

Predicting the Return to and the Maintenance of Paid Employment Post-stroke: A
Systematic Review and Meta-aggregation of Data.

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A meta-aggregation of data concerning the predictors of returning to and the maintenance of paid employment post-stroke, was completed after following an MSc course in collaboration with Plymouth University. This MSc course was funded by the Tertiary Education Scholarship Scheme at MFED.

This research project initially discussed how stroke has been affecting approximately 2 million young adults (18-65 years) annually. As a result, these persons' everyday lives were impacted and in certain circumstances also led to the loss of paid employment. This loss affected these persons', their families', and their society's wellbeing. Hence, there is an urging need to consider resumption of work, in such conditions. This research project also acknowledged the fact that re-employment can only be considered as successful if stroke survivors manage to maintain an employment position for a long period of time.

In attempt to analyse such an important topic, a search for previous publications discussing predictors influencing a stroke survivor's ability to return to, and maintain, paid employment, was conducted between April and May 2021. This literature search included both database specific and hand (reference and grey literature) searches, and yielded a total of 3,495 studies, of which only fourteen met the criteria of this review. The included studies, presented qualitative results, were published in English over the past 10 years (2012-2021). They involved participants who survived a stroke at the ages of 18-65 years and explored factors concerning the resumption and maintenance of paid employment. Data included in these fourteen studies was then extracted and synthesised in accordance with the JBI approach to qualitative synthesis.

The data synthesised in this review, outlined multiple interacting factors which clinicians should consider in post-stroke rehabilitation. The stroke survivors need to possess; intrinsic motivation to improve, external support, work adaptations and access to rehabilitation services to return-to and maintain work. Additionally, those survivors who conserve their driving abilities would more likely return-to-work, whereas those who have access to disability friendly transport services typically maintain their employment positions for longer. Conversely, a limited provision of rehabilitation services and post-stroke symptoms (cognitive, speech and endurance impairments) limit the return-to and the maintenance of work post-stroke. Finally, dependence on social security benefits and the loss of driving abilities also restrict the survivors' abilities to return-to-work.

These research findings can help clinicians, particularly Occupational Therapists to formulate their treatment plans when caring for young adult clients who survived a stroke, and also exposed an important field of research which could be analysed in greater depths in the future.