Influence of social welfare and the pensions system in work and access to employment by people with disabilities

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Abstract. Background: The population of people with disabilities (PWD) in Spain, according to available data reveals high rates of unemployment (20.34%) and, more alarmingly, a low rate of paid work within this collective at 35.5%. One of the possible causes of this low level of work may be related to the receipt of allowances that would seem to have an inhibiting effect on employment.

Specific aims: The aim of this project was to investigate the effects of receiving an allowance on work and employment in PWD. We also studied compatibility between non-contributory allowances and work.

Method: This involved working with a sample of 2,259 PWD nationwide, these mainly being men (57.61%). The methodology used was both quantitative and qualitative.

Findings: The study results showed that people who receive an allowance, whether contributory or non-contributory, reveal unemployment rates higher than in the remainder of PWD. Similarly, recipients of allowances are mainly inactive while PWD not in receipt of an allowance are mainly active.

Discussion: While the pension system is necessary, this must be very flexible in compatibility with the job and be accompanied by incentive measures for access.

Keywords: Disability, employment, benefits, allowances [pensions], activity

1. Relationship between disability allowance programs and participation in the labor market

The increase in the labor force participation of people with disabilities (PWD) on the ordinary labor market may be closely related to the benefits and allowances planned by the various public systems. Gruber [8] analyzed the relationship between the disability benefit programs and participation in the labor market. It focused on the US system’s public program, known as Disability Insurance (DI), which provides income to people who are not qualified to go on working due to a disability. This definition of disability leads to difficulty in determining whether a worker is genuinely disabled. A great many studies indicate problems in determining disability [19, 20, 23].

The flexibility of participation in the labor market might be influenced by an increase in allowances. This parameter is difficult to estimate in the context of the USA, since all beneficiaries receive exactly the same allowances. To get round this problem, Gruber [8] studied two different DI programs in Canada, one relating to Quebec and the other relating to the rest of Canada. Gruber found that there is a significant relationship between
labor force participation and the different welfare polici-
ies (differences in the DI programs).

Autor and Duggan [2] attempted to investigate the
impact of disability allowances in the labor force made
up of workers with few skills between 1978 and 1998
in the USA. 1984 brought a liberalization of the de-
finite of disability which was reflected in reform of
the system. Burkhauser and Daly [4] show that this
liberalization was reflected in an increase in people
receiving disability benefits. In the 80’s, there was a
reduction in the rate of employment for this group,
due to a downturn in the economic expansion of the
USA. Autor and Duggan [2] point out that there were
two types of workers able to apply for disability ben-
efits, one as a result of suffering illness and the other
due to loss of employment. The latter had to choose
between looking for a new job or applying, instead, for
a disability allowance. Liberalization of the definition
of disability in 1984 was reflected in a 60% increase in
the number of people receiving Social Security Disability
Insurance.

Conversely, Kaye [14] argues that the increase in
benefits and the reduction in employment rates among
PWD occurred due to an increase in the severity of
the injuries leading to disability. DeLeire [7], and Ace-
mgolu and Angrist [1], however, attribute this fall in
employment rates to The American with Disabilities
Act in the 1990s (ADA).

Burkhauser et al. [5] used data from the Cross-
National Equivalent File relating to the employment and
use of the government’s transfer program for working-
age workers with disabilities in three modern industrial
economies with quite different social institutions (Aus-
tralia, Great Britain and Germany) and compared them
with the same population in the USA using the Cur-
rent Population Survey (CPS) data. The results showed
that, long term, employment falls and dependence on
government transfers increases in workers with dis-
abilities in the USA, yet this has not occurred in
Germany, England and Australia since at least the 1990’s.

These data [5] cannot be explained by the severity
of the injuries or the underlying health of working-
age PWD in the USA, but by the changes that have
occurred in the Social Institutions. One possible expla-
nation could be due to the 1990 ADA.

