

Employer and Employee Concepts on Disclosure
of a Specific Learning Disability in the Office
Environment

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ABSTRACT

Background: There has been limited research on the disclosing of Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) in employment in the Irish context, how both employer and employee conceptualize SLD's. **Objective:** This study explores the employer and employee perspectives of SLD. Design: An online survey and semi-structured interviews were conducted with employers and employees, to explore their experiences of SLD disclosure. **Settings:** The Office environment across the private and public sectors. **Participants:** 61 participants across a range of organizations and service levels, 6 of which were taken forward to semi-structure interview. Participants were selected through a process of self-selection sampling, reflecting variations in terms of age, grade and tenure. **Methods:** Thematic analysis was conducted on the qualitative data from the survey and 6 semi-structured interviews, which then incorporated, limited quantitative data from the survey. **Results:** Two overall themes emerged, Self-determination and Communication and Understanding. Self-determination included the sub-themes: previous responses to SLD; stigma; personal conception of SLD; perceived advantages and disadvantages and level of self-determination. Sub-themes under Communication and Understanding included: Timing; information needed by employers; legislation and policy; understanding the employee and support and accommodation. **Conclusions:** The findings suggest that both employers and employees conceptualize SLD as deriving from the Medical Model of disability, however they also view social solutions as imperative to alleviating any problems, which may arise from an SLD. Disclosure is seen as vital to both the accommodation of SLD's from the employer perspective and to understanding and support from the employee perspective. Communication, timing and Self-determination are the underlying processes of SLD disclosure upon which the success of disclosure is bridged. There is limited knowledge of disclosure policies, disability legislation and of SLD definition.

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List of Abbreviations

CSO	=	Central Statistics Office
DAI	=	Dyslexia Association of Ireland
EEA	=	Employment Equality Acts
AHEAD	=	Association for Higher Education Access and Disability
NDA	=	National Disability Authority
DfES	=	Department for Education and Skills
ADA	=	American Disabilities Act
CIPD	=	Chartered Institute of Professional Development
NCI	=	National College of Ireland
HSE	=	Health Service Executive
SLD	=	Specific Learning Disability ¹

¹ The labeling SLD is complex, traditionally it has been called Specific Learning Disability and this proliferates both the present legislation and recent literature. However it should be noted that a considerable amount of individuals and advocacy groups are now using the term Specific Learning Differences. The author has chosen to use the former so as this kept the study in line with legislation and the literature. Also for an individual to invoke their legal right they would have to do so under disability or discrimination legislation and the removal of the use of the word Disability could be seen to obscure some social disabling factors.

1 Introduction

1.1 Context

The Central Statistics Office (CSO), 2011 Census points to 3% of the population being affected by a Specific Learning Disability (SLD) with a 28.7% labour force participation rate for people with a learning disability aged between 15-65 (CSO, 2012). There are just under, 26 thousand people with SLD in employment (CSO, 2012). There is little detailed statistical analysis of SLD in the Irish context. Looking at the UK there is significant variation in the estimations of the prevalence of dyslexia between 4-10% (AHEAD, 2013) and (Hartley, 2006) notes that 41.3 % of UK disabled student population have a diagnosis of dyslexia which is the most common SLD. As the Dyslexia association of Ireland (DAI) notes “there are many definitions of dyslexia. A very simple one would be that dyslexia is a specific learning difficulty which makes it hard for some people to learn to read, write and spell correctly” (DAI, 2013).

The Task Force on Dyslexia, the Dyslexia Association of Ireland and Madaus, Foley, MaGuire and Ruban, (2002) note that an individual can have more than one SLD. The DAI notes conditions can sometimes ‘co-occur’ such as Dyscalculia, Dysgraphia, Dyspraxia, ADD and ADHD- these will be examined in the literature review.

The world of employment is in stark contrast to that of education, as Gerber, Price, Mulligan and Shessel (2004, p. 290) note “the world of school and university where learning disabilities are widely understood and accepted the world of employment knows little about the nature of learning disability and this complex world is predicated on profit and efficiency”. This typical trajectory has been echoed in the literature (Bell, 2011; Madaus, Gerber and Price 2008; Price, Gerber and Mulligan, 2003 and Madaus et al., 2002). However with the advent of the ‘O2 Ability Awards’ which “are business awards for Best Practice in the inclusion of people with disabilities, both as customers and as employees” (theabilityawards.com) there are signs of increased awareness of disability in the employment context.

