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The Relationship Between Job Satisfaction and Disclosure of Disability Status of College Students With Disabilities

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The Relationship Between Job Satisfaction and Disclosure of Disability Status of
College Students With Disabilities

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Abstract

The increased number of students with disabilities in higher education promotes the need for specified career services for this population. Individuals with disabilities have historically struggled in employment settings, facing unemployment, underemployment, and wage disparities. Employees with disabilities are faced with the choice of whether or not to disclose their status to employers. A survey was designed to assess the relationship between the act of disclosing and other individual differences, such as type of disability, age at disability onset, use of informal compensatory strategies, use of formal accommodations, and work satisfaction. Disclosing disability status was found to have a significant relationship to type of disability and negative experiences in employment setting. Limitations of the investigation and implications for counselors are discussed.

The relationship between job satisfaction and disclosure status of college students with disabilities

The number of students with disabilities entering college has steadily increased over the past twenty years (Hennessey, Rumrill, Fitzgerald, & Roessler, 2008; Roessler, Hennessey, & Rumrill, 2008). Changes to disability rights laws have provided students with disabilities opportunities to attend college with reasonable accommodations to academic work and activities (Lynch & Gussel, 1996). As students with disabilities enter college in greater numbers, colleges have adjusted student services. Career services are an area of particular importance, as people with disabilities face life-long struggles in career development and satisfaction (Hennessey, et al., 2008). Once employed, adults with disabilities experience varied levels of job satisfaction. Two strong determinants of career satisfaction in adults with disabilities are high self-advocacy and use of self-regulation strategies (Madaus, Zhao, & Ruban, 2008).

In order to access accommodations and specialized services, individuals must disclose disability status to their employers. Disclosure also can carry many consequences both positive and negative, which explains why many people experience distress about knowing how and when to disclose (Madaus, Foley, McGuire, & Ruban, 2002; Prince, Gerber, & Mulligan, 2003). Additionally, many factors affect whether or not an individual discloses a disability. Previous research has found that college students who disclose to their professors or other college administrators may not necessarily disclose to their employers (Greenbaum, Graham, & Scales, 1996; Madaus, et al, 2002; Silver, Strehorn, & Bourke, 1997). Disclosure of disability status to an employer demonstrates both self advocacy and self-regulation, and may act as a strong indicator of

whether or not an employee is satisfied with his or her job. Strong indicators of job satisfaction for people with disabilities often include independence while on the job, self-autonomy, and self-fulfillment (Madaus, et al., 2008)

Students with Disabilities in the College Setting

The increased number of students with disabilities enrolled in post-secondary education provides evidence for increased research on this population. In 1987, 15% of high school graduates with disabilities entered post-secondary education, as compared with 32% in 2003 (Roessler, et al., 2008). Current estimates suggest that about 7% of the American collegiate student body have a documented disability (Henessey, et al., 2008). The exact number of college students with disabilities may be underestimated by current research, as some students may indicate that they have a disability through anonymous surveys but not disclose their disability to university faculty or staff. Between 40%-53% of students with disabilities who enter college will persist to earn their degrees (Madaus, et al., 2008). Unfortunately, little is known about the experiences of these students during college and their career outcomes after graduation (Madaus, et al., 2008).

Civil rights laws in the United States protect the rights of people with disabilities in work and school settings. Laws such as Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 have allowed greater numbers of students with disabilities to enter college. Subpart E of Section 504 guarantees the rights of people with disabilities in public and private institutions. According to Section 504, students with disabilities in post-secondary institutions must have: a) access to facilities and activities, b) non-discriminatory admission policies and procedures, c) testing procedures with appropriate

accommodations, and d) provision of auxiliary aides, such as sign language interpreters, or adaptive equipment (Lynch & Gussel, 1996).

The American with Disabilities Act (ADA), signed into law in 1990, further protected the rights of students with disabilities (Americans with Disabilities Act, 2008; Lynch & Gussel, 1996). The ADA mandates non-discriminatory policies on the basis of disability in the private sector and nonfederal public sector (e.g. state and local government). The most important difference between the ADA and Section 504 is that the ADA added protection to people with contagious diseases and eliminated protection of current illegal drug users. Both Section 504 and ADA protect all citizens of the U.S. with disabilities without regard to ethnic and racial origin (Lynch & Gussel, 1996).

The implementation of the ADA and Section 504 along with the increase in the numbers of disabled students attending college involved increased responsibilities for both students and institutions. Institutions now must provide notices about the rights and responsibilities of students with disabilities. Furthermore, policies and procedures for accommodation requests and appeals must be readily available to students, faculty, staff, and the community (Roessler, et al., 2008). Students have the right to nondiscrimination and confidentiality regarding their disability status, as well as appropriate academic adjustments. Acquisitions of reasonable accommodations, however, are the responsibility of the student. The student must provide documentation of a disability in order to receive modifications (Roessler, et al., 2008).

Career Concerns for Students with Disabilities

Despite civil rights laws that have increased protection for individuals with disabilities in the workplace and the increased number of students with disabilities

entering college, people with disabilities still face career-related challenges. The Bureau of Labor Statistics has reported an unemployment rate of 14.5% for individuals with disabilities, as compared to 9% of adults without disabilities (Persons with a Disability: Labor Force Characteristics Summary, 2010). Employment wages are another area of concern: men without disabilities earn 80% more money than men with disabilities (Schmidt & Smith, 2007). A college graduate with a disability is 8 to 12 times less likely to be employed than a college student without a disability (Hennessey et al., 2008). Several factors contribute to disadvantaged employment status of people with disabilities.

Children with disabilities may not experience the same career development process as their non-disabled peers. According to Super's (1980) life span theory, career development takes place across the life span, beginning in childhood with growth and continuing with exploration in adolescence. Essential steps in Super's life-span theory are the development of a sense of self and understanding of the world of work (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2009). Predictors of successful career development in both disabled and non-disabled populations are often addressed in the exploratory stage, as positive experiences in this stage are associated with the ability to make career-related decisions and career adjustments later in life (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2009). Unfortunately, many students with disabilities experience disadvantages in early career development stages, as the type and severity of disability may affect exploratory activities in childhood (Hennessey, et al., 2008; Lorenz, 2011). Students with disabilities may spend time receiving academic remediation or physical interventions, which can take away from time that could be spent doing part-time work, career exploration, or preparatory activities (Hitchings et al., 2001).

Research by Ochs and Roessler (2001) provided evidence that students with disabilities develop less career-related readiness than their non-disabled peers. Results on these two groups based on their results of vocational assessments (Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy Scale Short Form, Career Decision Making Outcome Expectations Scale, the Career Exploratory Plans or Intentions, and the Vocational Identity Scale) indicated that students with disabilities were less likely than non-disabled peers to endorse items related to having a clear and stable vocational identity (Ochs & Roessler, 2001). Unsuccessful completion of the tasks of early career development is also related to difficulty transitioning from high school to postsecondary activities (Lorenz, 2011).

The expectations of others may affect career success for people with disabilities' (Hitchings, et al., 2001). Parents may be overprotective of their child with disabilities, and make career choices on behalf of their child. Parents and teachers also may have low expectations for the outcomes of students with disabilities, which may lead to the student not being taken seriously. Thus, many individuals with disabilities have limited knowledge of the career-decision process, lack adequate skills for obtaining and maintaining employment, and are underemployed or unemployed (Hitchings, et al., 2001).

Disability-related benefit programs may prohibit people from disabilities from procuring work. Hennessey, et al., (2008) pointed out that the most important eligibility criterion for Supplemental Security Income and Social Security Disability is that a person's disability prevents them from performing gainful employment. Unfortunately such incentives may discourage individuals from attempting to find work and re-entering the workplace should they become able to work. Such programs can also undermine a

person's career identity, reduce the individual's confidence in employability, and reduce motivation to find work (Hennessey, et al., 2008).