The ADA extends the protection of civil rights
against the discrimination of PWD at work. The ADA
symbolizes an explicit effort to change the goals of
disability policies in the USA beyond the system of
transfers for PWD who are outside the labor market
towards sustained employment of PWD. The law tries
to remove barriers at work, and thus proposes that PWD
should have more freedom to choose a job than to
receive disability benefits. Burkhauser and Daly [3]
suggested that, in spite of these efforts, the biggest
impact of the government’s policy on PWD is based
on two transfer programs: Social Security Disability
Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income
(SSI). What is more, circumstantial evidence suggested
that the ADA may not improve employment oppor-
tunities for PWD. During the decade of the 90’s, the
employment rate of working-age PWD fell and benefits
increased.

Similarly, Acemoglu and Angrist [1] studied the con-
sequences of employment protected under the ADA.
Estimates of the effects suggest that the ADA leads to
fewer contracts for PWD, but does not affect levels. In
addition, there is little evidence of the impact of the
ADA on people without disabilities. The authors sug-
gest that the consequences of the ADA are limited to a
protected group.

Houtenville and Burkhauser [9] replicated the effects
found by Acemoglu and Angrist. They found a reduc-
tion in the rate of employment of working-age people
after the ADA. However, they do not put the law down as
a cause, but point to the 1984 legislation which extended
the medical definition of disability used in the different
social protection programs (SSDI and SSI).

DeLeire [7] proposed “The Unintended Conse-
quences of the Americans with Disabilities Act
Regulation” to explain the effects produced by the
ADA. Economists believe that DeLeire’s proposal
predicts that when workers’ wages fall, either wel-
fare benefits rise or the number of jobs goes down
in response to the increase in the minimum wage.
In this respect, the ADA reflects “The Unintended
Consequences of the Americans with Disabilities Act
Regulation”. The ADA was passed to remove barriers
to PWD in terms of employment and to require employ-
ors to take adaptive measures. However, the law led to
a reduction in jobs for workers with disabilities.

According to DeLeire, the costs involved in adapting
to workers with disabilities led to a lack of interest by
companies. The explanation, from the point of view of
economists, is that if you raise the price of a good or
service, people will not buy it as much. Similarly, if
a worker costs a company more, it will take on others
in his place. DeLeire believes in introducing changes
into politics, for example, creating tax-free credits for
workers with disabilities or doing away with income
tax for these workers.
2. Employment situation of PWD in Spain

Preliminary national studies on the labor force participation of PWD have been carried out by bodies responsible for social policy such as IMSERSO, in which aspects of welfare protection were explored, or by organizations representing PWD (such as ONCE, for example) focused on certain aspects of disability. On the other hand, no research has been carried out by the public bodies responsible for employment policies [16].

According to the Instituto Nacional de Estadística (National Statistics Institute) [12], the Encuesta sobre Discapacidad, Autonomía personal y situaciones de Dependencia (EDAD) produces alarming figures on the low rate of employment in PWD. Whereas 35.5% of PWD have a job, the rate is 81.98% in the general population [13]. Women with disabilities are seriously disadvantaged compared with men, as their rate of unemployment is ten points higher [12].

There are various studies showing that being both a woman and disabled leads to double discrimination [6, 17].

The data categorized by sex in the Encuesta sobre Discapacidad, Autonomía personal y situaciones de Dependencia [12] show that 2.30 million women claim to be disabled compared with 1.5 million men, and that, moreover, these rates are higher among women in the over-45 age brackets and among men in the under-44 age brackets. On the other hand, those without a disability who are not the main breadwinners are less likely to participate compared with other combinations of position in the family with or without a disability. Similarly, according to the sources already cited, the unemployment rate among PWD is 20.34% compared with 9.63% for the rest of the population. To be specific, PWD related to sight and hearing apparently show the highest rate of activity and lowest rate of unemployment. Equally, the authors justify their study in the Andalusian community, using the EDDS [22].