Previous research on SLD has found that “While nearly three quarters (73%) of the respondents indicated that their SLD impacted their work in some way, only 55% percent reported that they self-disclosed to an employer” (Madaus, 2006, p. 28).

Low levels of disclosure of SLD have been accounted for, by a number of different reasons; concern for negatively influencing relationships with supervisors or co-workers, concern for their job security and negative connotations linked with SLD such as being perceived as a lesser person. The timing of disclosure is important, pro-active disclosure can be positive however reactive disclosure can lead to adversarial situations and finally the necessity to avail of reasonable adjustments (Madaus, 2006; Roberts and Hoff Macan, 2006; Price et al. 2003 and Dickinson and Verbeek, 2002).

1.2 Structure

This study is organised in the following manner. Chapter 2 will begin with examining the literature relating to Specific Learning Disability and Disclosure and then move on to discussing the topic from the employee and employer perspectives. Chapter 3 will identify the research question and it’s supporting aims and objectives. Chapter 4 will explain the research methodology and the rationale behind why this methodology was considered appropriate for the study. Chapter 5 will present a detailed breakdown of the findings of the qualitative research (survey and telephone interviews). Chapter 6 will provide an analysis of the findings along with a comparison of the findings with the literature. Chapter 7 is the final chapter of the dissertation and outlines the author’s conclusions and recommendations. Finally, the paper is concluded with a bibliography of all books and articles used in the literature review and Appendices are provided which will contain the appropriate supporting material.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The following literature review is concerned with the concepts of SLD and disclosure. The purpose of this secondary research on this area is to generate a number of research questions for the paper and assist in focusing on specific areas for the primary research.

The literature review will provide an overview of the key areas identified from the disability and disclosure literature. It begins with tracking the changing conception of disability from the medical to social model and then to a combined conception of disability. Following this some of the main types of SLD are examined and definitions of SLD are appraised. The fifth section deals with the disclosure process and how this is brought about, the employee perspectives for and against disclosure are weighed. The concept of Self-determination is then discussed as key to the disclosure process. Finally the employer's perspective and their requirements are appraised. The review is finished off with a conclusion based on the preceding sections.

2.2 The Medicalization of Disability

Chappell, Goodley, and Lawthom (2001) notes the origin of the medical model has been located as a construct of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries which, created systems of knowledge, which defined disability as individual in origin. Also that eugenics defined the disabled as a potential danger as breeding could lead to inferior genes spreading throughout the population. As Kevles (1985) commented during the early first half of the twentieth century social prejudice frequently overwhelmed scientific objectivity. Further Kuhl (1994) commented on the widespread institutionalization of eugenics, the United States became a model of a country (for the Bethel Institute in Germany) that had successfully implemented eugenic sterilization and immigration policies. From eugenics policies of lifetime segregation developed to remove people with physical and sensory impairments,

learning difficulties and mental illness from mainstream society.

This individual construct of disability has been the corner stone of the medical model and persists to the present. Disability of any kind has traditionally been seen as the responsibility of the person concerned (Oliver and Barnes, 1998). The individual with a disability was expected to make adjustments to fit in with the demands of society and its institutions (Bell, 2011). Goering (2010) notes the framing of disability can be quite harmful. It identifies the individual as the primary problem, to be fixed or put aside and that it is so pervasive that for many people, the only way to understand disability is as a problem of the individual. This has been echoed by researchers over an extended period as Macdonald (2009) notes (Morton, 2004; Olson, 2002; Snowling, 2000; Stein & Talcott, 1999 and Nicolson & Fawcett, 1994) all point out the medical model effectively perceives dyslexia as a neurological dysfunction which results in the social and educational participation of individuals being restricted by neurobiological factors.

The legal view of disability has been heavily informed by the medical model and has reaffirmed its standing. The Employment Equality Acts (1998-2011) defines SLD as a condition or malfunction, which results in a person learning differently from a person without the condition or malfunction. As Lawson (2011) notes the UK Legislation EQA insists that disability results entirely from the impairment and, in so doing, anchors itself firmly in the medical or individual model of disability.

