



Exploring the Link between Resilience, Self-Efficacy, and Employment Outcomes in Physically Disabled Individuals

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Abstract

Employment remains a difficult challenge for people with physical disabilities. This challenge is composed of barriers such as structural shortcomings and long-standing prejudices in society. These barriers, both evident and hidden, exist worldwide. They often push people with disabilities to the edge of economic participation. In this social environment, academic discussions are now turning toward psychological resources. These resources include self-efficacy and resilience, especially in context of better work outcomes. Self-efficacy shapes how people start and continue job-search efforts. Resilience helps them face rejection and uncertainty while maintaining emotional well-being. This review studies how both these psychological constructs influence labor market experiences of disabled individuals. It draws on psychological theories, empirical findings, and policy literature. Using this base, it builds a conceptual framework. This framework explains how these traits connect with actual employment paths of individuals. The paper also highlights gaps in existing research. It emphasizes the need for context-aware and holistic interventions that connect psychological growth, skill development, and inclusive labor policies. By integrating these resources into broader system of reforms, we can reshape the employment landscape. This change can offer not just access, but also real power to individuals with physical impairments.

1. Introduction

The employment environment remains a difficult domain for job-seekers with physical disabilities. Complex structural and attitudinal barriers in society make it difficult. In both developed and developing countries, people with disabilities face many such barriers. These barriers prevent them from finding, entering, and keeping up decent work. The adversities appear in both visible and invisible forms. The visible form includes non-friendly infrastructure. The invisible forms include



unsupportive employers, limited workplace accommodations, and social exclusion. Therefore, disabled workers contribute less to the labor market compared to their non-disabled counterparts. Their lower contribution creates hard-to-break spirals of social exclusion and eventual poverty (Ordway et al., 2020; Marwaha & Anand, 2019). However, psychological resources such as resilience and self-efficacy also influence this varying contribution to the labor market. Academic and policy-oriented discussions have increasingly focused on this role of resources in persisting social inequalities. Here, self-efficacy acts as a crucial attitude of people that influences their work behaviors. It refers to a belief that an individual holds in his or her own capability to perform tasks and achieve certain outcomes.

Self-efficacy reinforces behaviors like making efforts to search for a job. It also helps in surviving adversities at workplaces. Moreover, it builds a long-term orientation towards growth (Guo et al., 2022). The perception of resilience complements this attitude of self-efficacy. Resilience refers to an individual's ability to respond adaptively to challenges. It promotes flexibility to handle rejections in the right spirit. It also helps people stay emotionally stable during long periods of uncertainty or transition. In addition, resilience enables individuals to bounce back from failures (Masten & Reed, 2002; Patra, 2021; Kim et al., 2023). Together, both attributes create a strong psychological bond for individuals with physical disabilities. This bond protects them from external limitations. As a result, they gain better access to opportunities and can sustain their participation in work (Ordway et al., 2020; Samsari & Soulis, 2019). This review analyzes how resilience and self-efficacy are associated. It also examines how these traits influence the career trajectories of physically disabled individuals. Furthermore, it explores key aspects of these attributes to reconceptualize employment outcomes for this population. Our review covers a wide range of interdisciplinary empirical research, psychological theory, and policy literature related to physical disabilities.

The review follows a clear structure. Section 2 introduces the conceptual foundations of self-efficacy and resilience. It also presents key definitions and theoretical perspectives (Masten & Reed, 2002). Section 3 outlines systemic and environmental barriers that affect people with



disabilities in the workplace around the world. Section 4 explores the psychological relationship between the two constructs. Section 5 reviews earlier empirical research (Adigun & Ndwandwe, 2022; Aderele, 2023). Section 6 presents a conceptual model that positions self-efficacy and resilience as predictors of employment outcomes. The paper concludes with policy takeaways, practical guidance, and emerging directions for future research and programmatic work (Shochet et al., 2022).

2. Understanding the Core Constructs

For individuals with physical disabilities, meaningful engagement in the labor market demands more than just accessible infrastructure. They also need strong internal psychological mechanisms. Self-efficacy and resilience play a key role in influencing a person's ability to adapt. These traits help individuals maintain effort. They also support the pursuit of long-term goals despite challenges (Ordway et al., 2020).