Along the same lines, Malo and Pagán [18] explored the effects of having a disability on the rate of employment in the Andalusian community, using the EDDS [10] data source for this. This community is typical in that it reflects the highest rates of disability among those of working age. Equally, the authors justify their study due to the regional structuring through the autonomous communities of the Welfare State. In this research, they used a neoclassical model of participation in the labor market which postulates that a person’s decision to work is based on the comparison between the wage offered on the labor market and their reservation wage. The results showed that a negative effect is produced by the disability on the likelihood of having a job. This result arises from the interaction between the disability and the receipt of welfare benefits. At the same time, it depends on factors such as the type of disability, it being more likely that a person with a sight-related disability or who is able to get out of the house will enter the labor market. In the same way, the more severe the disability, the poorer the levels of health and the more disabilities
a person has, the less likely they are to form part of the working population in the Andalusian community [18].

These authors state that one measure for resolving this problem might be found in the economic policy of the various communities. In the case of Andalusia, the Plan de Acción Integral para las Personas Discapacitadas en Andalucía [Comprehensive Action Plan for People with Disabilities in Andalusia] (2003–2006) examines various measures to increase employment in PWD via self-employment or working for someone else, through education and professional qualifications, as well as through consulting services, training and technology that foster people’s integration into working life, the elimination of physical barriers and the fight against discrimination [18].

In addition, they point out a relevant aspect not considered by legislation, namely designing passive policies based on the transfer of income that do not discourage PWD from seeking and holding down a job. In this respect, it would be important to implement legal amendments enabling PWD to get their allowance back if they fail to obtain a job or lose one. The cooperation of employers would also be important with regard to work-related complaints.

These results have implications for future policies for employing PWD. Policies must be designed that compensate for the additional difficulties that PWD have in doing housework and relating to other people. Similarly, attention must be paid to the negative effect associated with the types of sources of household income without reducing benefits. It is a case of redesigning the terms under which PWD receive allowances so that when the integration into working and social life of PWD breaks down, the person does not lose their allowance.

3. Approach

The PWD population in Spain shows high rates of unemployment at 20.34% [12] and, more alarmingly, a low rate of paid work within this collective at 35.5%. One of the possible causes of this low level of work may be found in the receipt of allowances that would seem to have an inhibiting effect on employment. Although Law 8/2005 [15] makes it possible to make non-contributory allowances compatible with employment, are we still seeing low levels of work and high rates of unemployment in PWD? The aim of this project was to investigate the effects of receiving an allowance on work and employment in PWD based on the quantitative and qualitative methodology.

Two hypotheses were considered based on this main aim:

- There is an inverse relationship between receiving an allowance and having a job. In other words, having an allowance will inhibit access to employment.
- There is an inverse relationship between receiving an allowance and actively seeking a job. As a result, the fact of receiving an allowance will be connected with not seeking employment.

4. Quantitative methodology

4.1. Procedure

Two different tools were used to develop the aims of the project. Quantitative data were gathered on the one hand, and qualitative data on the other. In order to obtain quantitative data, a questionnaire was designed for evaluating the impact of the Spanish social welfare systems on access to employment by PWD. This questionnaire covered the basic aspects of the research (Contributory allowance (CA), Non-contributory allowance (NCA), job, employment, reasons for unemployment and compliance with Law 5/2005).

A wide range of organizations working with PWD in Spain were contacted (ASPACE, CAE, CNSE, COCEMFE, DOWN, FADEMGA, FEAFES, FEAPS Andalucía, FEDACE, FIAPAS, Trévol Project). The questionnaire was sent out by e-mail or by post for distribution to the various associations, and from these in turn to their users. The completed questionnaires were sent back to the Instituto de Integración en la Comunidad (Institute on Community Integration) (INICO), where the data were collected and analyzed.

