

Employment After Spinal Cord Injury: Relation to Experiences and perspectives of people with Paraplegia in Gaining and Keeping job in Bangladesh.

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ABSTRACT

Study design: Convenient, semi-structured face-to-face explorative type of interview.

Objectives: To explore the experiences and perspective of people with paraplegia regarding gaining and keeping a job in the community, following spinal cord injury. Specifically employer's attitude, physical accessibility, transportation, health and psychological issue.

Settings: Participant's house and CRP complex.

Method: Five participants who met the selection criteria: person with complete paraplegia, wheelchair user, normal upper extremity function, aged between 20-45 years, level of education, class V and above including 1 year and above post-injury.

Results: Among the five participants two were able to gain employment, two established self-employment, the remaining one participant continued studying at M.Sc level and trying for job. When they wanted to return to their previous job, all of the participants perceived difficulties in transportation, accommodation facilities, inaccessible wheelchair environment and work place discrimination in the general workplace. Later on two of the participants experienced a fully wheelchair accessible environment at their current office campus and that was a rehabilitation center. In addition, concerning employer's attitudes, two

participants came across a positive attitude, two participants experienced negative attitudes. One participant was an independent worker pre- injury, and after injury didn't try for any job. Depression is a vital barrier for returning to work. All of the participants perceived that there is no one who will protect their rights particularly in relation to work, wheelchair accessibility and transportation. Two participants have experienced that pressure sores and UTI are problems for continuing work. More over lack of job assistance, financial support, health and rehab supports at community level were also identified in this study.

Conclusion: On –the- job and self-employment were found to be very successful. Educational level plays an influential role into gaining and continuing work. In order to minimize the transportation, accommodation and work place discrimination, it is better to change the people's attitude towards people with paraplegia and establish self-employment.

Key words: paraplegia, vocational rehabilitation, attitude, employment, and physical barriers.