Bell (2011) notes that there has been a move away from the medical diagnosis that attaches disability to the individual, towards awareness of SLD as being from and based in society.

The advantages of the medical model lie in its ability to conceptualize and define the positive and negative borders of SLD. The inhibited left hemisphere in dyslexic brain development promotes unusual potency in the right hemisphere especially those related to creativity and holistic thinking (Miller, 2011). Dyslexia is characterized by problems with accurate or fluent word identification, poor spelling and decoding ability (Lyon, Shaywitz, and Shaywitz, 2003). The disadvantages of the medical model lie in its adherence to solely locating the disability as of and in the individual this negates the non-medical interventions that both the individual

and society put in place, which alleviates the issues linked to the disability. The social model of disability focuses on this construction of disability.

2.3 Disability as a Social State

Oliver (1990) points out that the medicalization of disability is inappropriate as disability is a social state not a medical condition, medical intervention and control over disability are inappropriate as doctors are trained to diagnose, treat and cure illnesses not to relieve social conditions or circumstances. The construction of impairment and disability are key in the framing of disability under the social model as Chappell et al., (2001, p. 46) note, “the social model distinguishes between impairment (i.e. the loss or lack of some functioning part of the body) and disability (i.e. the meaning society attaches to the presence of impairment)”.

The social model acknowledges the existence of individual impairments but indicates that these are not the responsibility of the individual but of society as a whole (Bell, 2011; Lawson, 2011; Goering, 2010; and Poole, 2003). The social model holds that much of the disadvantage associated with impairment is imposed by society, rather than integral to the bodily or mental state (which is the primary understanding of the medical model). This is not to deny the impairment, but to redirect our attention to how societal attitudes, practices, and institutions may disable individuals unnecessarily and unjustly (Goering, 2010). This attempt to clarify the meaning of impairment and disability is expanded by Macdonald (2009, p. 348) who points that “disability is not the result of a biological impairment that restricts social participation, but rather institutionalized (which is constructed socially) discrimination that restricts education, employment and life opportunities”. He also contends that the use of the social model implies a premeditated shift of focus from the ‘functional limitations’ to ‘problems caused by a disabling environment’ (Macdonald, 2009). From an employer perspective the issue of SLD can in part be nullified by the use of assistive technology. As Madaus (2011) points out the use of assistive technology (digital textbooks, smart pens and smart phones) provide access for students. Success in the workplace can be produced by the use of assistive technologies; experiences from both the work environment and educational setting should be further developed (Gerber and Price, 2003).

The social model can highlight the negativity for those denoted as having an SLD. As Goering (2010) notes social change may be easier for those with visible disabilities, who may rely on a wheelchair but otherwise fit the societal norms and expectations for work and social exchange. As Roberts and Hoff Macan (2006) note because many nonvisible disabilities are psychological in nature, and have elicited more negative hiring ratings than physical disabilities. Miller (2011) points to negative assumptions around dyslexics being viewed as easily distracted, absent-minded, a dreamer and a behaviour problem. Bell (2011) notes the connotation of dyslexia as a child-based issue ignores the long-term effects of underlying difficulties such as short-term memory deficits.

The social model's assessment of the legal framework of disability points its ability to both undermine and support a non-medical conception. As noted above Lawson (2011) found that the UK Legislation EQA conceptualizes disability as entirely from impairment and consequently takes the medical or individual model of disability as its base. By removing the need to demonstrate the effect impairment has on ability to perform ordinary activities, would allow the legal framework to focus on the social dimension (Lawson, 2011; Bell, 2011; Barclay, 2011).

The advantages of the social model lie in the conceptualizing of SLD as the result of the disabling factors inherent to society which come into focus when an individual or group don't meet societal norms (Bell, 2011; Lawson, 2011; Goering, 2010; Poole, 2003 and Oliver, 1990). The disadvantage can be seen in the predominant focus on the social aspect of disability, this fails to give proper weight to the disadvantages of the disability itself, as some can be the source of significant pain and frustration irrespective of the social context (Barclay, 2011; Shakespeare, 2006 and Wendell, 1996).

