Hearing loss and work participation

STUDY RESULTS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR REHABILITATION

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«The difficult parts are projects or work tasks that entail a lot of coordination between departments and locations and video meetings. It doesn’t work well... What follows is a lot of guessing... I have been in all kinds of settings with hearing impairment, and have thought that I do not want to experience them again»

Male, 30-45, severe hearing loss
Background

- Prevalence: 5% of the world population (WHO, 2017)
- In Norway: 11% of the age group 45-64 (Engdahl, 2015)
- Low educational attainment (Emmett & Francis, 2015)
- Increased un-/underemployment (Emmett & Francis, 2015; Jung & Bhattacharyya, 2012)
- Increased risk of low income (Emmett & Francis, 2015; Jung & Bhattacharyya, 2012)
- Increased risk of disability pension (Helvik, Krokstad & Tambs, 2013)
- High prevalence of exhaustion (Nachtegaal et al, 2009; Kramer, Kapteyn & Houtgast, 2006)
- More troubled by background noise (Hua et al, 2013; Kramer, Kapteyn & Houtgast, 2006)
Hearing loss and work participation in Norway

Elucidating participation and displacement factors

- Survey among persons of working age with hearing loss
  *Hearing loss and work participation: a cross-sectional study in Norway. Svinndal, Solheim, Rise and Jensen, 2018*

- Interview study among employees with hearing loss

- Interview study among managers supervising employees with hearing loss
Survey results

EMPLOYMENT AND GENDER

- Employment rate: 76.6% (74.3%)
- In women
  - Severity of hearing loss associated with employment rate and part-time work
  - Higher prevalence of sick-leave
  - Lower workability scores
  - Higher hearing disability and fatigue scores

WORKPLACE ACCOMMODATION

- Increased prevalence with increased severity of hearing loss
- 31% in need of accommodation without receiving it
- Increased likelihood
  - Part-time workers
  - Seniority >8 years
  - Sick-leave >8 weeks last 12 months
  - Low workability score
Trajectories and phases of acknowledgement

PRE-ACKNOWLEDGEMENT PHASE
From time of onset of hearing loss until acknowledgement of the impact the hearing loss has on life

ACKNOWLEDGMENT PHASE
Slow transition process where knowledge on the impact of hearing loss is gained

POST-ACKNOWLEDGEMENT PHASE
Maintenance of positive accommodation processes or stabilising of unfavourable working conditions
Workplace conditions

Personal conditions

Service provider conditions

Workplace
- Oral-aural demands
- Flexibility
- Involvement

Services
- Access
- Extent
- Proficiency

Personal
- Knowledge
- Strategies
- Attitude
Facilitators in the trajectories

- Acknowledging attitude towards hearing loss
- Shared responsibility for implementing measures
- Access to a wide range of professionals and to peers
- High degree of flexibility at work
Manager experiences

- Positive inclination and social responsibility
- Hearing loss as a minor difficulty
- Expect the employee to know which measures to take
- Mainly temporary accommodation measures
- Support is not requested
## Implications for rehabilitation

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<th>WORKPLACE</th>
<th>SERVICE PROVIDERS</th>
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<td>Fatigue prevention through early measures</td>
<td>Extended services</td>
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<td>Improved access to knowledge</td>
<td>Hearing loss knowhow in occupational health services</td>
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<td>Involving all stakeholders (employee, colleagues, manager)</td>
<td>Vocational enablement protocol for hearing loss</td>
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«I put a lot of effort into attending courses – including mindfulness - I attended practically oriented courses regarding assistive devices. I desperately craved something that could help me have a better everyday life. I joined all kinds of Facebook groups to see how other people were trying to cope. The sum of all of that and that I was granted one treatment day per week, as well as receiving physiotherapy – all of that is the reason that I can manage»

Female, 46-55, moderate hearing loss, severe tinnitus