IPRPD
International Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences
ISSN 2693-2547 (Print), 2693-2555 (Online)
Volume 07; Issue no 11: November 2026
DOI: 10.56734/ijahss.v7n11a1

BEYOND CURRENT EFFORTS: A CRITICAL LOOK AT REDUCING DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION

Eunhye Choi, Ph.D.[1]

[1]*Assistant Professor, St. John's University*

Abstract

This study examined current efforts to address discrimination against individuals with disabilities. Participants were asked to complete the survey to provide examples of any ongoing relevant initiatives and assess each initiative on its effectiveness, beneficence, and continuance. The findings indicated thirteen major themes in participants' responses: Accessibility; Accommodation; Awareness/Advocacy; Content Reading; Equity; Inclusive Education; Employment; Legislation; Media Representation; Open Discussion; Perception/Attitude; Technology; Training. The study underscores a pressing need to continuously monitor, reassess, and readjust current efforts to address disability discrimination, and to apply a critical evaluation to each initiative in terms of effectiveness, beneficence, and continuation moving forward.

Keywords

Disability Discrimination, Critical Reflection, Effectiveness, Beneficence, Continuance

Introduction

Individuals with disabilities are challenged by discrimination socially and occupationally (Lindsay et al., 2023). They also encounter difficulties in accessing equitable educational opportunities (Duncan et al., 2020). To address those challenges, there have been efforts to promote the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in the workforce and education (Schloemer-Jarvis et al., 2022; Bines & Lei, 2011). Significant societal changes regarding discrimination cannot be achieved through a single or a few efforts. It is important to review current efforts critically and proactively plan next steps to achieve meaningful change. Therefore, the current study goes deeper into ongoing initiatives to address disability discrimination and aims to systematically identify key themes and critically examine their impact in benefiting individuals with disabilities. To address these research questions, the study employed a survey to elicit participants' critical reflection on ongoing efforts to address disability discrimination in terms of effectiveness, beneficence, and continuance; in other words, the efficacy of these initiatives in reducing disability discrimination, how much they benefit individuals with disabilities, their strengths and weaknesses, and whether they should be continued.

Methods

Fifty-eight individuals consented to participate and provided survey responses. Participants were predominantly aged 18-24 (77%), followed by those aged 25-34 (16%), 35-44 (5%), and 45-64 (2%). In the breakdown by gender, 91% were female while 9% were male. Participants consisted of 65% white/Caucasian, 16% Hispanic, 7% Black/African American, 10% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 2% Other. Of the participants, 53% were non-disability stakeholders, 45% were disability stakeholders, and 2% preferred not to respond.

This study sought to critically analyze ongoing initiatives to reduce discrimination against individuals with disabilities. The survey was developed and used to examine perspectives on the effectiveness of these initiatives in reducing disability discrimination, the extent to which they benefit individuals with disabilities, their strengths and weaknesses, and whether they should be continued. Questions included: What are some examples of efforts that aim to reduce discrimination against individuals with disabilities? There were sub-questions for each example participants provided: To what extent do you believe this effort e is effective in decreasing discrimination against

individuals with disabilities? To what extent do you think individuals with disabilities are benefiting from this effort? To what extent do you think that this effort should be continued? The "example" questions were open-ended, while the "extent" questions were 5-point Likert scale items (4 = A Great Deal, 3 = Much, 2 = Somewhat, 1 = Little, 0 = Never). Survey data were analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively to examine whether any themes emerged in participant responses.

Results

Participants provided 131 examples of efforts to address disability discrimination and rated their effectiveness, beneficence, and continuance on a 5-point Likert scale. According to the findings, 13 themes were identified in the participants' responses: Accessibility; Accommodation; Awareness/Advocacy; Content Reading; Equity; Inclusive Education; Employment; Legislation; Media Representation; Open Discussion; Perception/Attitude; Technology; Training.