2.4 Disability as a Medically induced Social State

Bell (2011) notes that legislation demands that 'reasonable adjustments' should be made to enable everyone to reach their potential without placing unnecessary barriers in their way. This is similar to the Irish context whereby employers must take appropriate measures to enable a person who has a disability, so long as this does not impose a disproportionate burden on the employer (Employment Equality

Acts 1998-2011). As noted above the Irish legal view of SLD is 'learning differently' in comparison to another. Bell (2011) notes on the international level, there is a growing awareness that employers should embrace diversity in the workforce, in order to encourage creativity and innovation, and therefore productivity. This indicates a move from a single source theory to a combination of factors.

Barclay (2011) is skeptical of any attempt to identify a single cause of disability and its disadvantages to just either biological or social states and points to Wasserman's (2001) argument that disadvantage arises from the interaction between a number of biological and social factors. Poole (2003) suggests the use of Bronfenbrenner's ecological model of human development, to look at dyslexia in its social and environmental context. Here the effects of a dyslexic's interaction with education, family, friends and wider culture can be observed. "The ecological model of dyslexia suggests that dyslexia is not just a set of biological and behavioural differences in individuals, but it exists within a complex web of relationships to a culture and the people in it" (Bell, 2011, p. 9). Gerber, Ginsberg and Reiff (1992) found a key difference between highly and moderately successful adults with an SLD, was their 'social ecology' the highly successful created networks of support which they engaged with to a greater degree than the moderately successful, key was the degree of support and the willingness to accept support. For an individual to engage with supports they will have to take the first step of disclosing their SLD

2.5 Defining SLD

There is considerable variation in the defining of SLD's there are many types which impact individuals in different ways, however all are noted as not be attributed to IQ level of and individual or a lack of access to education. The DAI defines dyslexia as a specific learning difficulty, which makes it hard for some people to learn to read, write and spell correctly (DAI, 2013). Dyslexia is a spectrum, which has no clear cut-off point which makes diagnosis and definition difficult (Miles, 1993). The Special Education Support Service (SESS) report (1993) notes 'general learning disabilities' as 'mental handicap' and defines specific learning disability as 'impairments in specific aspects of reading, writing and arithmetical notation, the

primary cause of which is not attributable to assessed ability being below the average range, to defective sight or hearing, emotional factors, a physical condition or to any extrinsic adverse circumstances' (SERC.1993, p. 86).

The most prominent types of SLD as noted by the Dyslexia association of Ireland (DAI) are:

“Dyslexia which is manifested in a continuum of specific learning difficulties which include Dyscalculia, which causes great difficulty in learning and comprehending mathematics, Dysgraphia affecting a person’s ability to write. Problems include fine motor muscle control in the hands and processing difficulties. Dyspraxia or Developmental Coordinator Disorder (DCD) is a specific difficulty with movement and aspects of learning such as, planning and carrying out sensory and motor tasks. Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) are biologically based conditions causing persistent difficulties resulting in one or more of the following behaviours: inattention, hyperactivity and impulsivity and Specific Language Impairment (SLI) affects communication” (DAI, 2013). Individual’s with dyslexia have difficulties in decoding phonetic groups, comprehension and can fumble speech in everyday situations. The DAI notes that there are often “difficulties in language comprehension, expressive language, using language in everyday situations and speech-sound difficulties” (DAI, 2013).

The comorbidity (the presence of different conditions simultaneously) of SLD’s has been highlighted in previous studies (Lyon et al., 2003; Shankweiler, Crain, Katz, Fowler, Liberman, Brady, Thorton, Lundquist, Dreyer, Fletcher, Stuebing, Shaywitz and Shaywitz, 1995; Shaywitz, Fletcher and Shaywitz, 1994; Lindamood, 1994; Moats, 1994 and Fletcher and Loveland, 1986). It is further noted “from an epidemiologic perspective, reading disabilities affects at least 80 percent of the SLD population and thus constitute the most prevalent type of SLD” (Lyon, et al., 2003, p. 2). A recent study from the Association for Higher Education Access and Disability (AHEAD) highlights the prevalence of Specific Learning Difficulty at 57.2% of all disabilities within higher education in the academic year 2011-2012 (see figure 1). This underlines the importance of this topic and the degree of variation in the defining of SLD.