Factors related to job satisfaction of people with disabilities.

Despite facing career-related challenges, many adults with disabilities persist to search for, obtain, and maintain employment. Little research has addressed the thoughts and opinions they have about their jobs (Schmidt & Smith, 2007). Employment satisfaction has a significant impact on overall life satisfaction, and is therefore an important indicator of adult success (Madaus, et al., 2008). The National Center on Secondary Education and Transition (2004) reported that employment is key to personal independence, self-sufficiency, and self-fulfillment of adults. According to Gerber (2002), work is "the centerpiece for independence, the pivotal element for autonomy in adulthood for all adults (p. 32)." Bandura (1997) explained that a career "determines whether a substantial part of our lives is repetitively boring, burdensome, and distressing or lastingly challenging and self-fulfilling (p. 2)."

Previous research indicated that measures of job satisfaction differ for adults with and without disabilities. A survey by Cabrita and Persita (2006) found work autonomy, flexibility in work tasks, financial variables, work hours, certainty of employment relationship, and individual well-being as the most important indicators of job satisfaction in people with physical and learning disabilities. Factors related to lack of job satisfaction included time pressure while on the job, tight deadlines, difficult customers, uncertainty about continuity of work, and lack of advancement and development opportunities (Cabrita & Persita, 2006).

Individuals with disabilities also rated work autonomy as a strong indicator of job satisfaction (Hansen & Nielsen, 2008). People with physical and learning disabilities also identified practical and organizational conditions as important to their satisfaction with their jobs, such as arrangement of the workplace, working hours, and ability to work alone. Flexibility in working tasks and hours was also a strong indicator of job satisfaction. Individuals with disabilities were also more concerned for their job security than their non-disabled peers (Hansen & Nielsen, 2008).

The limited pool of existing research on adults with disabilities presents varying conclusions about whether or not people with disabilities are able to find and maintain satisfying employment. Greenbaum et al., (1996) reported that 94% of a group of college graduates with a learning disability were satisfied with their jobs. Similarly, Maduas, et al, (2001) found that college graduates with learning disabilities were highly satisfied with their jobs. Witte, Phillips, and Kakela (1998), however, reported that college graduates with learning disabilities were generally unsatisfied with their employment.

Level of self-advocacy is a predictor of job satisfaction in people with disabilities (Hitchings, et al, 2001; Maduas, et al., 2008). Individuals with low levels of self-advocacy are likely to shy away from challenges when presented with difficulty or failure. Such an individual may therefore not engage in new activities or develop new skills. An individual with high levels of self-advocacy is likely to enjoy and continually engage in challenging activities and therefore learn new skills. Self-advocacy has been shown to be an essential element of students' development of conceptualizing and managing their disability in high school and post-secondary students (Hitchings, et. al, 2001). A person with a disability, with high levels of self-efficacy may be more likely to

engage in career-related challenges and use skills to increase their performance on the job (Maduas, et al., 2008). According to Palmers (1998), poor self-advocacy skills are the greatest contributors to poor post-graduation employment outcomes for post-secondary students with physical disabilities.

An individual's outcome expectations, or engagement in a behavior to create a desired outcome are another measure of self-advocacy. Outcome expectations can be physical and social, but self-evaluative outcome expectations can be related to job satisfaction, resulting in a sense of accomplishment and self-satisfaction (Maduas, et al, 2008). Self-evaluative expectations are also related to the development of personal standards of achievement and increased motivation to achieve levels of performance (Maduas, et al., 2008).

Use of self-regulation strategies are also related to job satisfaction of people with disabilities. Self-regulation strategies are internal processes that enable an individual to guide goal-directed behavior across activities and time. Examples include activities like goal setting, development of plans to achieve goals, ability to reframe a disability in a positive way, being persistent, the ability and desire to work hard, creativity in solving problems, continual use of social support, and knowing when to ask for help can lead to higher performance and job satisfaction (Maduas, et al., 2008). The use of self-regulation strategies is well established as a factor in academic success of students with learning disabilities. Use of self-regulation strategies such as study strategies and environmental accommodations allow a student to enjoy academic success. Furthermore, self regulation strategies and accommodations can be used in the workplace (Maduas, et al., 2008).

Gerber, Ginsberg, and Reiff (1992) reported that a major attribute of career success in individuals with disabilities is a sense of autonomy over career-related events and having a consistent pattern of taking control over one's life. Use of self-regulation on the job may increase an employee's satisfaction. For example, Balser and Harris (2008) found that individuals with physical and learning disabilities were most satisfied in their jobs when they were able to exercise autonomy in their positions (e.g. control of their own work schedule, being able to decide how their work should be done, being involved in decision-making processes at their job). Having a goal-oriented perspective, and an ability to reframe a disability, are also self-regulatory strategies that contribute to career success (Balser & Harris, 2008).

Self-regulation and self-advocacy strategies were found to be stronger indicators of employment satisfaction in people with disabilities than demographic factors and job characteristics. Maduas, Ruban, Foley, and McGuire (2003) examined several attributes related to job satisfaction in college graduates with learning disabilities from one institution. According to their research, a combination of variables explained 67% of variance in the job satisfaction score. Hierarchical regression analysis showed that demographic values, including gender and age, accounted for only 1% of variance, while length of time and salary explained 9% of variance. Self-regulation strategies, such as use of accommodations on the job, accounted for 16% of the variance, and overall self-regulation strategies accounted for 42% of variance in job satisfaction, a factor greater than all the other contributing factors (Madas, et al., 2003). Balser and Harris (2008) also found no connection between gender of individuals with physical disabilities and job

satisfaction. Hennessey, et al., (2008) also reported that gender was not a significant predictor of career satisfaction of people with disabilities.

Disclosure

Because of its implications on workplace environment and connection to self-esteem and identity, disclosure of disability status may be an indicator of job satisfaction. Disclosure of disability status is necessary to obtain accommodations from a school or workplace that may enable the individual to be effective in that environment (Americans with Disabilities Act, 2008). Literature revealed, however, that decisions regarding disclosure are related to much more than the need for environmental modifications, including one's identity, self-esteem, opinion of one's disability, and experience with societal pressures and discrimination (Maduas, et al., 2002; Olney & Brockelman, 2003).

Disclosure of disability status is intimately related to one's identity and autonomy, factors that have been identified as important to overall life satisfaction (Maduas, et al., 2002). Individuals with disabilities may have experienced reduced privacy in their lives due to reliance on others to help manage their daily needs. Disclosing to an employer or school involves divulging personal information to someone often who they have just met which can cause emotional distress and confusion about one's disability (Olney & Brockelman, 2003).

The history of research on disclosure focuses on how discussing one's disability is related to individuals' management of other people's perceptions. There is mixed literature about the behaviors people with disabilities employ in an effort to manage how other people perceive them. Goffman (1963) hypothesized that people with physical and intellectual disabilities attempt to "pass" as being non-disabled to avoid negative opinions

of others. More current research indicates that people with disabilities may embrace, reject, hide, or reveal their disabilities for various reasons (Olney & Brockelman, 2003). Individuals may feel positively about the overall experience of having a disability, even though they are aware of the possibility of negative evaluation. For example, people with developmental disabilities often tried to appear non-disabled, especially when they viewed it to be disadvantageous to be viewed by this label. Attempting to appear as a non-disabled individual is considered purposeful and effective, and to be an example of self-advocacy (Olney & Brockelman, 2003).

The decision whether or not to disclose.

