

Career Wellbeing for Workers with Physical Disabilities: A Phenomenology Study

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Abstract

Career well-being is essential for activating adaptive readiness when facing challenges. It serves as a valuable tool in career development interventions, particularly in assisting workers in overcoming work-related difficulties, especially for those with disabilities. Therefore, the objective of this study was to explore the career well-being of disabled workers. This study employs a phenomenological qualitative approach. The sampling technique used was purposive, targeting workers with physical disabilities who have been employed by a company for at least 1 year and have completed at least junior high school education. Data collection involved semi-structured interviews conducted with 6 employees with physical disabilities. The findings reveal the following: (1) The career well-being of workers with physical disabilities can be categorized into three themes. Firstly, there's a positive emotional impact on their career situations, as they express gratitude and happiness for being accepted at work, fulfilling their aspirations. Secondly, these individuals find meaning in their career situations, deriving significance for themselves, their families, and their companies due to the trust and responsibility vested in them. Thirdly, the status of career networks and social support plays a pivotal role, as evident through their involvement with the FKDK community and within the company. (2) Additionally, the factors influencing the career well-being of workers with physical disabilities stem from both internal and external sources. Internally, self-motivation plays a vital role, whereas externally, support from parents, spouses, and the company contributes significantly. This study's findings provide a substantial contribution to the comprehension of career well-being among workers with physical disabilities.

Keywords: *Career Wellbeing, Employee, disability*

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Introduction

Disability is a term used to describe an individual's condition involving a disorder or damage that results in limited mobility or restricted participation in activities. This inability to move freely or engage fully is a negative consequence arising from the interplay of an individual's health condition, their environment, and personal factors (WHO, 2022). Disabilities can be categorized into two main models: the medical model and the social model. The medical model encompasses disabilities stemming from bodily or physiological impairments, while the social model refers to impairments that hinder an individual's participation in social activities. According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2022), the medical model disabilities are those involving physical or physiological damage, whereas social disabilities encompass challenges that hinder individuals in carrying out their social engagements. In the context of Indonesia, 'UU no. 8 of 2016 concerning Persons with Disabilities' defines persons with disabilities as individuals who experience long-term physical, intellectual, mental, and/or sensory limitations affecting their ability to fully and effectively engage in society, impeding their rights to equal participation.

In 2022, WHO reported a global estimate of approximately 1.3 billion people, or 16% of the total world population, living with disabilities. Additionally, data from the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) in 2020 indicated that around five percent of Indonesia's population, roughly 22.5 million people, have disabilities. These figures underscore the anticipated growth in the number of persons with disabilities in tandem with global and Indonesian population increases. Notably, individuals with disabilities constitute the largest minority group worldwide, with two-thirds of the 600 million people residing in developing countries, including Indonesia (Santoso & Apsari, 2017). Despite grappling with various challenges emanating from mobility, communication, socialization, learning, and other domains, individuals with disabilities frequently exhibit remarkable resilience. Many are not only integrated into society but also demonstrate their capacity to be productive, develop their talents, and achieve success in various fields. The Central Statistics Agency (BPS) data from 2019 indicates that approximately 45.9% of persons with

disabilities were employed in Indonesia. While this proportion is not yet optimal, it reflects the impact of regulations encompassing laws, government directives, regional policies, and other regulatory frameworks that govern the rights and opportunities of persons with disabilities.

Ensuring the rights of individuals with disabilities to work and achieve equality in various aspects is a fundamental concern. A cornerstone of this endeavor lies within the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, specifically Article 28, paragraph (2), which asserts, "Every person possesses the right to be free from discriminatory treatment on any basis and is entitled to protection against such discriminatory actions." Consequently, individuals with disabilities are entitled to be shielded from discrimination, and the state is entrusted with the responsibility of safeguarding them against any discriminatory practices.

Moreover, individuals with disabilities must navigate the challenges of adapting to work environments and colleagues who may possess varying abilities (Verulava & Bedianashvili, 2021). This adaptation can be particularly demanding for persons with disabilities, as their roles may demand specific skill sets. Individuals with disabilities are required to innovate their work methods and tailor their approach to tasks (Omar et al., 2021). Gottlieb, Myhill, and Blanck (2010) note that interacting with new colleagues compels individuals with disabilities to discover novel strategies for effective collaboration. Hence, they must creatively cultivate harmonious relationships and productive collaborations with their colleagues.

