

Understanding a Strength-Based Approach in the Workplace: A Qualitative Study

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PURPOSE: To address a strength-based approach in the workplace and application to occupational therapy (OT). The approach 'builds upon the client's strengths, seeing the client as resourceful and resilient' (McCashen, 2005). This is important to explore as it has shown promising results amongst the population of individuals with disabilities (IDD).

DESIGN: Qualitative research investigated how participants with/without IDD experienced the organization's strengths-based approach. For a dual perspective (Diener, 2020) we recruited employees, employers, and a partner. Interviews were videoed for accuracy as some participants were limited speaking and data collection depended on gestured responses. Participants were selected upon longevity of employment.

METHOD: Initial data on the community partner was collected via interviewing the founder. Participant observation was used to build rapport. Semi-structured interviews were conducted via video/audio recording with 12 participants. Transcripts were analyzed using mixed method coding. Inductive coding was completed via NVivo to gather and identify emergent codes. Deductive coding was utilized using the Doing, Being, Belonging, and Becoming Framework (Wilcock, 1998) to organize sub-codes into major themes.

RESULTS: The study acclaims a need for further on the ground support. Major themes included (1) doing as performances completed, (2) being as intrinsic outcomes of participants engagement, (3) becoming as development of the organization/participants, and (4) belonging as the sense of inclusion/community.

CONCLUSION: The study contrasts existing literature that individuals with IDD face dead end jobs (Schur, 2022). Rather, strengths support a positive work environment where mutual value and growth are shared. OT can advance on the ground support via strength-based assessments to identify facilitators, barriers, and application. Implications emphasize the need for advocacy for inclusive workplaces that welcome diversity.

References

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