4.2. Description of the sample for the quantitative study via the social welfare questionnaire

We obtained a total sample of 2,259 PWD who were users of the different federations. The sample included a slightly higher number of men (57.61%) than women (42.39%). However, the EDAD [12] data show a markedly higher number of women with disabilities than men (2.30 million women compared with 1.55 million men).
The sample was spread, by age brackets, between the intermediate age brackets of 26 to 45 years (41.6%) and the youngest participants (40.91%), with the group of older people forming the least number of participants (17.43%). With regard to the degree of handicap, those with a degree of handicap of between 65 and 74% are the most frequent users (45.8%), followed by the group of between 33 and 64% (38.1%), and finally, those with a degree of handicap of more than 75% (16.1%). Of the total sample of 2,180, 343 received a contributory allowance (15.95%) and 572 received a non-contributory allowance (25.21%) while the rest did not receive allowances (58.84%).

5. Results and conclusions of the analysis of the data obtained from the social welfare questionnaire

5.1. Recipients of allowances

This analysis took into account everyone who had an allowance, whether contributory or non-contributory, compared with those who did not receive allowances. Let us look at the influence of receiving an allowance with regard to employment and taking part in actively seeking for a job.

From the data, we see that the percentage of people out of work is higher than the percentage of those with a job. With specific regard to recipients of allowances, the number of those out of work (81.8%) is overwhelmingly greater than those in work (18.2%); although the same pattern arises among people not receiving allowances, these differences are considerably less (70.9% out of work compared with 29.1% in work). Similarly, among those in work, there is a higher number of people not receiving an allowance (29.1%) than recipients of an allowance (18.2%) (see Table 1).

If we look more closely at the “actively seeking” variable, we can see that among those not receiving an allowance, there is a considerably higher percentage of people actively seeking a job (56.4%) compared with those who are inactive (43.6%). Among recipients of an allowance, there is a significantly higher percentage of people who are not active in seeking a job (56.9%) than actively seeking work (43.1%) (see Table 2).

These data seem to support the hypotheses considered in this research project, since we can prove that the majority of PWD with an allowance, regardless of what type of allowance, tend not to be looking for work, while the PWD without an allowance are usually actively seeking a job. We may therefore state that the allowance has an inhibiting effect on actively seeking work.

5.1.1. Recipients of contributory allowances

With regard to the employment variable, we find a higher number of unemployed people among both recipients of contributory allowances and people not in receipt of an allowance, but these differences are more marked in the case of recipients of contributory allowances, one in ten of those receiving a CA having a job (9.5% compared with 90.5%), and almost three in

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Welfare (W) and employment</th>
<th>Employment</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Recount</td>
<td>929</td>
<td>382</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Wtotal</td>
<td>70.9%</td>
<td>29.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of employment</td>
<td>56.1%</td>
<td>70.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of total</td>
<td>42.2%</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes Recount</td>
<td>727</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Wtotal</td>
<td>81.8%</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of employment</td>
<td>43.9%</td>
<td>29.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of total</td>
<td>33.0%</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1656</td>
<td>544</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Wtotal</td>
<td>75.3%</td>
<td>24.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of employment</td>
<td>43.9%</td>
<td>29.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of total</td>
<td>33.0%</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
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</table>

Pearson chi-square 33.911 1 0.000

0 boxes (0.0%) have an expected frequency of less than 5.
The minimum expected frequency is 219.83.

<table>
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<th>Welfare (W) and activity</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>No Recount</td>
<td>491</td>
<td>380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Wtotal</td>
<td>56.4%</td>
<td>43.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of activity</td>
<td>63.2%</td>
<td>50.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of total</td>
<td>32.0%</td>
<td>24.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes Recount</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>378</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Wtotal</td>
<td>43.1%</td>
<td>56.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of activity</td>
<td>36.8%</td>
<td>49.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of total</td>
<td>18.6%</td>
<td>24.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>777</td>
<td>758</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Wtotal</td>
<td>50.6%</td>
<td>49.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of activity</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of total</td>
<td>50.6%</td>
<td>49.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pearson chi-square 26.662 1 0.000