Furthermore, nurturing a positive work trajectory and harnessing their potential hinge on the career well-being of persons with disabilities. In the Indonesian legal framework, Law no. 8 of 2016 mandates that the government and society prioritize the welfare of all individuals with disabilities. A pivotal component of this well-being is career satisfaction, denoting contentment with one's professional life. This psychological state acts as a catalyst for constructive self-regulation during the process of career adaptation (Steiner & Spurk, 2019; Wilhelm & Hirschi,

2019). Coetzee's research (2021) underscores that career well-being activates adaptive readiness, even in the face of adversities. Consequently, career well-being emerges as a valuable tool in interventions for career development, particularly for individuals with disabilities, assisting them in surmounting the unique challenges prevalent in the realm of work.

Career wellbeing is a potential mechanism that not only supports career development in general but also holds significance for workers with disabilities (Verulava & Bedianashvili, 2021). People's career development constitutes a deep psychological need for personal growth and advancement, alongside the fundamental requirement for decent work that enables a meaningful contribution to society and an improvement in the basic economic living conditions for both individuals and their families (Coetzee & Schreuder, 2021).

Coetzee et al. (2020) formulated career well-being as a multidimensional concept encompassing three key aspects: positive affective career status, career meaningfulness status, and career networking/social support status (Coetzee, 2021). The positive affective career status of the individual client represents the hedonic subjective facet of career well-being. Within the realm of career well-being, eudaimonic elements are tied to individuals' psychological perceptions of career meaningfulness and self-efficacy in attaining social support within their careers (Coetzee, 2021).

Aligned with the arguments of Lent and Brown (2008), the foundational premise of career well-being posits that through the perception of being supported in goal achievement and career progression, coupled with the conviction of possessing social networks, resources, skills, and experiences necessary for engaging with chosen careers in an interesting, valuable, and meaningful manner, individuals foster a sense of purpose that resonates within their broader life context. This intrinsically positive socio-emotional psychological state represents a self-conforming

autonomous career motive, giving rise to an overarching sensation of career well-being (Coetzee, 2021).

Numerous studies have previously delved into career wellbeing; however, the focus has primarily been on employees in a general context (Aderibigbe, 2019). In a corporate setting, it is essential to recognize that not only regular employees but also those with disabilities hold the same rights to access decent job opportunities and lead fulfilling lives. With this rationale, this study aims to address the career wellbeing needs of minority employees, especially those with physical disabilities. Furthermore, while several studies have illuminated the positive functions associated with career well-being, an in-depth comprehension can be attained by employing qualitative methods to explore how career well-being manifests among workers with disabilities. Consequently, the study's inquiries are as follows:

- a) What is the nature of career wellbeing among workers with physical disabilities?
- b) What factors exert influence on the career wellbeing of workers with disabilities?

Method

Design

This study employs a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach. Phenomenology seeks to describe the general meaning of various life experiences, concepts, or phenomena from the perspective of multiple individuals (Creswell, 2015). The primary focus of this research is to address the question of how career well-being is perceived among workers with physical disabilities.

Participant Selection

A total of six participants were included in this study, selected through purposive sampling. Participants were chosen based on specific criteria: a. Individuals with physical disabilities b. Employed in a company for a minimum of 1 year c. Possessing a minimum education level of junior high school.

Participant Profiles

The study's participants were employed in for-profit companies across diverse sectors, including manufacturing, the cigarette industry, and shipping. They varied in terms of age, job roles, marital status, and years of service. The following outlines the profiles of each participant. Participant 1 (S1): 42 years old, high school education, 6 years of experience, frontliner and administration in the expedition business. Participant 2 (S2): 35 years old, high school education, production employee at a manufacturing company. Participant 3 (S3): 35 years old, high school education, 1 year of experience, employee of a cigarette company. Participant 4 (S4): 30 years old, high school education, 3 years of service, employee in a manufacturing company. Participant 5 (S5): 37 years old, high school education, 3 years of service, employee of a manufacturing company. Participant 6 (S6): 35 years old, high school education, 1 year of experience, employee of a cigarette company.

Data Collection

Prior to the interviews, all participants were informed about the research's purpose. Those who were willing to be interviewed completed an informant willingness form. Participants were assured that their participation was voluntary, and they could withdraw from the interview at any point without consequences. The interviews took place between March 3, 2023, and April 20, 2023, at various locations agreed upon with the participants. The interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. The interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview format.