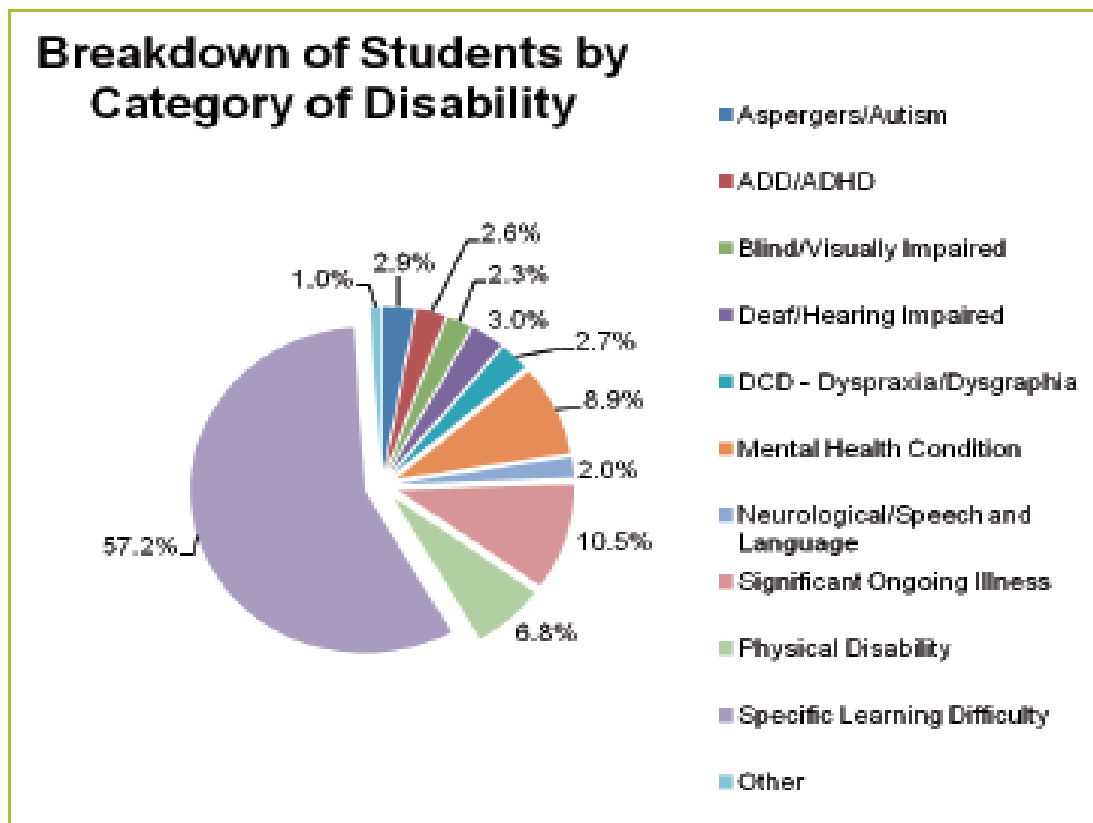


Figure 1. **Source:** Survey on the Participation Rates of Students with Disabilities in Higher Education for the Academic Year 2011-2012 (Ahead, 2012)

The causes of Dyslexia as with other SLD's have been widely debated, as it is not the remit of this research to add to that debate this dissertation will take the DAI viewpoint "experts do agree that dyslexia describes differences in the way in which the brain processes information, and while there may be differences in the way in which the brain works, this does not imply any abnormality, disease or defect" (DAI, 2013).

The DAI notes the typical trajectory for a person with SLD such as dyslexia would be diagnosed in early childhood, during school years, supports at this stage can include learning support teacher, exam accommodations reader, tape recorder, scribe, exemption from spelling and grammatical components in language subjects and assistive technological such as word processor and computer aids. During third level education there are similar supports with the addition of a designated disability support services (DAI, 2013).

These definitions are mirrored on the international level as the International

Dyslexia Association defines Dyslexia as a specific learning disability that is neurological in origin. It is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction (IDA, 2013). Shaywitz and Shaywitz (2005) also note it's associated with neurological abnormality; it's usually inherited, and accounts for about 80% of all learning disabilities in America. Bell (2010) further points to elements such as continued feeling of inadequacy and low self-esteem which may follow dyslexic's throughout their career and may lead to unstable patterns of employment.