Accessibility was identified through participant statements including "Making public places accessible to individuals with disabilities" and "mandates that public places, such as restaurants, hotels, and government buildings, be accessible to people with disabilities." Accommodation was identified through participant statements including "Setting up an accommodation process for individuals with disabilities to voice their needs and have accommodations implemented in a given setting/environment (e.g., school, workplace, healthcare facilities)" and "making sure there are reasonable accommodations for disabilities to be able to participate and engage with other individuals without disabilities". Awareness/advocacy was identified through participant statements including "A disability awareness training session being available to increase awareness and understanding of disabilities" and "Advocacy for certain disabilities". Content reading was identified through participant statements including "assigning reading content" and "books". Employment was identified through participant statements including "People with disability get priority for a job interview" and "Giving more working positions to those who have disabilities". Equity was identified through participant statements including "Allowing them to have equitable opportunities." and "making adjustments to policies, practices, and environments to ensure equal access to education for students with disabilities". Inclusive education was identified through participant statements including "Providing students with an IEP and inclusive classroom" and "incorporating students with disabilities into general education classrooms". Legislation was identified through participant statements including "The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)" and "The Rehabilitation Act of 1973". Media representation was identified through participant statements including "more positive and accurate representation of individuals with disabilities in media and public life." and "Positive representation in the media". Open discussion was identified through participant statements including "Talking about disability" and "openly talking about disabilities in a positive light and not as something that holds people back". Perception/attitude was identified through participant statements including "never judge" and "reduce stigma". Technology was identified through participant statements including "Providing assistive devices or software, such as screen readers, ergonomic keyboards, or magnification software" and "using accessible technology, like screen readers and voice recognition software". Training was identified through participant statements including "Staff, parent, and family workshops" and "preparing teachers with strategies to reach all students even if they have a disability".

Identified themes are ordered from most to least frequent: Inclusive education (18.32%); Legislation (16.03%); Awareness/advocacy (15.50%); Employment (11.40%); Accommodation (8.63%); Perception/Attitudes (7.63%); Accessibility (6.87%); Content Reading (3.82%); Open discussion (3.82%); Equity (3.05%); Media Representation (2.29%); Technology (2.29%); Training (2.29%).

The overall mean scores for all initiatives were 3.33 (Effectiveness), 3.32 (Beneficence), and 3.56 (Continuance), indicating that participants had a positive perception of current efforts to address disability discrimination, with 4 being the highest rating.

Mean scores for each theme are as follows:

Accessibility (Effectiveness = 3.40, Beneficence =3.60, Continuance = 3.60)
Accommodation (Effectiveness = 3.36, Beneficence =3.54, Continuance = 3.72)
Awareness/Advocacy (Effectiveness = 3.39, Beneficence =3.39, Continuance = 3.56)
Content Reading (Effectiveness = 2.40, Beneficence =2.00, Continuance = 2.60)
Equity (Effectiveness = 3.33, Beneficence =3.17, Continuance = 3.67)
Inclusive Education (Effectiveness = 3.43, Beneficence =3.48, Continuance = 3.57)
Employment (Effectiveness = 3.23, Beneficence =3.46, Continuance = 3.69)
Legislation (Effectiveness = 3.19, Beneficence =3.05, Continuance = 3.48)
Media Representation (Effectiveness = 3.33, Beneficence =2.33, Continuance = 4.00)
Open Discussion (Effectiveness = 3.40, Beneficence =3.20, Continuance = 3.20)
Perception/Attitude (Effectiveness = 3.45, Beneficence =3.36, Continuance = 3.55)
Technology (Effectiveness = 3.33, Beneficence =3.67, Continuance = 4.00)

Training (Effectiveness = 4.00, Beneficence =4.00, Continuance = 4.00)

The mean effectiveness score for each theme can be ranked as follows: Training(4.00); Perception/Attitude(3.45); Inclusive Education(3.43); Accessibility(3.40); Open Discussion(3.40); Awareness/Advocacy(3.39); Accommodation(3.36); Equity(3.33); Media Representation(3.33); Technology(3.33); Employment(3.23); Legislation(3.19); Content Reading(2.40).