The primary reason for disclosure is often to invoke the rights set forth by the ADA to protect people with disabilities in the workplace (Maduas, et al., 2002). The Americans with Disabilities Act (2008) provides protection similar to those provided to individuals on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, age, and religion. The ADA protects individuals from discrimination in all employment practices, including job application procedures, hiring, firing, advancement, compensation, and other conditions of employment. It also provides protection in employee recruitment, advertising, tenure, layoff, leave, fringe benefit, and all employment activities (Americans with Disabilities Act, 2008). Applicants or employees who meet the requirements for the job are entitled to reasonable accommodations. A reasonable accommodation is defined as “any modification or adjustment to a job or the work environment that will enable a qualified applicant or employee to participate in the application process or to perform essential job functions” (Americans with Disabilities Act, 2008, p. 4). Examples of commonly used accommodations in the workplace include: modifying work schedules, acquiring or

modifying equipment, providing readers or interpreters, modifying training or examinations. The employer is not required to make an accommodation if it imposes an “undue hardship,” or an “action requiring significantly difficulty or expense” (Americans with Disabilities Act, 2008, p. 8). The range of “reasonable accommodations” are endless, from providing assistance with filling out a job application to the use of sound absorption panels, and the entire process must be set in motion by self-initiated disclosure (Maduas, et al., 2002).

Research indicates that disclosure to an employer can have positive and negative secondary effects. In addition to allowing one access to needed accommodations, another positive result of disclosure of disability status is that it can promote mutual positive regard for the discloser. In surveying interviewers, Roberts and Macan (2006) found that disclosure of personal information to a recipient increased recipient’s liking of the revealer.

Disclosure can benefit a relationship by promoting understanding of the discloser’s experience as a disabled individual. Individuals may disclose because belief that the employer should know about their disability because it is part of who the employee is, desire to develop a trusting relationship with an employer, and a knowledge of their legal rights (Kakela & Witte, 2000; Maduas, et al., 2002).

Others may disclose to call the employer’s attention to positive personality characteristics. For example, an applicant for a teaching position disclosed his struggles with dyslexia stating, “It would help the students and parents, you know, to know that I understand what they’ve been through” (Olney & Brockelman, 2003, p. 364). Graduates of a large Northeast University who identified themselves as having a learning disability

in Maduas' et al. (2002) research also listed enabling use of technology, need for additional time, need for more detailed directions, helping the discloser to be more understood, and display of empathy for others as reasons for disclosure.

Reasons for an individual not to disclose are numerous and based on individual differences, experiences, and environments (Madas, et al., 2002). The decision whether or not to disclose could be based partially on self-concept. Those with psychiatric disabilities are most likely to hold a negative self-stigma regarding their decision. One who holds a self-stigma sees in him or herself the negative attributes that others hold about individuals with mental illness (ranging from stereotypes and ignorance to real factors such as unpredictability) (Guimon, 2010). Those who believe themselves to have negative attributes on the basis of their disability may be less willing to share details about their condition (Guimon, 2010). Employees who internalize a social stigma are more likely to have diminished self-esteem and self-advocacy. As disclosure of disability status is an example of self-advocacy, it seems logical that employees with psychiatric disabilities would be unlikely to display this behavior.

The effect of a psychiatric condition may be cyclical in nature, therefore affecting individuals on a sporadic basis. A visual, auditory, or physical disability (especially, for example, a major mobility issue) may affect activities of daily living more globally, resulting in a greater need to discuss the condition with others. Employees may not know or be able to predict how their condition might affect them on a given day, making it more difficult to explain to others how their disability functions in the workplace (Madas, et al., 2002).

The onset age of a psychiatric disability is often between age 18-25, so individuals may have their first experience with a psychiatric condition while in college or while employed as an early adult. This results in limited time to adjust to one's condition and limited time to prepare to disclose (Kessler, Berglund, Demler, Jin, Merikangas, & Walters, 2005).

In addition to evaluating age of disability onset and type of disability, self-identification as an individual with a disability could be related to disclosure behavior and work satisfaction. According to Darling and Heckert (2010), self-identification as an individual with a disability is positively correlated with overall self-esteem. Positive orientation toward disability includes three components: cognitive ("I am an individual with a disability"), evaluative ("I am proud to be a person with a disability") and behavioral (engaging in activities such as activism). Previous research indicates that even individuals with disabilities involving major mobility difficulties did not always identify themselves as being disabled (30% did not identify (Darling & Heckert, 2010)). For adults, self-identification as being disabled was associated with changes in social network and ability (such as the loss of the ability to drive) (Darling & Heckert, 2010). For adults, change in functioning, rather than diagnosis or labels, was related to self-identification as a disabled individual: 61% of adults who had difficulty with or could not complete at least one activity of daily living did not consider themselves to be disabled (Darling & Heckert, 2010).

Many potential disadvantages of disclosure include the potential for negative impacts on the relationships with supervisors or co-workers (Maduas, et al., 2002). People may be misinformed about disabilities, and may assume that a person is

responsible for contracting their disability, which can compound the negative rating of the disclosure (Roberts & Macan, 2006). It may be of a person's benefit to point out if there is an external cause for a disability. Interviewees who delay disclosure of their disability status were seen to be doing so out of shame and embarrassment (Roberts & Macan, 2006). Additionally, there was no difference in rating patterns between disclosures of disabilities that were externally caused or caused by the actions of the discloser (Roberts & Macan, 2006).

Inappropriately timed disclosures can cause negative effects for the disclosers. Disclosures that occur after a professional relationship has been formed may leave supervisors and co-workers feeling deceived and shocked. Individuals may find more positive reactions to their disclosures if they are completed early in the relationship, such as early in the interview process (Roberts & Macan, 2006). Disclosure after a problem occurs (e.g. requesting an interpreter after a test has been administered) may contribute to a belief that one is using their modifications to avoid work requirements (Greenbaum, et al., 1996).

For many, the primary reason for not disclosing was fear of discrimination. A common theme found in research by Maduas et. al., 2002 was the fear that one would be fired or not promoted on the basis of their disability status as evidenced by statements such as "maybe they'd fire me," and "people look down on you" (Prince, Gerber, & Mulligan, 2003, p. 354)

Employees who do not disclose report fear of discrimination or stigmatization, and feeling that their disability no longer affected their lives (Greenbaum, et al., 1996). The majority of participants (adults with a learning disability) in the study by

Greenbaum, et al, 1996, 71%, did not disclose and cited reasons such as it would not be helpful to them on the job, their disability did not affect their performance, employers did not need to know about their disability. In fact, many employees were emphatic about not needing or wanting help. For example, one participant stated, “I want to try and do it myself, I’ll feel so much better about myself” (Prince, et al., 2003, p. 354).

Results from Price, et al., 2003 pointed out how self-perceptions and lack of knowledge about ones disability can act as a barrier to disclosure. For example, 13 of 25 respondents did not see themselves as having a disability, despite having a documented learning disability and a history of past educational services based on disability status.

The findings of Price, et al., 2003, called attention to another potential barrier: lack of knowledge about how to talk to employers about their disability. A study of self-assessed job-search skills of college students with learning disabilities did not feel confident in their knowledge of when, where, and how to discuss a disability with a potential employer. Overall, however, students rated themselves as high in self-advocacy in interview presentation (Thompson & Dickey, 1994). Twelve of the 25 participants surveyed by Price, et al. (2003), also indicated that they did not know enough about their disability to talk about it with an employer.

Given the positive and negative consequences of disclosing disability status, it is unsurprising that previous research found differing rates of disclosure in disability cohorts. Maduas, et al. (2002) surveyed 209 students with learning disabilities who recently graduated from a competitive public university in the Northeast. Eighty-seven percent of individuals sampled reported current full-time professional positions. Ninety percent of employed respondents indicated that their learning disability affected their

work in some way, but only 30% of respondents self-disclosed their disability status to their employer.