Watson and Nolan (2011) note the complicated categorizing of SLD in the 2006 Census, Intellectual & learning disability combines two very different groups, those with an intellectual disability (usually diagnosed at birth or during early childhood) and those with learning difficulties such as dyslexia and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), which tend to be noted during an individual's school years. SLD as noted above are legally defined as a condition or malfunction, which results in a person learning differently from a person without the condition or malfunction (Employment Equality Acts, 1998-2011) which results in SLD's as being defined as medical conception.

As it can be seen the defining of SLD is complex and problematic, with both educational and legal viewpoints focusing on the individual, which derives from the medical model, which was discussed previously.

2.6 The Disclosure Process

Disclosure is defined in the context of SLD as 'the process of an employee informing their employer of a disability or impairment. This may happen in several ways, including anonymously as the National Disability Authority (NDA) provide the examples of through a staff survey, or 'openly', for example for the purposes of achieving reasonable adjustments of specific support at work' (NDA, 2009, p. 6). And more generally as "People's willingness to divulge sensitive information [which] depends on judgments that are inherently comparative, such as signals

about others' readiness to divulge" (Acquisti, Leslie and Loewenstein, 2012, p. 160).

Goldberg et al. (2005) comment that disclosure of a disability to an employer can be of greater concern for people with 'non-evident' or hidden disabilities. "However nondisclosure may also result in added workplace stress and therefore be counterproductive" (NDA, 2009, p. 9). Munir, Pruce, Haslam, Leka and Griffiths (2006) found that employees who disclose are likely to benefit from work adjustments, supports and an improvement to their overall quality of working life.

The NDA points to three levels in which the decision to disclose can be conceptualized, the individual, the organizational level and the systems level. The individual level relates to the personal circumstances of the employee, their education, position and their disability and importantly their perception of it. The organizational level relates to the specific culture of an organization as the employees, employers, industry and legislation construct it. The systems level relates to the economic, political and legal systems that are in place in a territory at a particular time (NDA, 2009). AHEAD notes "the decision to disclose or not seems to be made on the basis of weighing up the benefits of reasonable accommodation, workplace considerations and awareness against the cost of labeling and potential discrimination/ differential treatment in recruitment and employment" (AHEAD, 2013, p. 4).

Disclosure can happen at different stages of employment, for example during interview, post interview, upon promotion or upon the evoking of disciplinary procedure (Madaus et al., 2008; Roberts and Hoff Macan, 2006; Madaus, 2006; Price et al., 2004 and Gerber and Price, 2003). Madaus (2006) found that a supervisor was the most likely recipient of a disclosure of SLD by an employee at 65.9% a co-worker was the next choice at 53.5%.

2.7 Employee Concealment

In relation to disclosure of SLD's there have been a lot of research carried out in America primarily by (Madaus et al., 2008; Madaus, 2006; Gerber et al., 2004; Price et al., 2003; Madaus et al., 2002 Price and Gerber, 2001 and Gerber et al., 1992). The reasons to not disclose draw on connections to how disability is

conceptualized through either the medical or social models as Madaus, points “a concern for negatively influencing relationships with supervisors (30%) or co-workers (29%). Twenty percent indicated that they were concerned for their job security” (Madaus, 2006, p. 28). Price et al. (2003) found concerns around the negative connotations linked with learning disability such as being perceived as a ‘lesser person’. As Gerber and Price (2003, p. 355) note the response of one individual “I don’t have any concerns talking about my SLD” and another “I don’t consider myself to have SLD at all” this is in direct contrast to the individual noted above who connected SLD to being a ‘lesser person’.

The timing of disclosure is important, pro-active disclosure can be positive however reactive disclosure can lead to adversarial situations between employers and employees (Gerber and Price, 2003). Granger (2000) notes that with nonvisible disabilities the decision regarding the best time to disclose is a major concern. As Roberts and Hoff Macan (2006) note the type of disability highly influences the decision to disclose and students with non-visible disabilities were not confident in their ability to decide the timing of disclosure during an interview. Madaus et al. (2002) found that early disclosure was preferred with 15.7% disclosing during the interview stage, 12.4% disclosing after being hired, and 2.2% disclosing while employed in a previous role within their current company. Finally Gerber et al. (2004) found that 80% of American’s and 60% of Canadian’s never self-disclosed their disability during the interviewing process.

