Disability disclosure simulation as an educational tool

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Background

* There are 3.8 million working age Canadians with a disability, but only 47% of them are employed
* Less than 1 in 5 people with a disability receive workplace accommodations
* It is important to understand how disclosure and accommodations are facilitated in the workplace to create more inclusive and productive workplaces

Objective

To explore participants experiences as they contributed to the development of building a simulation scenario as an educational tool for employers and managers

Methods

Design: qualitive focus group design with 2 simulation build sessions (2.5 hours each) facilitated by researchers certified in SIM-One simulation debriefing and facilitation

* First build session focused on disability awareness, disclosure discussions, creating inclusive environments and benefits of hiring people with disabilities
* 2nd build session: piloted the scenario with live actors who trained for their character roles

Sample: 7 employers and human resource personnel or hiring managers with experience in recruiting and hiring youth with disabilities

Results

Creating a comfortable and safe space for employees to disclose

* Themes: trust, removing stigma, personal biases, effective communication
* “for employers, it is what can you ask? Where can you build a safe space to talk about what you need? You can phrase it as, what do you need to be your best at work?”

How to ask employees or job candidates about disability

* Participants expressed concerns about legalities of what they could do while also considering the best way to set up the conversation.
  + The type and visibility of the condition often affected this.
  + “Often where it gets complicated is when we talk about disabilities…I think that’s the big difference, when it’s non-visible…whereas with the visible disability it is hard not to ask.”

How to respond to employees disclosure of a disability

* Many participants were unsure about how to respond when an employee or job candidate disclosed a disability or if they overshared medical information.
* Employers were “uncomfortable with someone disclosing toileting, medications or very specific procedures…there’s a sense of liability with this information.”

Reactions to the disability disclosure simulation

* Participants expressed overall positive reactions to the simulation
  + “I really enjoyed it…you bring a perspective that we don’t get to see. We’re on the employer’s side but we don’t get to see the job seeker’s side of it. You brought a really good window into that world.”

Limitations and future directions

* The sample was predominately female participants. Future studies should aim for greater gender diversity.
* Disability disclosure may vary by type of disability, cultural and workplace context.

Conclusions

Developing a simulation about disability disclosure discussions is a novel approach to educating employers and human resource managers that has the potential to help enhance diversity and inclusion in the workplace

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