Researchers (Greenbaum, et al., 1996) found disclosure rates similar to those found in previous research (Greenbaum, et al, 1996; Kakela & Witte, 2000; Maduas, et al., 2002). In surveying recently graduated students from a large public university who received support services for their learning disabilities, 71% were employed. Eighty percent of employed graduates reported that their learning disability affected their work, particularly in the areas of reading, writing, math, and memory. Despite the impact on their work, only 20% of participants self-disclosed their disability status to their employers.

Research by Maduas, et al. (2002) demonstrated various fears and hopes that individuals have about disclosure, as well as finding a moderate disclosure rate. When surveying college graduates who obtained accommodations from their college based on their disability status, 90% indicated that their learning disability affected their work. The area reported most frequently affected by a learning disability were writing skills, followed by information processing, reading comprehension, and time management. Thirty percent of participants surveyed disclosed to their employer (Madas et al., 2002).

Silver, et al. (1997), found low to moderate rates of workplace disclosure. According to their research, recent college graduates with disabilities who received accommodations based on their physical disability during their college career reported an employment rate of 84%. Of employed graduates, 15% reported their disability status to an employer, 33% disclosed to a supervisor, and 38% disclosed to their coworkers. It is unclear if participants were allowed multiple selections, and if the categories were

mutually exclusive. Only one participant reported requesting workplace accommodations (Silver, et al., 1997).

Kakela and Witte (2000) found similar rates of disclosure, and found that many peoples' decisions about disclosure are based on more than just need for accommodations. In surveying 29 graduates with physical disabilities, only 29% of individuals disclosed their disability status.

Price, et al., (2003) also found evidence that people with disabilities may be reluctant to ask for accommodations but may be willing to discuss their disabilities with others. In a survey of 25 adults aged (19-31) with learning disabilities, 13 individuals reported having spoken about their disabilities in their workplace (Prince, et al., 2003). None of the 25 interviewees requested accommodations.

Other research found much lower rates of disclosure. Witte, et al. (1998) surveyed 72 recent college graduates who had documented disabilities during college and requested supportive services in college. Ninety-six percent of participants held full or part-time employment, but only 5% disclosed their disability status to their employers.

It is noteworthy that all of the participants in the research reviewed had previously disclosed disability status to their college and requested accommodations. The participants therefore had initiated a conversation about their disability to others and asked for accommodations on at least one occasion.

Significant differences in disclosure rates may occur between visible and non-visible disabilities (Roberts & Macan, 2006). Physical disabilities may be more likely to be disclosed early in a working relationship, because the need for accommodations might be more urgent (e.g. need to ensure that there is handicapped access to the building where

the interview is held). Previous research indicates that non-disabled individuals have preferences for interacting with people with disabilities: people with physical disabilities are most preferred, followed by sensory disorders, and lastly, psychological disorders (Roberts & Macan, 2006). Additionally, physical disabilities have higher ratings of employability and more positive hiring recommendations than sensory or cognitive disabilities. Lastly, many employers may already have accommodations in place for people with physical disabilities, making it easier to welcome them into the workplace. In the early 1990's, employers began gearing up for legal compliance for people with physical disabilities. Many employers have remained uninformed about learning disabilities and how their disability affects them in the workplace (Gerber, 1992).

Results of disclosure.

Fear of discrimination is commonly reported as a barrier to disclosure of disability status. Feedback from interviewers disputes this fear. Interviewers did not rate those who disclosed disability status more negatively than those they assumed were non-disabled. In fact, those who disclosed were more liked by interviewers than non-disclosers (Roberts & Macan, 2006). Additionally, individuals who disclosed their disability early in the interview process were rated more qualified, confident, honest, and to possess more positive personality characteristics than individuals who disclosed after their interview (Roberts & Macan, 2006). Disclosers were also rated positively when they established that they did not want to initiate an employment relationship under false pretenses.

A possible additional reason for the minimal disclosure rates to employers is that individuals engage in a process of self-selecting occupations that fit their areas of strength and challenge. Gerber, Ginsberg, and Reiff (1991) identified this process as

“goodness of fit,” and found evidence that individuals with disabilities fit themselves into environments in which they could succeed, and where they were best able to use their skills. Highly successful adults with disabilities selected work contexts where they could make decisions about their work and be more comfortable and successful. Participants described making career-related decisions that allowed them to “capitalize on their strengths,” (Gerber, et al., 1991, p. 480). For example, a female medical student specialized in dermatology because she could use her strong visual-spatial perception skills. If an individual is able to focus on areas of work where he or she can take advantage of their strengths, they may be able to work without accommodations. Therefore, the goodness-of-fit hypothesis may provide evidence of why fewer individuals disclose to employers than schools (Gerber, et al., 1991). Self-identifying occupations that capitalize on strengths are considered evidence of self-advocacy and a self-regulatory strategy.

Disclosure and overall job satisfaction.

The act of disclosing a disability to one’s employer can be related to job satisfaction because it represents both self-efficacy and self-regulation strategies. People with disabilities have the option to self-disclose to schools and workplaces the presence of a specific disability (Madaus, et al., 2002). Disclosure is an example of self-advocacy because it demonstrates an understanding of one’s disability and how it affects their work. It is also an example of engagement in a behavior that will create a desired outcome, whether the goal is greater understanding from co-workers, expression of empathy, or workplace accommodations. Disclosure is also an example of goal-directed behavior and problem solving, aspects of self-regulation (Madaus, et al., 2008).

Additionally, employers consider self-disclosure and self-advocacy as very important factors for their employees (Prince, et. al., 2003). The process of adjusting one's behavior to manage how others view them is an example of self-regulation, because these behaviors are purposeful, effective, and demonstrate an understanding of how people may devalue people with disabilities (Olney & Brockelman, 2003). As discussed previously, self-advocacy and self-regulatory strategies can lead to job satisfaction in adults with disabilities. Therefore, disclosure is a possible important factor of job satisfaction, and is a pertinent issue for college students, counselors and administrators.

Because of the potential positive and negative outcomes of disclosure of disability status, its connection to the ability to successfully complete job tasks, and implications for employer relationships, disclosure is a pertinent issue for high school and college counselors and administrators. The current dearth of research on disclosure examines the outcomes of disclosure, and has mostly focused on individuals with learning disabilities. Some literature refers to physical disabilities as "obvious," as if employees are less likely to engage in discussions about their disability with employers because their disability is visible (Roberts & Macan, 2006). Psychiatric and auditory disabilities are also under-represented in the literature. Furthermore, as of yet, research has also not investigated whether or not there is a relationship between age of disability onset and willingness to disclose. Additionally, a review of the literature did not provide any information about a possible connection between industry and rates of disclosure. The present study was designed to address these gaps as well as assess students' attitudes toward and experiences with disclosure.

The present study will address the rate at which students disclose their disability status, and the relationship of having disclosed with age of disability onset, type of disability, negative experiences at work on the basis on ones' disability, request of formal accommodations, and use of informal compensatory strategies, and work satisfaction.

Method

Participants in the current study will complete a survey adapted from Maduas's et al. (2002) Job Satisfaction and Self-Efficacy scales. The survey was designed to address the following hypotheses:

- 1) Of students reporting having work experience, a small amount will have disclosed their disability status to their employers.
- 2) Those with physical disabilities will be more likely than those with cognitive, auditory, visual or psychiatric disabilities to disclose disability status.
- 3) Those who were identified as having a disability at birth will be more likely to disclose disability status than those identified as having a disability later in life.
- 4) Those who disclosed will report higher job satisfaction than those who do not disclose.
- 5) Those who disclose will report requesting formal and use informal accommodation strategies.
- 6) Those who disclose will not report more negative experience in the workplace based on their status of an individual with a disability.

Setting

The participants for this project were selected by virtue of being a student at Rochester Institute of Technology registered with Disability services. The private university occupies 1,300 acres in suburban Rochester, the third-largest city in New York. The campus consists of 243 buildings total (5.6 million sq. ft.). The school has an enrollment of just over 17,000. The majority of students are males (65%), while 35% are females. The university contains nine colleges of various academic focuses, serving both graduate and undergraduate students.