2.1 Self-Efficacy: Foundational Constructs and Employment Implications

Self-efficacy comes from the Social Cognitive Theory of Albert Bandura. He emphasized that belief in one's capability lies at the core of being human as an agent. Bandura postulated that self-efficacy plays a critical role in influencing motivation, decision-making, and behavior. Four main sources help develop and enhance self-efficacy. These are mastery experiences (achievement of particular tasks), social modelling (observation of others), verbal persuasion (encouragement and feedback), and physiological and emotional states (internal states of confidence or stress). Together, these sources shape a person's self-perceived ability to manage tasks, especially when the tasks become challenging. We can conceptualize self-efficacy at two levels. General self-efficacy refers to a broad belief in one's ability to manage a wide range of situations. Domain-specific self-efficacy (Bandura) relates to the confidence to perform specific tasks, such as in school, social relationships, or workplace roles (Guo et al., 2022). For individuals with physical disabilities, self-efficacy becomes a highly significant concept. Functional limitations, long-term stigma, and environmental barriers can gradually reduce belief in



one's self-efficacy (Samsari & Soulis, 2019). In contrast, empirical studies show that disabled individuals with strong self-efficacy often show greater persistence in job-seeking, a stronger problem-solving mindset, and higher chances of achieving stable employment (Ordway et al., 2020). Therefore, building self-efficacy remains essential for both psychological well-being and career-related outcomes in this group (Patra, 2021).

2.2 Resilience: Conceptual Models and Vocational Utility

Resilience often refers to the ability to recover or bounce back after difficulties. It plays an important role in how people respond and adapt to the ongoing trials of life (Masten & Reed, 2002). However, resilience goes beyond just bouncing back. It involves continuously maintaining or regaining mental health. It also includes striving toward personal goals despite long-term difficulties (Adigun & Ndwandwe, 2022).

One of the influential models in resilience theory is Richardson's Resilience Model. This model presents resilience as a continuous reintegration process over time between challenged and non-challenged states. The framework outlines four reintegration response patterns that individuals engage in after exposure to stressors. These are: dysfunctional reintegration, reintegration with loss, reintegration with recovery, and reintegration with resilience. The last one is the ideal situation. In this case, people not only bounce back but also grow stronger and build resilience.

Measurement instruments such as the Connor–Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC) add empirical depth to this theoretical base. This tool is widely used in disability-related research. It measures resilience across domains like acceptance, optimism, and confidence when individuals face challenging situations (Kim et al., 2023).

Resilience plays a decisive role in emotional adaptation and job continuity. It serves as a crucial trait that helps individuals endure the stress caused by physical limitations. Here, individuals who show higher resilience also exhibit greater psychological flexibility. They respond better to discrimination and rejection in employment arising from their physical limitations (Aderele, 2023). These individuals habitually treat setbacks as lessons to



preserve motivation. This habit helps them stay committed to pursuing long-term professional goals.

2.3 Synthesis: An Interacting System of Self-Belief and Recovery Capacity

Self-efficacy and resilience work together because of their complementary nature. These traits form a psychological blend in which self-efficacy helps individuals build a sense of activity. It also strengthens their belief in their own abilities. Resilience, on the other hand, maintains this sense of activity in them. It holds the belief steady during phases of adversity or uncertainty (Shochet et al., 2022). Modern labor environments are complex and highly discriminatory. Such environments lead to universal inequalities in employment for physically disabled individuals. But the psychological blend of self-efficacy and resilience offers a foundation. This foundation helps in discussing those inequalities (Marwaha & Anand, 2019).

3. Employment and Disability: A Global Overview

We continue from the earlier discussion on self-efficacy and resilience. Now we consider the disturbing gap in employment outcomes. This gap exists between individuals with physical disabilities and their non-disabled counterparts. Our society still faces this gap. It continues even as the global focus on inclusion and accessibility in employment increases. Individuals with physical impairments show lower participation in the labor force. Their participation remains less than half in several national contexts when compared to the general population. Differences in individual capacity contribute to this disparity. Deep-rooted socio-cultural biases also create obstacles. Structural challenges further block equal access to work.

Infrastructural limitation creates a major challenge here. People often neglect this issue. This limitation includes a lack of physical modifications. Many workspaces, transport networks, and public buildings do not support the mobility needs of individuals. These places fail to address mobility constraints. As a result, the physical environment stops participation. This happens even when individuals are well-qualified and highly motivated. Limited potential is not the issue. The environment itself causes exclusion and makes individuals feel unintentionally left out.



