

The direct and indirect role of physical activity on employment among individuals with disabilities

What is this study about? This scoping review explores the direct or indirect role of exercise in employment among individuals with disabilities?

Exercise is thought to contribute to better health-related outcomes. But little is known about whether exercise is associated with employment and work-related outcomes.

What did we do?

Searched 6 databases to identify studies that fulfilled the following inclusion criteria:

- **Study design:** quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods design
- **Outcomes:** employment rate, occupational performance, work competence, productivity at work.
- **Participants:** persons with physical disability from different age groups

We Found 23

papers met the inclusion criteria.
3243 participants included in the studies: youth and adults **65%**, youth **22%** and adolescents **13%**
Gender distribution was **57%** men vs. **43%** woman

Direct Measures

- **7** studies examined associations between sporting/exercise modalities and employment.
- Participation in wheelchair rugby, and basketball mitigated mobility impairments and was associated with **4%** increase in likelihood of employment.
- A positive relationship was found between physical fitness (aerobic, anaerobic and muscular endurance) and gainful employment in persons with spinal cord injuries

Indirect Measures

- **16** studies reported on physical fitness, social functioning (participation), self-efficacy as a result of exercise, sports or recreational activities.
- **Occupational performance:** physical independence, mobility, self-care skills, transportation
- **Physical fitness:** aerobic and anaerobic fitness, agility, muscle strength/endurance, flexibility, weight management
- **Psychological well-being:** self efficacy, sense of belongings, sense of accomplishments

Conclusion

- Challenges in terms of increasing employment chance for persons with disabilities is ongoing.
- Our finding shows that sporting/exercise modalities have a direct and indirect role on employment for persons with disabilities.
- Knowledge derived from this scoping review can assist vocational program professionals to consider sporting/exercise to a greater extent, than in the past