0 boxes (0.0%) have an expected frequency of less than 5.
The minimum expected frequency is 327.89.
Table 3  
Contributory Welfare (CW) and employment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No Recount</th>
<th>Yes Recount</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No CW</td>
<td>879</td>
<td>373</td>
<td>1252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of CW</td>
<td>70.2%</td>
<td>29.8%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of employment</td>
<td>74.2%</td>
<td>25.8%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of total</td>
<td>55.3%</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
<td>78.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes CW</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>337</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of CW</td>
<td>90.5%</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of employment</td>
<td>25.8%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>21.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of total</td>
<td>19.2%</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>21.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

% of CW: 70.2% 29.8% 100.0%
% of employment: 74.2% 25.8% 100.0%
% of total: 55.3% 23.5% 78.8%

Pearson chi-square: 57.598  1  0.000
0 boxes (0.0%) have an expected frequency of less than 5.
The minimum expected frequency: 85.89.

Table 4  
Contributory Welfare (CW) and activity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No Recount</th>
<th>Yes Recount</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No CW</td>
<td>467</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>828</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of CW</td>
<td>56.4%</td>
<td>43.6%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of activity</td>
<td>67.0%</td>
<td>33.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of total</td>
<td>42.8%</td>
<td>32.1%</td>
<td>76.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes CW</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of CW</td>
<td>32.4%</td>
<td>67.6%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of activity</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
<td>32.9%</td>
<td>24.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of total</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
<td>16.2%</td>
<td>24.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Recount</td>
<td>552</td>
<td>538</td>
<td>1090</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of CW</td>
<td>50.6%</td>
<td>49.4%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of activity</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of total</td>
<td>25.5%</td>
<td>74.5%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pearson chi-square: 45.703  1  0.000
0 boxes (0.0%) have an expected frequency of less than 5.
The minimum expected frequency: 129.32.

Table 5  
Non-Contributory Welfare and employment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No Recount</th>
<th>Yes Recount</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No NCW</td>
<td>879</td>
<td>373</td>
<td>1252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of NCW</td>
<td>70.2%</td>
<td>29.8%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of employment</td>
<td>67.0%</td>
<td>33.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of total</td>
<td>48.4%</td>
<td>20.5%</td>
<td>68.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes NCW</td>
<td>432</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>564</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of NCW</td>
<td>76.6%</td>
<td>23.4%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of employment</td>
<td>73.9%</td>
<td>26.1%</td>
<td>31.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of total</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
<td>31.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Recount</td>
<td>1311</td>
<td>505</td>
<td>1816</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of NCW</td>
<td>72.2%</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of employment</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of total</td>
<td>72.2%</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pearson chi-square: 7.904  1  0.005
0 boxes (0.0%) have an expected frequency of less than 5.
The minimum expected frequency: 156.84.

5.1.2. Recipients of non-contributory allowances

With regard to the percentage difference between unemployed (76.6%) and employed (23.4%) recipients of a non-contributory allowance, it is greater than among those not receiving an allowance (70.2% compared to 29.8%). Logically, these data tell us that unemployment is higher in the case of people in receipt of a non-contributory allowance. Similarly, we can say that receiving a NCA may be an influential factor in PWD accessing work (see Table 5).

Another relevant item of data we can draw from this analysis is that a higher number of those not receiving an allowance are actively seeking work (56.4%) than not doing so (43.6%). However, of those in receipt of a NCA, there are more people not looking for work (50.7%) than actively seeking a job (49.3%) (see Table 6).

As a result, we can also state that receiving a NCA may be a factor that is significantly connected with a higher level of inactivity and that the fact of receiving a non-contributory allowance influences the active search for work, leading to a tendency towards not seeking work that is not seen in the remainder of PWD.
Table 6
Non-Contributory Welfare and activity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NCW</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>Recount</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% of NCW</td>
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<td>% of total</td>
<td>37.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Recount</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% of NCW</td>
<td>49.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% of activity</td>
<td>30.3%</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Recount</td>
<td>670</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% of NCW</td>
<td>54.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% of activity</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% of total</td>
<td>54.0%</td>
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</table>

Value gl Asymptotic sig. (bilateral)

Pearson chi-square 5.630 1 0.018

0 boxes (0.0%) have an expected frequency of less than 5.
The minimum expected frequency 189.39.