Similarly, another deep-rooted problem demands urgent consideration. This problem is workplace discrimination. The discriminatory attitude of society affects hiring decisions. It also shapes recruitment filters and employee retention strategies. This attitude often comes from both explicit biases and implicit assumptions in society. Patra (2021) explains that employers often carry incorrect notions. These notions are about the abilities or output potential of individuals with physical disabilities. Not just employers, colleagues may also unintentionally contribute. They may engage in exclusionary behavior or show limited empathy. This further deepens the feelings of isolation among such employees. Another issue adds to this isolation. There is a disconnect between the specific capacities of disabled individuals and the design of mainstream skill-development programs. A major reason for this disconnect is linked to vocational training. These initiatives frequently overlook differences in learning preferences. They also ignore the aspirations and support needs of employees. As a result, individuals with physical limitations face unstable employment. Many also face persistent underemployment. Some even remain excluded from formal work settings for long durations (Adigun & Ndwandwe, 2022; Aderele, 2023).

In several instances of discrimination, the exclusion of external structure is often accompanied by internal psychological burdens. Individuals often try to cope with such discrimination arising from constraints such as lack of consistent social support, feelings of internalized stigma, reduced self-esteem, and a diminished sense of control. These emotional and cognitive constraints do not evolve in seclusion. Instead, prolonged institutional disregard shapes them. Repeated exposure to inaccessible environments also shapes them. Subtle forms of prejudice add to this effect (Ordway et al., 2020). These constraints collectively span multiple domains. They affect physical, psychological, and educational spheres. They also influence social circles. Together, they form a complex disadvantage matrix. This matrix restricts employment opportunities for individuals with physical disabilities. Solving these constraints requires more than surface-level infrastructural changes. It also needs more than basic policy reforms. At this point, psychological elements become crucial. Self-efficacy and resilience play key roles. These elements help individuals endure, adapt, and reimagine their professional paths (Masten & Reed, 2002; Guo et al., 2022;



Kim et al., 2023). The following sections will explore these psychological elements in greater depth.

4. Psychological Determinants of Employment Among Physically Disabled Youth in India

The link between a person's inner psychological strengths and their employment outcomes is not simple. It does not follow a straight path. Instead, this connection reveals itself through several interconnected layers of influence. Among individuals with physical disabilities, two traits stand out. These traits are self-efficacy and resilience (Ordway et al., 2020; Patra, 2021). They help individuals navigate the employment environment. These traits not only help them secure a job. They also support their ability to stay employed. They help them adjust to changing work situations over long periods (Kim et al., 2023; Guo et al., 2022). This part of the discussion examines how both traits matter. It explores their isolated and combined effects. It focuses on how these traits affect the job-related experiences of people with physical disabilities.

4.1 Self-Efficacy and Employment Outcomes

Self-efficacy plays a vital role. It shapes how individuals engage with employment opportunities. Individuals who believe in their own abilities face work-related challenges with confidence. They stay calm under pressure. They consistently put effort into building new skills. They adjust to evolving job roles. This belief in one's capacity to succeed drives steady job-seeking behavior. This kind of persistence holds special importance for individuals with disabilities. These individuals often experience repeated rejection during the employment process (Aderale, 2023). Higher levels of self-efficacy show a strong link with increased job stability. These levels also support flexibility in workplace environments. Individuals who exhibit strong self-belief adapt more easily to organizational change. They also pursue long-term career growth (Samsari & Soulis, 2019). Ordway et al. (2020) observed this clearly. Self-efficacy affects how people interpret challenges in their professional lives. Those with higher self-efficacy assess difficult situations more effectively. They also find productive responses. This makes self-efficacy a central factor. It supports both achieving and maintaining long-term employability.



4.2 Resilience and Career Adaptability

Resilience plays a crucial role. It works alongside self-efficacy to shape the outcomes of an employment environment. Self-efficacy may prompt individuals to pursue job opportunities. Resilience supports emotional strength during ongoing challenges. This trait becomes especially important for people with physical disabilities. They frequently face systemic barriers, inaccessible workplaces, and both hidden and explicit biases. Individuals who carry strong resilience tend to view setbacks as short-term obstacles. They do not treat them as permanent defeats. This attitude helps them avoid emotional fatigue. Repeated rejection or exclusion often causes such fatigue (Masten & Reed, 2002). Their mental adaptability and emotional strength stay closely linked to career adaptability. Career adaptability means the ability to stay productive. It also includes maintaining goals and responding effectively in unpredictable or changing work environments (Adigun & Ndwandwe, 2022). Radovanovic et al. (2020) highlight this clearly. Resilience helps individuals enter the labor market. It also supports continued participation in meaningful work over time.