Data Analysis

Data collection involved observation and in-depth interviews. To ensure research trustworthiness, the study employed triangulation, discussion, and reference materials, following Poerwandari's guidelines (2013). Content analysis was chosen as the data analysis method to gain a deeper understanding and interpretation of the meaning conveyed by respondents regarding the career well-being of workers with physical disabilities.

Result

After analysis, two important themes emerge: (1) The description of career wellbeing among workers with physical disabilities, and (2) the factors influencing perceived career wellbeing among workers with physical disabilities.

The interviews revealed a general understanding of the career wellbeing of workers with physical disabilities. In general, these individuals express gratitude for being accepted to work despite their limitations. Although laws provide opportunities for people with disabilities to work, not all companies can effectively implement these rules. Various descriptions related to the career wellbeing of workers with physical disabilities are based on aspects of career wellbeing, including.

a. Positive career state affect

This involves positive self-feelings related to one's career, autonomy, growth and advancement. These feelings are supported by the resources, skills, and experiences gained from a career, enabling sustainable and meaningful employment.

"I am grateful to be able to work, because with this job I can support my parents and my wife. From a young age I went to public schools so that I was confident in getting along with other normal people. Then when I was in high school, I decided to leave town for a special school for disabilities, which could be distributed directly to PMA companies." (S1)

Subject 1 is grateful for the opportunity to work at the company, as it allows them to contribute to their family's well-being. They developed a positive outlook from childhood, fostering the confidence to connect with others. They made informed educational choices, attending special schools that placed them in cooperating companies.

"I didn't expect to be accepted at the company, it's been a long time since I applied for a job here and there but no one called me, so before that I chose to be in the business of selling groceries. When I was accepted at the current company I was very happy, I was very satisfied because the welfare provided by the company was very good" (S2). "I just started working for this company, to be honest, at first I applied for fun but it turned out that I was called and accepted, I am very happy to be given the opportunity to work here". (S4)

Subjects 2 and 4 were taken aback by their acceptance into the company, given their past struggles to secure employment. Despite initially pursuing entrepreneurial endeavors, their happiness grew upon receiving better welfare benefits and stability from the company.

"I am very happy to be able to work at the current company because working hours do not take up much, even though there is a feeling of dissatisfaction because I have not been appointed as a permanent employee" (S3). I have been working for a company in Jepara for a long time, I am very happy to work for that company, because the salary is quite large but I am a bit constrained by the distance from home, so maybe if there is a job closer to home I will try to leave the company at this time"(S6)

Subject 3 and 6 are experiencing high levels of job satisfaction due to favorable working conditions, including good benefits and expected working hours. However, there are still aspects of their current jobs that leave them dissatisfied, notably the ongoing issue of low employee status, along with the considerable commuting distance from home to the company.

a. The state of career meaningfulness

Positive eudaimonic feelings about a willingness to work and careers to be meaningful, interesting, useful, valuable and contribute to a larger purpose in life.

“I feel grateful because I can be a person who is useful and beneficial to the family even though I have a deficiency like this but thank God I was able to send my mother's pilgrimage. Previously I worked for a company in Jakarta, then my parents asked me to change jobs, so I chose to leave and look for a job near where I live, and thank God, now I can work close to my parents, so I can still make money and also take care of my parents. (S5). Yes, I do, I feel very happy, yes, because of the process of my life which started independently, with my work, what is the term, my efforts went there and with my frustration, as I said. So when I was able to work at SAMI I was very happy because I could be independent and able to support my own family, not depend on my parents”. (S3)

Subjects 3 and 5 believe they contribute meaningfully to their families and the environment through their work. This allows them to provide for their families and achieve greater independence without relying on others.

“Yes, I also feel that I am also given authority or responsibility, right? It means there is more value from the superiors, it means there is a plus value, oh, it means I have progress, I can teach other friends, that's a new term. The comfort is that I have been entrusted by my superiors, so there is responsibility, so it's a joy in itself. Previously, I used to be close to my boss, so it made it easier for me to be even more enthusiastic about working”(S2).

Subject 2 felt very happy because he could contribute to his company, the subject felt that by being empowered he could contribute more and be able to help his other friends.

b. Career network status/social support becomes meaningful:

Feelings of eudaimonic self-efficacy regarding the ability to establish and gain support for achieving self-appropriate autonomous career goals from social networks or communities.