Participants

Seventy-eight students participated in this research study. Sixty-three percent of respondents were male, 37% were female. The participants' ages ranged from 18-44 (average age 21.5). Fourteen percent identified as first years, 19% 2nd years, 28% 3rd years, 24% 4th years, and 12% graduate students. The majority (78%) of students identified as White non-Hispanic, while 8% identified as Asian or Pacific Islander, 4% as Hispanic, and 3% Black non-Hispanic. One percent of respondents were international students. They had identified with themselves as having a disability to the Students with Disability Office at Rochester Institute of Technology in order to receive academic accommodations. Participants have self-identified as having either a cognitive, physical, auditory, visual, and/or psychiatric disability.

Materials

A survey was constructed based on Maduas (2000) survey entitled “Job Satisfaction & Self-Efficacy Scales,” which assesses college students’ with disabilities work experiences and opinions of these experiences. The survey used in this research was revised to include terms specific to areas of study at Rochester Institute of Technology as well as reduced in length. The survey was made on Clipboard (Clipboard.com). The present survey has 24 questions. Six questions addressed demographic information, including the nature of the responder’s disability. Thirteen questions addressed responder’s work experience. Responders were instructed to “check all that apply” for 5 questions. Seven questions regarding work environment offered the option “other,” and allowed the responder to use their own words to describe their experience. For example:

14. In what areas does your disability impact your work? Check all that apply

_____ Entering and exiting the building

_____ Access to work areas (e.g. bathroom, break rooms)

_____ Transportation to and from work

_____ Traveling for work

_____ Writing skills

_____ Organizational skills

_____ Rate of processing information

_____ Mathematics computation

_____ Oral communication skills

_____ Reading comprehension

- _____Time management
- _____Social interactions with colleagues
- _____Social interactions with supervisor(s)
- _____Other:

19. For what reason did you chose to disclose your disability? Check all that apply

- _____Need for additional time to complete job tasks
- _____Use of technology as an accommodation
- _____More detailed directions related to components of my job responsibilities
- _____To make co-workers aware of my disability
- _____To make supervisors aware of my disability
- _____Other, please specify

One question assessed work satisfaction on a Likert-Type scale:

24: Please indicate your level of satisfaction with your previous or current work experience:

1 – Extremely dissatisfied	2- Very dissatisfied	3- Dissatisfied	4-Satisfied	5 – Very Satisfied	6 – Extremely Satisfied

A full copy of the survey can be found in Appendix A.

Procedure

College students at Rochester Institute of Technology who have identified themselves as having a disability were sent an email with instructions on how to complete the online survey. Before they began the survey, participants were presented with a statement of informed consent. In the informed consent statement, participants were assured that their results are in no way connected to any identifying information. The letter also stated that the participants could stop completing the survey at any point, or skip any questions they wished, even after beginning the survey. A copy of the cover letter can be found in Appendix B. After completion, participants are provided with the contact information of the primary researcher and thanked for their time. 2x2 chi square analyses were conducted to investigate the relationships between disclosure and work satisfaction, type of disability, age of disability onset, use of formal accommodations, use of informal compensatory strategies, and negative experience at work based on disability status.

Results

Chi square analyses were used to examine the presence of relationships between variables. A significance level of .05 was set for all statistical tests. Support for the hypotheses for relationship between age of disability onset and disclosure status and work satisfaction and disclosure status were not found. Results approached statistical significance for the hypotheses for a relationship between type of disability and disclosure status and request for formal accommodations and disclosure status. Statistically significant relationships were found between disclosure status and

experience of negative effects at work and disclosure status and use of informal strategies. The results of this study found significant support for the hypothesis that the majority of students with disabilities reporting previous or current work experience will not disclose their disability status (36% disclosed).

Chi square tests were used to determine whether there were significant relationships between disclosure of disability status, employment satisfaction, negative experiences at work, and use of compensatory strategies, age of disability onset, type of disability, request for formal accommodations.

These results were not significantly significant for relationship between disclosure and age of disability onset, $\chi^2(1) = 91.48, p > .05$. The majority of respondents were identified as having a disability at age 6 or later (67%). Twenty-one participants (29%) were identified with a disability from birth to age 5. Forty-three percent of responders who were diagnosed before the age of six disclosed their disability Thirty-three percent of students who had been diagnosed with a disability at age six or later disclosed disability status.

Disclosure status was not found to have a significant relationship with work satisfaction, $\chi^2(1) = 2.7, p > .05$. Respondents indicated that they were “somewhat satisfied” (35%) and “very satisfied” (31%) most often. Other responses included: “extremely dissatisfied” (3%), “very dissatisfied” (3%), “somewhat dissatisfied” (16%) and “extremely satisfied” (12%). These results are graphically represented in Appendix B.

Results do not support the hypothesis that students with a physical disability will be most likely to disclose their disability status to employers ($\chi^2(1) = 92.59, p > .05$).

Cognitive disabilities were reported by the highest percentage of respondents (41%). Twenty eight percent of students reported having auditory disabilities, and 25% of students reported being physically disabled. Psychiatric disabilities accounted for 4% of respondents, and visual disabilities affected 2% of participants. One hundred percent of students with visual disabilities disclosed their status to their employers. Those with physical disabilities were the second most likely group at 66% disclosure rate, followed by auditory (61%), cognitive (18%) and psychiatric (0%).

More students reported that they did not request formal accommodations in both disclosed and non-disclosed categories. This relationship approached statistical significance, $\chi^2(1)=89.74, p=.55$

The finding that those who disclose disability status were not more likely to experience negative effects was statistically significant, $\chi^2(1)=94.64, p=.03$. Seventy-four percent of respondents reported not having negative experiences at work (45 of those without negative experiences did not disclose, 18 did). These results are graphically represented in Appendix D.

A statistically significant difference was found between those who did not endorse use of informal accommodations. Of 38 respondents who did not use informal strategies, 9 disclosed, and 29 did not, $\chi^2(1)=91.58, p=.017$. Those who disclosed were equally likely to utilize informal accommodations (47 respondents disclosed their status, and 23 utilized informal strategies, 24 did not). These results are graphically represented in Appendix C.

Discussion

The survey results indicated a significant relationship between disclosure status and negative experiences at work and disclosure status and use of informal strategies in the workplace. Explanations of findings, implications for counselors and administrators, directions for future research, and limitations are discussed.

Disclosure

Results from this survey and similar studies have consistently reported a disclosure rate of about 30% of college students with disabilities to their employers. Many students also report having no reason to disclose. It is therefore reasonable to expect that students will not generally disclose their disability status and promote a strategy that more employees are willing to use. Intervention by employers, counselors, or college administrators could focus on identification and implementation of accommodation strategies that can be put into place regardless of disclosure status. Far more students used informal strategies or accommodations than disclosed their disability status. Employees could also use the forum to brainstorm strategies that were effective in school, home, or social settings that might be effective in work settings.

The results of the survey indicated that students who disclosed reported several reasons for disclosing other than requesting accommodations. These included “to make supervisors aware of my disability (31%), to make co-workers aware of my disability (27%), needed additionally time to complete jobs (11%). One student reported having disclosed because “it’s the law,” (perhaps this student is referring to current ADA law,

which states that with disclosure, the employer is required to provide reasonable employment accommodations).

Feedback on the survey from one student called attention to self-esteem about a disability and education as other possible reasons for disclosure. After taking the survey, one student contacted the primary researcher to say that she discussed her deafness in the workplace, and that she did not consider her deafness a disability. She felt proud that she was a member of the deaf community.