The mean beneficence score for each theme can be ranked as follows: Training(4.00); Technology(3.67); Accessibility(3.60); Accommodation(3.54); Inclusive Education(3.48); Employment(3.46); Awareness/Advocacy(3.39); Perception/Attitude(3.36); Open Discussion(3.20); Equity(3.17); Legislation(3.05); Media Representation(2.33); Content Reading (2.00).

The mean continuance score for each theme can be ranked as follows: Media Representation(4.00); Technology(4.00); Training(4.00); Accommodation(3.72); Employment(3.69); Equity(3.67); Accessibility(3.60); Inclusive Education(3.57); Awareness/Advocacy(3.56); Perception/Attitude(3.55); Legislation(3.48); Open Discussion(3.20); Content Reading (2.60).

Discussion

The findings indicated that current efforts to address disability discrimination spanned 13 thematic approaches: Accessibility; Accommodation; Awareness/Advocacy; Content Reading; Equity; Inclusive Education; Employment; Legislation; Media Representation; Open Discussion; Perception/Attitude; Technology; Training.

The most frequently identified efforts were inclusive education, legislation, awareness/advocacy, and employment. This indicates that such initiatives could be the most widely known as well as implemented approaches to address disability discrimination. Likewise, to address attitudes towards people with disabilities, disability awareness initiatives are employed (Lindsay & Edwards, 2013). Various attempts exist to foster inclusive employment (Bonaccio et al., 2020). The Americans with Disabilities Act (1990) and the Rehabilitation Act (1973) serve as legal safeguards against disability discrimination. Yet, there is a necessity to respond to the growing demands of recent years and implement strategies to safeguard these emerging needs. The acknowledged efficacy and benefits of inclusive education encourage the continuation of these efforts (Kramer et al., 2021).

However, these approaches, except for inclusive education, were not ranked highest in effectiveness, beneficence, and continuance. This indicates the need to reassess the current efforts regarding disability discrimination and find ways to improve. Moreover, the overall mean scores for all initiatives were above 3, indicating that participants had a positive perception of current efforts to address disability discrimination. Notably, the findings reveal a pattern in which, on many occasions, participants perceived that initiatives should continue more boldly than they did, given their effectiveness or beneficence. This might suggest that initiatives are being carried out or encouraged without adequate evaluation of their effectiveness or benefits. Meanwhile, this also implies that people still acknowledge the necessity to continue efforts to tackle disability, even though putting these efforts into practice is challenging.

Training, perception/attitudes, and inclusive education were seen as more effective, whereas content reading was considered less effective. Training, technology, and accessibility were more often perceived as beneficial, while content reading and media representation were less so. Media representation, technology, and training were identified as areas that strongly need to be continued, while content reading was less likely to be seen as necessary to continue.

Content reading was ranked as the lowest. Content reading here could imply giving individuals access to resources for viewing. Nevertheless, this process is not mutual, but inputting information one way, while addressing disability discrimination could be not only about learning about it but also actively responding to it. Consequently, this approach appears neither effective nor beneficial, and it warrants no continuation; thus, it indicates that efforts to address disability discrimination require more than mere knowledge.

In particular, there was a significant discrepancy between effectiveness and beneficence in media representation. This indicates that while media representation initiatives may be perceived as effective, they do not necessarily benefit individuals with disabilities, highlighting the need to revisit current media representation initiatives. Misrepresented media portrayals can perpetuate disability stigma (Goethals et al., 2022), thus implying the need for careful reassessment and adjustment, incorporating the findings of the current study.