6. Conclusions

On the basis of the data obtained from the sample taking part in this analysis, we may state that of the people in receipt of an allowance taken as a whole, the proportion of those unemployed comes to 81.8% since only one in five has access to employment, while of those not in receipt of an allowance, the percentage is eleven points lower (70.9%), three out of every ten having access to a job. In addition, we notice that of those in employment, there is a considerably higher percentage of people not in receipt of an allowance (29.1%) than of those receiving an allowance (18.2%). We can therefore confirm the inhibiting influence of an allowance on access to work. Similarly, there is a significant majority of inactive recipients of an allowance (56.9%) compared with an active majority of those not in receipt of an allowance (56.4%). This enables us to confirm the negative influence that receipt of an allowance has on the activity of PWD.

If we focus on the recipients of a Contributory Allowance (CA), the percentage of those unemployed comes to 90.5%, only one in ten in work compared with three in ten of people not receiving an allowance. The inhibiting effect of the allowance on employment for the recipients of a CA is therefore increased. Similarly, with regard to inactivity, we find an active majority among people not receiving an allowance compared with an inactive majority among recipients of a CA – the percentage gap here is more than thirty points, much more pronounced than in the whole group of those receiving an allowance.

Of the recipients of Non-Contributory Allowances (NCA), we can say that although the percentage differences regarding unemployment among recipients (76.6%) and non-recipients (70.2%) are lower than in the CA group and in the whole group of those receiving an allowance, they are still significant with a difference of more than six points. As a result, we can say that receiving a NCA has a negative effect on access to work. Equally, as far as inactivity is concerned, the NCA may be a factor that encourages PWDs not to be active in seeking work, since those not looking for a job are a minority among non-recipients (43.6%) and a significant majority among recipients (50.7%).

7. Qualitative methodology

Qualitative data were collected at the same time as the quantitative data were being gathered, and five discussion groups, each composed of eight people, were formed for this purpose. The debate of the discussion groups which supplemented the data obtained through the questionnaire was studied. Four basic topics were examined in the focal groups: allowances, employment, making allowances compatible with work, and choosing between an allowance and a job.

7.1. Description of the focal group sample

Each focal group was made up of two moderators and eight working-age people in receipt of an allowance, who might or might not be working. The participants were users of the Trévols Project and FEAFES (Valladolid). Participants were therefore working-age people with psychiatric, physical or mental disability (aged 16 to 64).

Five focal groups were set up:

- People with an intellectual disability (not working, with a NCA or CA)
- People with an intellectual disability (working, with a NCA or CA)
- People with a physical disability (combined)
- People with a mental illness (working, with a NCA)
- People with a mental illness (not working, with a NCA).
7.2. Results and conclusions of the focal groups

The main conclusions drawn from studying the focal groups’ discussion on the four basic topics (allowances, employment, making allowances compatible with work, and choosing between an allowance and a job) are outlined in this section. The participants thought that the allowances, although economically insufficient, are necessary for certain groups that cannot work, more specifically, those people who are most disabled. In this respect, they all suggested that the amount should be increased. In addition, several stated that despite the allowances being tailored to the people they were meant to go to, fraud sometimes occurred in the way some of them were allocated. Similarly, they pointed out that allowances lead to a lack of work that sometimes brings with it low self-esteem as a result of the fact that receiving an allowance can make the recipient feel stigmatized. Some discussion groups thought that allowances should supplement paid work, though others believed they were the only starting-point for obtaining money.