Disclosure status and age of disability onset

The results of the survey indicated that there was not a significant relationship between disclosure status and age of disability onset. One possible explanation for this finding is that so few students disclosed, it was unlikely to find a significant relationship within this small group. Additionally, both the survey questions and sample used may not have been diverse enough to reflect different experiences based on age of onset. Previous research indicates that adults identified with a disability at age 21 or later were most likely to indicate that their disability had a significant impact on their lives (Darling & Heckert, 2010). Because the survey only included one category for disability identification for adults (age 18 and over) and the mean age of the sample was 20.9, this study is unlikely to find significant differences based on age. Future research aiming to differentiate experiences based on age of disability onset could expand the age range of the sample.

Disclosure status and workplace satisfaction

According to this survey, 82% of responders indicated some level of satisfaction with their work experience. This finding is promising, as it suggests that individuals with disabilities have job satisfaction levels similar to the rest of the country. A recent Gallup poll found that 87.5% of Americans were satisfied with their jobs (Gallup, 2011).

Disclosure of disability status was not significantly related to disclosure status. This finding has implications for college administrators, counselors, and students, as it suggests that for many students, disclosing disability status is not a necessary condition for satisfactory employment.

Disclosure status and type of disability

According to the survey results, type of disability had a significant relationship with disclosure of disability status. None of the students responding to this survey with psychiatric disabilities disclosed their status to employers. Those with cognitive disabilities were the second least likely to disclose (18%). There are several different interpretations of this finding. Perhaps those with psychiatric and/or cognitive disabilities are least likely to need formal accommodation in the workplace. Additionally, it may be more difficult to identify accommodations that are helpful and appropriate to the workplace.

Implications of this finding for counselors and administrators could include continued education about the psychiatric or cognitive disability. Also, one can aim for a position that will suit the individual's areas of strength and challenges (e.g., an individual who understands that his or her bipolar disorder is triggered by stress might seek out an

occupation with minimal pressures. Counselors can encourage students to track or journal the effects of their disability, to track patterns that may become important factors in the workplace. Practice of disclosure scripts is pertinent as well, in the event that an employee decides to disclose his or her disability. The employee should be prepared to discuss the implications of the disability in the workplace if necessary.

Disability status and formal accommodations

According to the results of the present survey, students who disclosed were not more likely to request formal accommodations. The majority of students who disclosed (81%) did not request formal accommodations from their employers. This suggests that there are several different motivators for disclosure, aside from requesting accommodations. This finding deserves consideration from career counselors and administrators. When cultivating relationships with potential employers of students with disabilities, employers should be aware that employees with disabilities may or may not request and use formal accommodations, and may be more likely to adjust approach to work tasks according to their specific challenges (as discussed under “Disability status and informal strategies”). Counselors and career services staff can encourage job-seekers to seek out information about job environment to attempt to predict how their areas of challenges will function in particular occupations. This process can lead to a brainstorm about what the individual needs to be successful in a work environment, and whether or not accommodations are necessary.

Disability status and informal compensatory strategies

The survey results indicated no statistically significant relationship between disclosure status and use of informal strategies. This suggests that regardless of an

individual's comfort with or need to disclose, students with disabilities are equally likely to find and employ methods to increase productivity at work. The implications of this finding are pertinent to counselors as the promotion of use of informal strategies can be useful to many students.

Students endorsed several different strategies in the workplace. Setting goals was the most popular strategy, endorsed by 27% of respondents. Other strategies used in order of popularity include time management (26%), stay late at work (26%), arrive early to work (24%), quiet work environment (21%), self-advocating for job-related needs (18%), support from family or significant others (17%), problem-solving and brainstorming (14%), assistive technology (10%), graphic organizers (8%), delegation of difficult tasks (7%), and use of proof-readers (5%).

Fifteen percent of responders identified other strategies not included as possible survey response. These included: use of a computer instead of writing by hand and avoiding heavy lifting.

A number of students called attention to specific strategies that benefit deaf or hard-of-hearing employees, such as use of interpreters, reduce use of the phone, and "remind people to face me when they talk, and ask themselves to repeat themselves a lot."

Thirty-four percent of respondents indicated they neither disclosed their disability status nor used informal strategies in the workplace. It may appear that, within this group, few issues related disability appeared in the workplace. Members in this group may be able to identify and obtain positions that allow them to function effectively without discussing their disability with others or compensating for their disability. This is a

promising finding, and suggests that many young adults are adept at understanding and compensating for their disability.

While it is possible that this group of respondents was able to perform a job without compensatory strategies, it is difficult to predict which occupations they will have in the future, and what strategies or accommodations they may need in these positions. This group should therefore be included in interventions or trainings for students with disabilities as they prepare to enter the dynamic work force.

Alternatively, this group of students may not discuss their work with employers or use compensatory strategies because they have significant discomfort in discussing their disability, have less knowledge about their disability, or have little understanding of how their disability functions in the workplace. Using the results of this study, it is difficult to ascertain if students did not disclose or use informal strategies because they did not need to or were unprepared to, or feared negative outcomes.

Disclosure and negative effects

The majority of students (58%) who disclosed their status did so without any negative effects on the workplace. Students who disclosed their disability status to their employers, however, were more likely to experience negative effects at the workplace on the basis of their disability. Concurrently, a small group, 13%, experienced negative effects in the workplace on the basis of their disability without having disclosed their status. This finding suggests that simply deciding not to discuss one's disability with others in the employment settings does not offer protection against discriminatory or hurtful remarks. This finding provides evidence that fear of negative effects on the basis of being disabled is a legitimate fear in disclosing status.

Several different themes were present in the variety of negative experiences reported by students with disabilities. Several students reported that their disability had a negative effect on their social relationships at work. For example, students reported:

- “Being called negative words”
- “Being lectured on what to do, over and over”
- “”Looked down upon by others”
- “Singled out”
- “They think that I cannot do things, that I cannot be productive”

Several students reported having negative experiences because their disability affected their ability to perform their given job responsibilities:

- “Had reduced responsibilities”
- “ Had to do tasks which were very difficult for me”
- “ Important tasks were not given to me, but to a coworker”
- “ It is very difficult for me to stay on task”

The most concerning group of responses focused on discriminatory and hurtful experiences on the basis of one’s disability. For example:

- “An offer for a position was given to a coworker when it was initially given to me”
- “ A coworker and boss made me go a sit down”
- “I was once asked not to use my wheelchair until later in the day”
- “Coworkers made comments that I was going to the hospital just to get out of work.”

Similarly concerning was one responder’s answer, suggesting that there may be a myriad of other negative experiences that were not reported in this study.

“[Employee] has a policy of not discriminating. Any adverse effects would be veiled by [employer]. I’m not comfortable detailing any suspicious behavior in this forum.”

This student implies that discriminatory practices are present and are concealed by the employer. The response calls attention to the possibility that, other students may

have also felt uncomfortable relaying their negative experiences on the survey for fear of retribution. It is unclear how many other students had negative experiences and did not wish to disclose them. This student's response raises questions about whether or not employees with disabilities have supportive forums in which to discuss concerns about their employers.

Students who disclosed their disability status were more likely to experience negative effects on the basis of their disability. The majority of disclosers, (58%) however, did not experience any negative effects on the basis of their status. This finding suggests that some co-workers and/or supervisors may target employees with disabilities in the workplace either covertly (e.g. "reduced responsibilities") or overtly (e.g. "they asked me not to use my wheelchair"). Having disclosed disability status may offer more satisfaction in the wake of these negative experiences, because being forthcoming about one's status can invoke the protection of the ADA. So while disclosing may open an employee up for discriminatory remarks, it also opens the legal protection as so stated by the ADA. Strategies to cope with negative effects in the workplace are suggested later.