Training was perceived most positively in terms of effectiveness, beneficence, and continuance. This is substantiated by the active application of training across various professional environments, including educators (Bialka et al., 2024) and healthcare professionals (Rotenberg, 2022). Meanwhile, media representation and technology were also considered as strongly needed areas for continued effort. However, cautious interpretation is warranted, as the number of responses in these categories, including training, media representation, and technology, was relatively small and may not reflect a widely held opinion. Also, the study was limited because participants

were disproportionately drawn from specific genders, ethnicities, and age ranges, which may not represent a broad cross-section of the population and may reflect certain demographic groups' perspectives. However, the study included a similar number of non-disability and disability stakeholders; therefore, it could still be generalized to both groups.

In conclusion, the study has identified 13 distinct themes of effort: Accessibility; Accommodation; Awareness/Advocacy; Content Reading; Equity; Inclusive Education; Employment; Legislation; Media Representation; Open Discussion; Perception/Attitude; Technology; Training. Although these efforts were widely acknowledged and employed approaches, they are not necessarily widely perceived as effective, beneficial, or worth continuing, which necessitates reassessing current efforts regarding disability discrimination and finding ways to enhance them. Moreover, overall, continuance was scored higher than effectiveness and beneficence, which may suggest that efforts could be carried out without adequate evaluation of their effectiveness or benefits; therefore, critical evaluation is necessary. The study also points out a pressing need to revisit efforts related to content reading and media representation. Finally, it underscores the vital necessity to continuously monitor, reassess, and readjust current efforts to address disability discrimination, and to apply a critical evaluation to each initiative in terms of effectiveness, beneficence, and continuation moving forward.

Reference

Bialka, C. S., Hansen, N., Kan, I. P., Mackintosh, D., & Jacobson, R. (2024). From deficit to difference: Understanding the relationship between K–12 teacher training and disability discussion. *AERA Open*. https://doi.org/10.1177/23328584241245089

Bines, H., & Lei, P. (2011). Disability and education: The longest road to inclusion. *International Journal of Educational Development, 31*(5), 419–424. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2011.04.009

Bonaccio, S., Connelly, C. E., Gellatly, I. R., Jetha, A., & Martin Ginis, K. A. (2020). The participation of people with disabilities in the workplace across the employment cycle: Employer concerns and research evidence. *Journal of Business and Psychology, 35*(2), 135–158. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10869-018-9602-5

Duncan, J., Punch, R., Gauntlett, M., & Talbot-Stokes, R. (2020). Missing the mark or scoring a goal? Achieving non-discrimination for students with disability in primary and secondary education in Australia: A scoping review. *Australian Journal of Education, 64*(1), 54–72. https://doi.org/10.1177/0004944119896816

Goethals, T., Mortelmans, D., Van den Bulck, H., Van den Heurck, W., & Van Hove, G. (2022). I am not your metaphor: Frames and counter-frames in the representation of disability. *Disability & Society, 37*(5), 746–764. https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2020.1836478

Krämer, S., Möller, J., & Zimmermann, F. (2021). Inclusive education of students with general learning difficulties: A meta-analysis. *Review of Educational Research, 91*(3), 432–478. https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654321998072

Lindsay, S., & Edwards, A. (2013). A systematic review of disability awareness interventions for children and youth. *Disability and Rehabilitation, 35*(8), 623–646. https://doi.org/10.3109/09638288.2012.702850

Lindsay, S., Fuentes, K., Tomas, V., & Hsu, S. (2023). Ableism and workplace discrimination among youth and young adults with disabilities: A systematic review. *Journal of Occupational Rehabilitation, 33*, 20–36. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10926-022-10049-4

Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, 42 U.S.C. §§ 12101–12213 (1990).

Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504, 29 U.S.C. § 794 (1973).

Rotenberg, S., Rodríguez Gatta, D., Wahedi, A., Loo, R., McFadden, E., & Ryan, S. (2022). Disability training for health workers: A global evidence synthesis. *Disability and Health Journal, 15*(2), 101260. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dhjo.2021.101260

Schloemer-Jarvis, A., Bader, B., & Böhm, S. A. (2022). The role of human resource practices for including persons with disabilities in the workforce: A systematic literature review. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 33*(1), 45–98. https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2021.1996433

.