

The Disability Employment Gap in the Brazilian Labor Market

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During the last few decades in Brazil, a great evolution has occurred in the social movement that concerns the rights of people with disability. This movement aims to integrate this group of people into society, allowing equal access to education and the labor market [1]. This movement can also be observed at the international level, since in 2015 the ILO – International Labor Organization - launched a strategic 2014/2017 inclusion plan [2], which is based on: non-discrimination, equal opportunities, accessibility, acceptance of disability as part of human diversity, gender equality and involvement of people with disabilities through their representative organizations.

According to the Washington Group on Disability Statistics [3], people with disability are defined as those who are at more risk than the general population in suffering from limitations in performing specific tasks (activities) or restrictions on their social activities. This group includes people experiencing difficulties in one or more of the six major areas (seeing, hearing, walking, cognition, self-care and communication). Disability involves an interaction between a person's functional status and the physical, cultural and political environments. If the living environment is supposed to include the full range of human functioning and incorporates appropriate accommodations and support mechanisms, people with functional limitations would not be "disabled" as they could participate fully in society.

It is clear that the accomplishment of work activities brings to the person with disability a new perspective of life, and contributes to rehabilitation. A Brazilian law of 1991, no. 8213/1991, established that every company in the national territory with 100 or more employees must have at least 2% of its workforce composed of disabled people. However, despite this law, the inclusion of people with disabilities in the labor market is still a challenge. According to the ILO, people with disabilities are still less likely to be employed when compared with non-disabled people. They are also more likely to earn lower wages than non-disabled people. This article aims to analyze the current state of participation of people with disabilities in the Brazilian labor market by studying the disability employment gap. In 2013, IBGE – Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística, in partnership with the Ministry of Health, conducted the PNS - Pesquisa Nacional de Saúde or National Health Survey, which, among several other subjects, investigates the characteristics of people with disabilities and the labor market. The PNS 2013 [4] will be the data source for this paper. By 2013, there were approximately 160 million people aged 14 years and over in Brazil. Among them, there were 6.7 million people with disability (4.2%). Among the people with disability, an estimated 56.4% were male; 42.1% were between 30 and 59 years old and 44.19% were 60 years and over. More than 60% of the people with disability had only completed the first level of

education (no education and incomplete primary education), while among those without disability this proportion was less than 40%. On the other hand, the proportion of people without disability with a bachelor's degree was more than the double of those with disability. Regarding key indicators of the labor market, the labor force participation of people with disability was 26.8% while for people without disabilities this proportion was 63%. The proportion of people with disability who was employed was 25.7% and for people without disability it was 59.3%.

The results presented clearly show that there is in the Brazilian labor market an inequality of opportunities between people with and without disabilities. In this way, understanding the factors that interfere in the probability of a disabled person being employed in Brazil is utmost important. In order to estimate this probability, a logistic regression model was used and disability, age categories, education level and limitation level were the predictor variables. A similar model was presented in the 2015 report, from Eurostat, regarding the employment of disabled people [5]. As the main results obtained, we have that disability has a significant negative effect on employment. This effect is greater for males when compared to females. A disabled middle-aged man (30 years old to 59 years old) has a decrease of 72.4% in the odds of being employed when compared to a non-disabled man. For females, this decrease is 57.7%. We can also notice that those with intense limitation in their activities have a strongly significant decrease in the probability of being employed.

These results demonstrate that despite the existence in Brazil of a law for the inclusion of people with disability in the labor market, in practice this is still far from reality. The employment gap in terms of labor force participation (36.2%) is greater than the actual employment rate for those with disability (26.8%) and higher than the gap observed in other countries. A similar study in Canada [6] has shown that the employment gap in the labor force was 26.7%, and for the block of countries in the European Union [4] this gap was 20.2%. Therefore, the promotion of surveys and the elaboration of studies that direct the public policies to the problem faced by people with disabilities in Brazil are essential to reverse this scenario.

References

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