Conclusions/Implications

There are several implications for counselors, student affairs staff, and career services staff members on college campuses for promoting satisfying employment in students and adults with disabilities. Current and previous research indicates that a small percentage of adults with disabilities will disclose their employers. Thus, encouraging all potential employees to disclose their disability status will not take into account the needs of all individuals with disabilities. Some students do desire to disclose, and therefore,

clinicians should be prepared to help students develop disclosure scripts, practice them, determine the best time to disclose, and to whom they should disclose.

A support network or group could provide support for employees with disabilities. Issues discussed in this article can all be discussed, from the decision whether or not to disclose, brainstorming ideas of possible strategies that may help increase productivity on the job, and support if discrimination occurs. Such groups should be free from employer affiliation, to allow participants to share concerns specific to their workplace, coworkers, or employers.

In order to meet the needs of more students, clinicians must be willing to discuss ways that employees can be successful in the workplace without disclosing. The development and promotion of informal compensatory strategies will benefit many students regardless of their comfort with disclosure or type of disability.

Many students had employment experiences during which they disclosed their disability status without negative effects on the basis of their disability. Unfortunately, there was a significant relationship between disclosing disability status and experiencing negative effects in the workplace. This implies that students would benefit from the support of an individual or support group in the event discriminatory or painful remarks. Counselors and other staff members should be able to provide an appropriate legal referral if an employee suffers from discrimination. A support group, independent from employers, could provide a safe space for employees to discuss concerns related to work without fear of retribution from their employer.

Limitations

Generalization of results from this study is limited because of the convenience sample. Participants were all students at Rochester Institute of Technology, which has a male to female ratio of 67:33. Because of its emphases in art, design, and science, the RIT student population does not represent the greater American colligate student body.

Additionally, at least one participant felt uncomfortable detailing his or her work concerns about work. Despite the confirmation that the survey results would be anonymous, it is unclear how many additional participants felt similarly, and censored their responses for fear of retribution by their employer. If this occurred, the responses to the survey may be circumspect in severity and variety. Potential participants may also have not even attempted to complete the survey based on their previous work experiences, experiences with disclosure, or experiences as an individual with a disability. Therefore, the responses in this survey represent only a sample of students' experiences both at work and with disclosure of disability status.

An additional limitation of this study is that it does not take into account all the possible experiences in both work settings and with disclosure that contributes to one's experience. For example, this study does not address prior experience disclosing, how many times one has disclosed status, or the outcomes of these disclosures. Similarly, this survey quires participants about work experiences broadly, but more detailed questioning (e.g. in how many work environments did you suffer negative consequences on the basis of your disability?) would provide more information about experiences that lead to a current decision-making method.

This survey also did not assess participants' preparation for disclosure (e.g. does an employee know he or she would like to say, when to say it, and to whom they would like to speak?). Having a disclosure script prepared could increase ones' comfort with disclosure and likelihood that he or she will disclose. This represents another possible intervention area for counselors or administrators: education on the procedure of disclosing and an opportunity to practice in a secure environment. Research by Maduas, et al., (2003) provides guidance on ideal timing of disclosure and appropriate points to mention when discussing a disability with others.

Fifty-nine percent of respondents who had held employment indicated that their disability affected their work. This survey does not adequately explore the experiences of the remaining 41% of respondents. Perhaps these students have been able to select work environments that allowed them to ensure their disability would not affect their work. Previous research indicates that once individuals have reached adulthood, they have become so adept at understanding their areas of strength and challenge that they are able to select jobs in which their disability will not be an issue (find resources).

There is evidence that some participants in this survey did not view themselves as disabled (e.g. "it is not a disability really, just a way of viewing things differently). Those who do not view themselves as having a disability would be highly unlikely to disclose disability status to employers or request accommodations. Future research could assess individuals' orientation as a person with a disability as it relates to discussions about disability in the workplace and informal accommodations.

In conclusion, the issue of disclosure in the workplace remains largely and individualized issue. Disclosure was related to type of disability and negative experiences

at work, but could be related to other concerns not detailed in this investigation, such as preparedness for disclosure. Counselors and administrators should be prepared to address preparation for work through various interventions, including helping students write their disclosure script, cope with negative experiences on the job, or develop strategies to increase their efficacy on the job.

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Appendix A. Survey of student with disabilities' job experiences

This project focuses on the experiences of students with disabilities in the work place. This research project is being conducted in order for the researcher, Janine Rowe, to complete a Master's thesis for the Department of Counselor Education at The College at Brockport, State University of New York.

In order to participate in this study, your informed consent is required. You are being asked to make a decision whether or not to participate in this project. If you want to participate in the project, and agree with the statements below, your completion of the survey signifies your consent.

I understand that:

1. My participation is voluntary and I have the right to refuse to answer any questions.
2. My confidentiality is guaranteed. My name will not be connected to the survey. If any publication results from this research, I would not be identified by name.
3. There will be no anticipated personal risks or benefits because of my participation in this project.
4. My participation involves answering 24 survey questions. It is estimated that it will take 5 minutes to complete.
5. Approximately 700 students will take part in this study. The results will be used for the completion of a master's thesis by the primary researcher.
6. Data will be deleted after the research project is completed.
7. Your RIT login information is required only to confirm that you are an RIT student. Your login information will not be connected to your responses.

I am 18 years of age or older. I have read and understand the above statements. All my questions about my participation in this study have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in the study realizing I may withdraw without penalty at any time during the survey process. Completing the survey indicates my consent to participate.

If you have any questions, you may contact:

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Instructions: Please check the appropriate box or type the appropriate information. Feel free to add additional comments or insights if desired.

1. What is your gender?

_____ Male

_____ Female

2. What is your age?

3. What is your year at RIT?

_____ 1st year

_____ 2nd year

_____ 3rd year

_____ 4th year

_____ graduate student

4. What is your ethnicity?

_____ Asian of Pacific Islander/America

_____ American Indian or Alaskan Native/American

_____ Black Non-Hispanic American

_____ Other Hispanic or Spanish-surnamed American

_____ White Non-Hispanic American

_____ Non-Resident Alien

_____ Other:

5. When were you initially identified with a disability?

- _____ At birth
- _____ Age 1-5
- _____ Age 6-10
- _____ Age 11-15
- _____ Age 16-17
- _____ Over age 18

6. What is the nature of your disability? (Check all that apply)

- _____ Physical
- _____ Auditory
- _____ Cognitive
- _____ Psychiatric
- _____ Other:

7. Did the availability of RIT services influence your decision to attend RIT?

- _____ Yes
- _____ No

8. Current school or college of your RIT studies:

- _____ College of Applied Science and Technology
- _____ College of Business
- _____ College of Computing and Information Science
- _____ College of Engineering
- _____ College of Imaging Arts and Sciences
- _____ College of Science
- _____ Golisano Institute of Sustainability
- _____ National Institute for the Deaf

9. Have you completed, or are you currently completing, a CO-OP at RIT?

- _____ Yes
- _____ No

10. Have you held employment since being identified with your disability?

- _____ Yes, full-time employment
- _____ Yes, part-time employment
- _____ Yes, internship (either paid or unpaid)
- _____ No

11. What type of employment have you held since being identified with your disability?

Check all that apply

- _____ Agriculture
- _____ Business
- _____ Education

- Factory/Industry
- Federal Government
- Health Care
- Media
- Homemaker
- Military Service
- Non-Profit
- Recreation
- Social Services
- State/Local Government
- Technology
- Other:

12. Does your disability impact your work?

- Yes
- No

13. Please indicate the term that best describes how frequently your disability affects your work

- Never
- Once a month or less
- Monthly
- Weekly
- Always

14. In what areas does your disability impact your work? Check all that apply

- Entering and exiting the building
- Access to work areas (e.g. bathroom, break rooms)
- Transportation to and from work
- Traveling for work
- Writing skills
- Organizational skills
- Rate of processing information
- Mathematics computation
- Oral communication skills
- Reading comprehension
- Time management
- Social interactions with colleagues
- Social interactions with supervisor(s)
- Other:

15. Have you disclosed your disability status to an employer?

- Yes
- No

16. Check the reason(s) you chose to not disclose your disability to your employer

- Concern for job security
- Concern for negatively influencing relationships with clients
- Concern for negatively influencing relationships with co-workers

- Concern for negatively influencing relationships with supervisor(s)
- Previous disclosure created problems
- No reason to or need for accommodation(s)
- Other, please specify

17. When did you disclose your disability to your employer? (e.g. interview, after starting work)

18. To whom did you disclose your disability? Check all that apply

- Supervisor(s)
- Co-worker(s)
- Other:

19. For what reason did you chose to disclose your disability? Check all that apply

- Need for additional time to complete job tasks
- Use of technology as an accommodation
- More detailed directions related to components of my job responsibilities
- To make co-workers aware of my disability
- To make supervisors aware of my disability
- Other, please specify

20. Have you ever experienced negative effects at your place of employment as a result of your disability status?

- Yes
- No

21. Please provide examples of negative effects at your place of employment:

22. Have you ever requested formal workplace accommodations?

- Yes
- No

23. Which, if any, of the following strategies or accommodations do you use in the workplace? Check all that apply

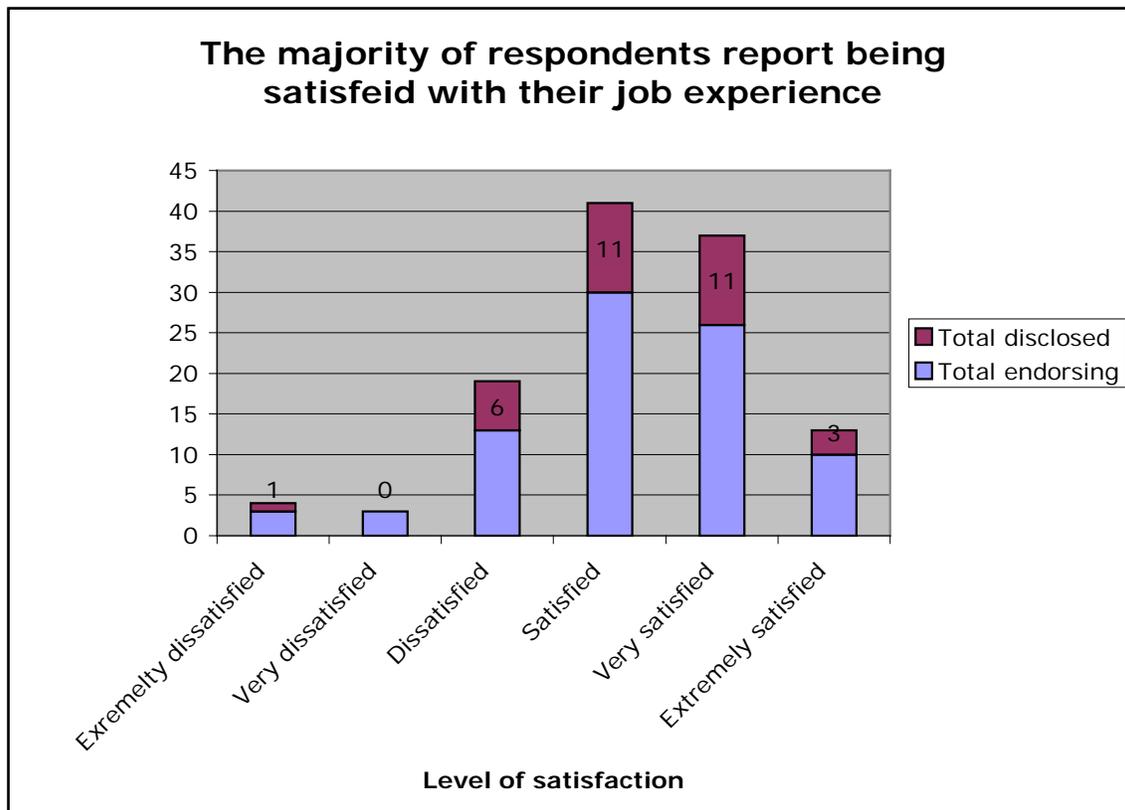
- Arrive early to work
- Assistive technology
- Delegation of difficult tasks
- Graphic organizers
- Problem solving/brainstorming
- Quiet work environment
- Use of proof-readers
- Self-advocating for job related needs
- Setting goals and priorities
- Stay late at work

- _____ Support from family/significant others
- _____ Time management
- _____ Time outside of work to complete tasks
- _____ Other:

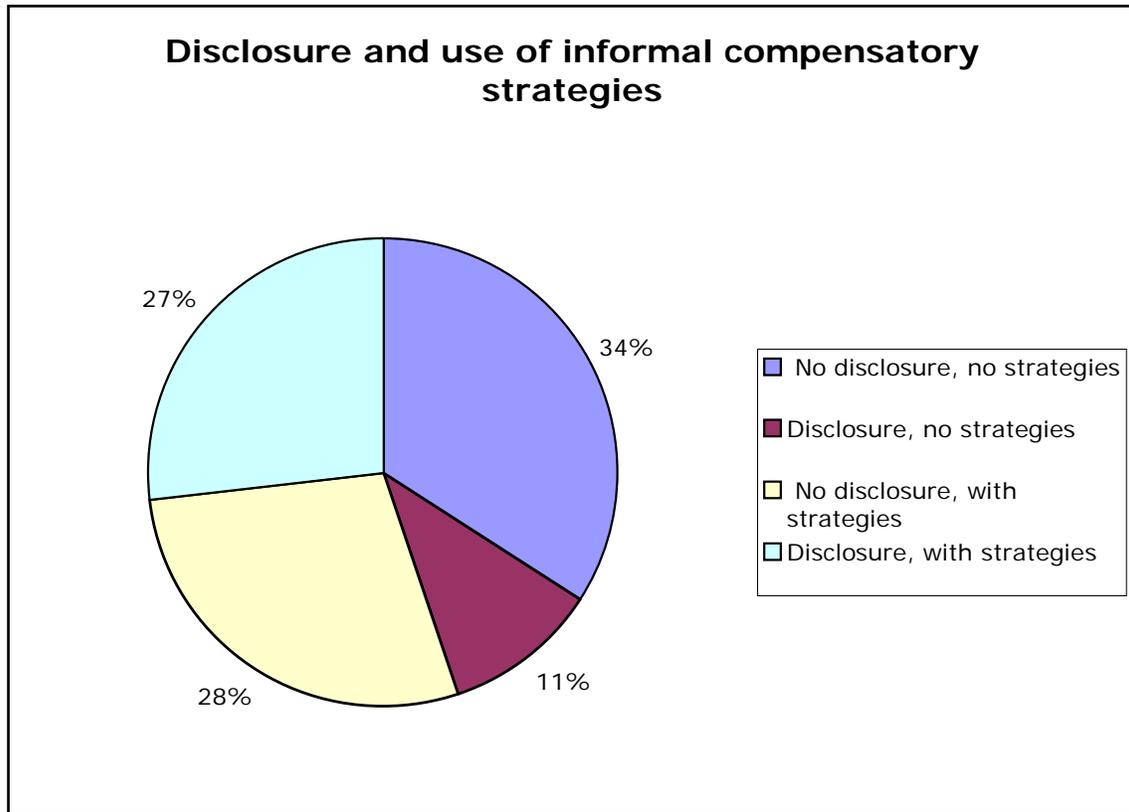
24. Indicate your level of satisfaction with your work experience so far:

- _____ Extremely dissatisfied
- _____ Very dissatisfied
- _____ Dissatisfied
- _____ Satisfied
- _____ Very satisfied
- _____ Extremely satisfied

Appendix B



Appendix C



Appendix D

