

"That Smart Pen Sounded Like it Could Be Pretty Helpful:" A Thematic Analysis on Using Wireless Technology in the Workplace

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Abstract

- Employment is a major part of an adult's identity and plays a significant role in creating a stable life environment (Chen, 2015).
- Individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities (IDD) are not an exception.
- Employment creates many of the same benefits for adults with IDD as it does for other working adults: increased self-worth, perceived self-worth, and social partnerships (Cavkaytar, 2017).



- As adults with IDD enter or remain in the workforce they may desire support in order to enhance their success at their place of employment (Arthanat, 2016).

- Workplace support for adults with IDD varies dramatically depending on the needs of the employee, the supervisor, accommodations (flexible breaks, a service animal), or assistive technology (Arthanat, 2015).



Background

What is Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE)?

CIE is work performed by a person with disability within an integrated setting. Wages are at least minimum wage or higher and at a rate comparable to workers without disabilities performing the same tasks.

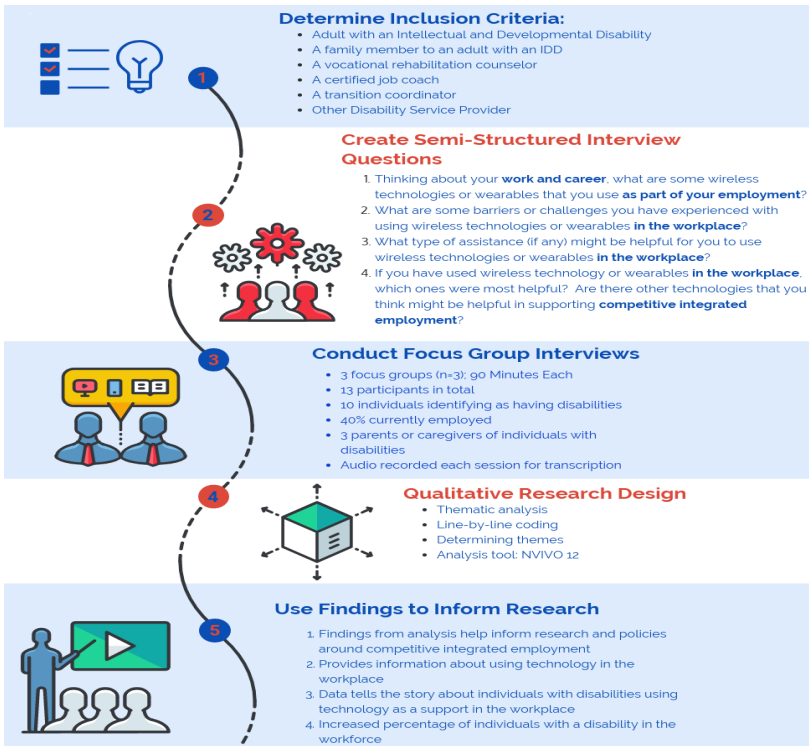
Why is CIE Important?

Competitive integrated employment positions provide *customized* employment and workplace support to meet the specific abilities of the individual with a disability as well as the business needs of the employer.

Research Question:

Can the use of wireless or wearable technologies facilitate **competitive integrated employment** for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities? What type of technology is being used? Is this technology

Research Methodology



1. Open the QR Code reader on your phone.
2. Hold your device over a QR Code so that it's clearly visible within your smartphone's screen.
3. Use a QR reader to scan the code for a text document. Use the text to speech feature to have the contents of this poster read to you.



Findings

Theme: Challenges + Barriers to using technology in the workplace

- Breaking / No longer working
- Technology not allowed / Not supported in the workplace
- WiFi connection slow or not working
- Not sure how to use technology

Privacy concerns

Theme: Assistance with using technology

- Assistance from family / caregiver
- Assistance from tech support
- Assistance from someone at work

Self-Assist

Theme: How would you classify yourself?

Tech Savvy

- Some tech know-how
- Infrequent user of tech

Theme: Type of technology used in the workplace

Wireless technology examples

Uses of tech in the workplace

Wearable technology examples

Table 1. Common themes from focus group sessions.

1. "Electronic pens can work in hospitals with patients that have multiple symptoms, disorders, that can help in the hospitals and in the workplace."
2. "Which puts some people at a great disadvantage where they could be a better worker if they could utilize it."
3. "I'm thinking employers, some of them being willing and understanding of the need for these things so that people are able to do their best job and are being supported."
4. "Depending on the level of their disability or comprehension, some of the things [are hard to understand]... I don't have a disability, but I'm confused."
5. "Bose has the noise canceling headphones or the noise blockers. [It can] tune out all the noise around you so that people can work and not deal with distractions."
6. "Just like identity theft and all that kind of stuff, it can happen to an individual with special needs as well."
7. "I can be hired but I still need this device because it's part of my life."
8. "That's \$75 for the whole month, so cost."
9. "I use [technology] probably 50% of the time."
10. "I'm technically savvy."

Figures 1 to 10: Quotes from focus group participants.

Conclusions

One method of support that can facilitate and maintain successful employment is assistive technology.

Where do we go from here?

- Educate and influence fiscal dollars
- Support development of new technologies
- Increase awareness surrounding technology in the workplace
- Improve access and use of wireless technologies