The participants stated that employment bestows a sense of feeling useful, both personally and socially, that being in work, as well as providing funds, affords the possibility of independence, increases the possibility of acquiring consumer goods, fosters social relationships and friendships, frees up the family, and helps with integration and, in the case of mental illnesses, provides for a sense of order and stability. Moreover, they emphasized how the family always rates work in a positive light. Negative aspects included the need for support, for help from a third person in certain cases, and the discrimination suffered by PWD when trying to access a job. Moreover, the figures for those unemployed or not seeking work – which more or less match those obtained in the EDDS survey (2001), the EPA survey for the third quarter of 2002 [11], or the EDAD survey [12] – still highlight the hard reality of difficult access to work and an all the more worrying situation of inactivity.

We were also able to discover how access to work and employment are inversely related to factors such as age and the degree of disability, and that being a woman results in encountering a higher level of discrimination when trying to access a job. Moreover, the figures for those unemployed or not seeking work – which more or less match those obtained in the EDDS survey (2001), the EPA survey for the third quarter of 2002 [11], or the EDAD survey [12] – still highlight the hard reality of difficult access to work and all the more worrying situation of inactivity.

The subjective assessment of PWD themselves, obtained when taking a qualitative approach to this study, leaves us in no doubt of the need to maintain social protection policies in the form of allowances, the amounts of which are, in the participants’ view, insufficient. In their opinion, however, allowances lead to inactivity, as well as low self-esteem and a feeling of failure. Conversely, work, as well as providing funds and enabling people to acquire goods, affords autonomy, relationships, friendship and integration. In many cases, recipients of NCA do not know how to reconcile having an allowance and having a job.

We believe that the results of this study should lead us to reflect on existing social welfare and employment...
promotion policies. We do not think that the problem is the existence of allowances, nor their amounts, which might well be higher given that, effectively for a significant percentage of recipients, they are and will be the only means of subsistence. We consider it more essential to bring together more flexible systems of making allowances and work compatible, with wider margins of joint income that provide adequate levels of income to allow an independent life and full integration. We think that this flexibility must come with tangible incentives that encourage the PWD collective itself to take a step towards employment, breaking the inertia of inactivity that typifies the group.

On the other hand, and secondarily, the actions aimed at recipients of an allowance must be supplemented by clear strategies encouraging PWD into work. It will serve us little or nothing to motivate the group if the opportunities for them to be able to take a step towards getting a job fail to materialize. The need to consolidate specific services within the general employment services for the PWD group, as is already done in some Spanish autonomous administrative regions, is essential. These services must be properly coordinated with the effective response that the NGOs sector has historically afforded to this problem. The solid economic support for these initiatives that make up for the administration’s oversight must be consolidated. If we believe that the aim of integration into working life is full social integration, social and employment policies ought to be steered towards standardized employment as a basic goal. In order for this to happen, not only will it be right to reexamine the employer’s incentives for hiring PWD, but also compliance with the binding nature of the quota, or the repercussion on the integrated job itself of penalties on companies or of measures that exempt them from meeting this quota. Political and social investment in more integration-focused systems, which are based on the provision of economic and technical support according to the fair need of those who use them, must be key to achieving a society in which PWD are workers and citizens with full rights.

Carrying out this original research, and as a result sparking a potential line of thought that might be worthwhile while examining in depth, has provided us with answers and leaves us with further questions. These may relate to the interaction of grounds that, together with the allowance, influence employment or activity, entrenchment of the barriers to accessing work, the outlining and adjustment of strategies for making allowances and jobs compatible and motivating PWD, and testing how effective they are, the possible comparisons between countries, the forms of interaction between allowances, the labor market and the measures or resources available for supporting access to work, and no doubt others which may arise. The methodological possibility of creating approaches through in-depth interviews, with fewer but representatively selected samples, will undoubtedly furnish relevant follow-up data to those obtained. Implementing qualitative strategies, such as those used in the second part of this study, that complement the quantitative ones, will certainly make it possible to obtain the follow-up information required to filter the reality of the data from the perspective of PWD.

References