2.8 Employee Disclosure

Madaus et al. (2002) has found “the most common reason cited for self-disclosure was to enable the use of technology (18.5%). A need for additional time (11.1%) and a need for more detailed directions (7.4%) were also cited. Other reasons included helping the employee to “be understood.” One respondent described self-disclosure as a means “to let the company know about my strengths and value to the company,” and another stated “I feel comfortable disclosing SLD when asked about my perception or approach to assigned tasks.” (Madaus et al., 2002, p. 367). In a follow up study Madaus found a marked difference between need to disclose and willingness to, “While nearly three quarters (73%) of the respondents indicated that

their SLD impacted their work in some way, only 55% percent reported that they self-disclosed to an employer” (Madaus, 2006, p. 28). A partial account for this is offered, which contends that unlike the world of school and university where learning disabilities are widely understood and accepted the world of employment knows little about the nature of learning disability and this complex world is predicated on profit and efficiency (Gerber et al., 2004 and Gerber, 1997).

Finally the reasons to disclose based on necessity to avail of ‘reasonable adjustments’ in Ireland, the UK or America as Dickinson and Verbeek (2002) explain without disclosure the employee is not entitled to reasonable accommodations. Further reasonable accommodations in the context of SLD are in terms of cost (if any) are minimal with good collaborative problem solving (Gerber and Price, 2003). However the complex nature of reasonable accommodations is also noted by Gerber and Price (2003) as some accommodations are easy to understand for example environmental modifications, while job restructuring are more difficult. The NDA (2009) asserts that access to reasonable accommodations via medical certificates appeared to reinforce the ‘medical model’ of disability rather than the ‘social model’. Madaus et al. (2002) concur that in both the education and employment sectors an individual with an SLD must provide supporting documentary evidence of a current substantial limitation to learning. The DAI (2013) point this is achieved through the presenting of an assessment report or an evidential letter from an educational psychologist who can verify that you have dyslexia and need special arrangements. A key element in successful disclosure is self-determination, which will now be explored

2.9 Self-determination

Gerber et al. (1992) define self-determination as the ability to analyze ones abilities and determine how they can be used as strengths to compensate for weakness. Madaus et al. (2008) contend that people with SLD must learn self-determination; whereby they are able to understand their own strengths and weaknesses have compensatory techniques and self-evaluate effectiveness. Campbell and Oliver (1996) locate self-determination within the wider theoretical perspective of the social model of disability as a central factor in transforming personal and social consciousness. Chappell et al. (2001) notes the importance of self-advocacy as it

enables people to demonstrate their self-determination in the face of discrimination. The focal components of self-determination are self-awareness, decision-making, self-advocacy, independent performance, and self-adjustment and evolve from an understanding of one's own strengths and needs (Madaus et al., 2008; Valenzuela and Martin, 2005; Field et al., 1998 and Field and Hoffman, 1994). To achieve this Goldberg et al. (2003) noted that, successful adults performed two key tasks; they understood their SLD and were then able to compartmentalize its impact. They identified their strengths, preventing their SLD from negatively impacting their overall sense of self. They set specific goals and responded to and benefited from an unexpected opportunity. In contrast, less successful adults were passive and only responded to events (Madaus et al., 2008 and Goldberg and Killeen, 2005). Bell (2011) similarly notes the importance of ownership of an SLD, when individuals join a community support group this "requires the individual to accept the label of dyslexia which is encapsulated in the group's name, and this in itself may involve a shift in their own self-image" Accordingly the use of self determination can be seen as a key component in a successful disclosure process.

2.10 Employer Disclosure Prerequisites

The type of organization affects its legislative responsibilities and in turn its culture the Disability Act, 2005 (Part 5) obliges public bodies to reach a target of 3% of employees with disabilities (NDA, 2009). The private sector does not have such a condition however both sectors are committed to having a diverse work force.