“As time went on, I got more information from friends with disabilities who had formed an FKDK (Holy Disability Community Forum) group, so I got to know Pak Rismawanto earlier, he is the chairman. After joining, there was information from a large company at PT Jepara, namely PT SAMI Jepara. (S2). I'm embarrassed to leave the house, but I've known FKDK for a long time, so I'm even more grateful because there are many people with disabilities who are worse off”. (S3)

Subjects 2 and 3 felt that they benefited from joining the FKDK community (Holy Disability Community Forum), because by joining the community subject 2 received information about work and subject 3 had more confidence.

Factors affecting the career wellbeing of workers with physical disabilities

Certain recurring themes emerge regarding the factors impacting career wellbeing among workers with physical disabilities. One prevalent factor, articulated by six participants, revolves around external elements such as external support systems significantly shaping their career satisfaction. Within this category, family support—encompassing spouses and parents—echoes in the accounts of five individuals (S1, S2, S4, S5, S6).

Additionally, external factors from the organizational sphere intersect with career wellbeing for these workers. The testimonies of all six subjects (S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, S6) underline corporate elements, including provisions for individuals with disabilities and operational processes (mentioned by S1, S2, S3, S5), along with leadership support, a sentiment unanimously conveyed by the six participants.

Moreover, the dynamics of relationships with colleagues emerge as influential components in the career wellbeing experiences of workers with physical disabilities, as revealed by participants S1 and S3.

Furthermore, an internal dimension adds depth to the factors shaping career wellbeing among these workers. These personal factors are pivotal as they shape an individual's perception of their work and future career aspirations. Internal factors hold significance as they intrinsically motivate individuals, serving as their primary driving force. This intrinsic motivation is epitomized in the following manner:

“Give encouragement to yourself so you can be independent, don't bother other people, if you can help people, don't let them help you like that..(S3); I motivate myself more to always work hard so I can save up for business capital later” (S2).

The influence of supporting resources, both personal and external, is felt to be important for the six subjects of workers with physical disabilities.

Discussion

Career wellbeing refers to the ongoing positive experience and feelings associated with one's career within a specific career situation (Coetzee, 2021; Coetzee, Ferreira, & Potgieter, 2021; Kidd, 2008). It often reflects how an individual assesses their relationship with the organization. When career wellbeing is present, individuals enjoy their work, feel confident about future career prospects, and recognize how their work aligns with their life goals.

Interview results regarding the career wellbeing of workers with physical disabilities reveal three dimensions identified by Coetzee et al. (2020): (1) Positive affect on career conditions: Subjects express gratitude for being accepted at their workplace despite their physical limitations, fostering enthusiasm and loyalty. (2) State of career significance: Workers find meaning in their lives and demonstrate their value to their families and companies despite doubts about their abilities. (3) Career network status/social support: Joining support communities enhances self-confidence and reduces psychological challenges in addressing career issues (Di Fabio & Kenny, 2012; Jiang, 2017). Factors impacting the career wellbeing of workers with physical disabilities can be categorized as external and internal. External factors, including family support, particularly from spouses and parents, significantly influence career wellbeing. Steiner & Spurk's research (2019) emphasizes the interconnectedness of career wellbeing with non-work domains like family, urging consideration of their wellbeing. Company-related factors, such as facilities for disabled individuals and work

relationships, also influence career wellbeing. Organizational support correlates with higher perceived career wellbeing (Sawitri, Parahyanti, & Soemitro, 2013).

Research by Mpofu et al. (2019) aligns with these findings, highlighting the reciprocal nature of career wellbeing. Positive career wellbeing and job performance reinforce each other, resulting in better work adjustments and opportunities for growth. Individuals excelling in their roles often receive recognition and rewards, further enhancing their career wellbeing.

Envisioning future-appropriate career wellbeing involves crafting narratives about self-employment, embracing change, and seizing professional opportunities. Workers with disabilities possess equal rights despite skepticism about their abilities (Omar & Chowdhury 2021). Encouraging and instilling confidence in them can lead to valuable career wellbeing, benefiting their present and future lives.

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Declaration of interest statement

This research can serve as a valuable reference for organizations aiming to enhance the development of workers with physical disabilities while ensuring compliance with relevant laws and regulations. By comprehending the impact of job descriptions and various factors on the career well-being of these workers, organizations can better design targeted interventions within their development programs. It's important to note that this study's participant pool is limited, suggesting potential for future expansion to include a larger and more diverse group for a more comprehensive perspective.

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