4.3 Synergistic Effect of Self-Efficacy and Resilience

A combination of self-efficacy and resilience significantly shapes employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities. People believe in their own abilities. They show emotional strength when they face adversity. This emotional strength helps them handle the specific challenges of disability in professional life (Patra, 2021; Guo et al., 2022). They often adopt coping strategies. These strategies focus on finding solutions. They maintain persistence during long periods of job searching. They also adapt well to changing work environments (Shochet et al., 2022). Marwaha and Anand (2019) explain this approach. It promotes greater job satisfaction. It builds stronger connections with workplace culture. It also gives a clearer sense of the individual's role and identity at work. They explain that resilience and self-efficacy together enhance personal control. This combination strengthens the individual's ability to adjust to challenges. In turn, it boosts psychological caliber.



Individuals with this caliber stop treating disability as a limitation. Instead, they begin to see it as a starting point for personal and career development.

5. Conceptual Framework: Linking Psychological Strengths to Employment Outcomes

This section presents an integrated model. It is based on the theoretical discussions and empirical findings described earlier. The model explains how self-efficacy and resilience together influence employment outcomes for persons with physical disabilities. It includes key psychological traits, enabling support systems, environmental influences, and eventual job-related results. This structure supports future research. It also helps in designing inclusive employment strategies (Ordway et al., 2020; Samsari & Soulis, 2019). Self-efficacy and resilience form the core of this model. These are two important psychological strengths. They shape employability. According to Guo et al. (2022), self-efficacy helps individuals pursue job opportunities. It enables them to set goals that are both realistic and aspirational. It also builds confidence in dealing with workplace challenges. In contrast, resilience provides emotional stability. It allows individuals to bounce back from difficulties. It helps them stay committed after failures. It also encourages them to continue working toward long-term career goals. Findings from Masten and Reed (2002) support this observation.

Each psychological resource holds value on its own. However, they create a stronger impact when combined. Together, they produce a psychological boost. This becomes especially important in workplaces where people face discrimination. It also helps when physical and social barriers continue to exist (Patra, 2021). The model in this study highlights a key point. It emphasizes the importance of linking internal psychological strengths with real employment outcomes. Several key elements support this connection. Vocational training programs build job-specific skills. Educational growth opens up wider professional possibilities. It also improves long-term career prospects (Aderale, 2023).

Supportive social environments play a major role. These include mentoring, peer support, and an inclusive workplace culture. These factors help individuals build confidence and adapt more effectively (Shochet et al., 2022; Adigun & Ndwandwe, 2022). At the same time, this framework



includes several influencing factors. These factors can either enhance or reduce the impact of resilience and self-efficacy. For example, individuals often face functional challenges. The severity of physical disability affects how effectively they perform work-related tasks. Social perspectives also influence workplace experiences. The way society views disability shapes this. Cultural attitudes and social narratives play a role. These factors continue to affect how open and accessible workplaces feel to people with disabilities. Considering these context-specific influences helps the model. It becomes more effective in addressing inequalities. It also improves how policies and institutions support inclusion in diverse settings (Marwaha & Anand, 2019). The framework outlines three key outcomes related to employment. The proposed framework connects various concepts. It offers both conceptual clarity and practical steps for real-world application. This framework provides a strong base. Researchers can use it to test hypotheses and conduct long-term studies. Policymakers can use it to design targeted policy measures. These measures support individuals with physical impairments in improving employment outcomes. The model also promotes interdisciplinary collaboration. It links psychological ideas with educational programs, local community involvement, and larger socio-political factors in a unified manner.

6. Policy and Practical Implications

Psychological strengths like self-efficacy and resilience are now widely seen as essential. They help improve the employability of people with physical disabilities. However, these qualities do not usually develop on their own. Their growth often depends on the surrounding policy and institutional systems. These systems either support or restrict individuals in daily life (Ordway et al., 2020). To truly reduce employment-related barriers, we need a combined strategy. This strategy includes building up individuals' inner psychological resources. It also involves transforming the broader social and structural systems. These systems impact their chances of finding and keeping meaningful jobs.

Inclusive workspaces are a key priority. This matters when designing policies and practices that support enabling environments for individuals with disabilities. Employers must understand the diverse skills and contributions of people with physical impairments. At the same time, they should



receive active support. This support should help them challenge long-held biases. Such biases often lead to unfair recruitment patterns. To make workplaces truly inclusive, institutions must provide practical support. This support includes accessible infrastructure, disability-friendly technologies, and inclusive HR frameworks. Without these provisions, well-intentioned efforts may fall short. They may end up limiting the abilities they aim to empower.

Career training and vocational development programs must change. They need to go beyond one-size-fits-all approaches. These initiatives must adopt disability-sensitive designs. They should reflect the diverse needs of individuals with physical impairments. Standardized modules do not work anymore. They often miss the specific challenges that this group faces (Adigun & Ndwandwe, 2022; Guo et al., 2022). To become effective, these programs must use adaptable teaching methods. They should include activities that build confidence. They must also offer mentorship that mirrors real-world experiences. Programs implemented in this way improve job readiness. They also strengthen psychological resilience and self-belief (Patra, 2021). This alignment supports individuals. It helps them connect their personal strengths with suitable career opportunities (Ordway et al., 2020).

Employability programs must include mental health support. Yet, real-world policies often overlook this aspect. Emotional exhaustion, isolation, and internalized stigma reduce motivation. These factors also lower the aspirations of individuals with disabilities who pursue employment (Shochet et al., 2022). Counseling services should be easily accessible. Group-based therapy and planned resilience-building activities also play an important role. These strategies improve their chances of securing and retaining jobs. Such approaches help individuals regulate emotions. They also help them learn adaptive coping mechanisms. These supports keep them motivated during long periods of job hunting. They also help during challenging transitions at the workplace (Masten & Reed, 2002). Employability is not only about skills or available opportunities. It also needs a system-wide response. This response must include psychological resilience, inclusive environments, and supportive structures. Ordway et al. (2020) and Samsari and Soulis (2019)



highlight this clearly. Sustainable employment for persons with physical disabilities depends on this kind of integrated and collaborative approach.

7. Conclusion and Future Directions

This review highlights the crucial role of psychological assets like self-efficacy and resilience. These traits influence the employment trajectories of persons with physical disabilities. These are not peripheral traits. In fact, they often act as key enablers. They empower individuals to access work opportunities. They also help them sustain participation. These assets support individuals as they navigate systemic obstacles. They also help them face societal prejudices and inaccessible environments (Ordway et al., 2020). Both theoretical perspectives and empirical studies now offer increasing support. These studies suggest that nurturing personal belief and adaptive coping skills improves employment outcomes. This improvement is especially relevant for this historically underserved group (Masten & Reed, 2002; Patra, 2021; Guo et al., 2022). Yet, some significant gaps still remain in the literature. Scholarly interest in these psychological constructs has grown. Even so, many studies rely on cross-sectional approaches. These studies often focus on limited geographic or socio-economic contexts. They rarely capture the lived realities of individuals in low- and middle-income nations. In those contexts, structural barriers become even more severe (Aderale, 2023). Furthermore, current research still lacks longitudinal investigations. Few studies assess the long-term impact of targeted programs that aim to strengthen self-efficacy and resilience in disabled populations (Shochet et al., 2022). To advance the field and bridge the persistent knowledge gaps, several strategic directions need deeper attention.

First, future inquiry should use longitudinal and intervention-driven methodologies. These studies can trace how constructs like self-efficacy and resilience unfold over time. They can also examine how these traits relate to sustained employment and career progression (Samsari & Soulis, 2019). Second, for interventions to have real impact, they must align with the specific socio-economic and policy contexts. These are the conditions in which individuals with physical disabilities navigate daily life. This is especially true in underrepresented regions like the Global South.



Third, psychological support should not stand alone. It must integrate into vocational training, job-preparedness programs, and inclusive labor frameworks. As Kim et al. (2023) emphasize, such hybrid models can cultivate environments that build both internal strength and systemic access.

By embedding psychological insights into larger socio-economic initiatives, key stakeholders can shape a better labor ecosystem. Educators, employers, policymakers, and rehabilitation experts all play a part. Together, they can build systems that are not just inclusive, but also empowering in a sustained and meaningful way (Ordway et al., 2020; Radovanovic et al., 2020).

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