Diversity means several things but the term is generally used to describe entities with members who have identifiable differences. In the European context, diversity can be defined from a policy and legal perspective across at least five clear 'strands': gender, age, race and ethnic origin, sexual orientation, religion and belief, and disability European Commission (2008). In the Irish context this is taken up in the Equal Status Acts, 2000 and 2004 which seeks to limit discrimination across nine grounds added to the above European strands 'membership of the traveller community, marital status, family status and disability'. By limiting discrimination in the employment sector this would have the congruent affect of increasing diversity. As Bell (2011, p. 9) notes "at international level, there is a growing awareness that employers should be educated to embrace diversity in the workforce,

including disability, in order to encourage creativity and innovation, and therefore productivity”. Bell (2011) further notes the commitment at the national level; the government is committed to the encouragement of diversity in the workplace through its publication “Department for Education and Skills (DfES) (2005b) Getting on in business, getting on in work”.

Miller (2011) points the negative affects of standardized systems such as GMAT testing in the United States which proves to be a significant barrier to those with an SLD seeking access to careers in academia and he asserts that “this not only unfairly penalizes those whose lives have already posed significant challenge, it also deprives the academy and our research projects of enriching diversity— of people with different experiences, points of view, and ways of thinking” (Miller, 2011, p. 345). But Woodward and Day (2006) show, during their archival research of large UK company’s compliance with UK disability policies, their Annual Report expresses:

“During the year, we set up two committees made up of senior executives to shape our strategy for improvement in the areas of diversity and staff development. Other initiatives used to support our employee commitments were as follows

*_ performance targets and measures for appraisal, development and training;
_ creation and initial implementation of our diversity strategy.”*

(Woodward and Day, 2006, p. 89-90).

Finally for diversity to take shape at an international level as Bell (2011) notes to create a workforce who embraces diversity it is important to consider how the challenges facing the individual members of the community who face specific difficulties may be mitigated.

The importance of a supporting and knowledgeable work environment is necessary to disclosure as Goldberg and Killeen (2005) suggests that individuals placed in supported environments tended to disclose more to employers and co-workers than those placed in more competitive employment. However as Madaus et al. (2002) has noted the reluctance to disclose is based on the assumption that they could be

treated differently after they disclose. As noted above Gerber expressed the difference in cultures between the educational sector and the world of work. As he found that there is a lack of knowledge and confusion about the term learning disability (Gerber and Price, 2003). Moreover, an understanding of how to accommodate people with learning disabilities in the workplace was rarely evident (Gerber and Price, 2003). Price et al. (2003) noted the lack of reaction from some employers to employee disclosure “My employer was neutral” another related after disclosing dyslexia his employer did not want to know about it.

As noted above disclosure depends on judgments about others [groups or organizations] and the readiness to divulge (Acquisti et al., 2012, p. 160). However legislation places the onus on the individual to seek accommodations (Dickinson & Verbeek, 2002). This is also cited by Price et al. (2003) who note that the American Disabilities Act (ADA) put the onus on individuals with learning disabilities to bringing an understanding of their disabilities to the workplace that would foster a partnership with their employer; this has been conceptualized as self-determination. Employers have a base need for communication, education and guidance from employees on the issue of SLD and timing is a key factor in the disclosure process. Gerber and Price (2003) discovered employers are expecting self-determination from their employees. There were five relevant points:

- The term learning disabilities is confusing to employers.
- For the most part employers are sympathetic to persons with SLD, but in the private sector there is an eye on the bottom line. Therefore productivity is of high importance irrespective of an occurrence of an SLD.
- Employers are interested in modifying training methods to fit persons with an SLD moreover they feel training that incorporates all learning styles benefits all employees.
- Find it important that employees with SLD’s know their own SLD and their personal challenges and the accommodations needed. Also they need to be able to advocate so they can provide guidance and feedback to employers.

- SLD's are not reported in interviews (typically), furthermore if employees do not disclose the provisions of law do not apply.

2.11 Conclusion

This review has charted the changing conception of disability, the medical and social models provide different concepts as Chappell et al. (2001) Macdonald (2009) and Barclay (2011) notes with the former locating disability as being within the individual and the latter locating the disabling factors in a social setting. The outcome of any interaction based on one could lead to conflict with the other. This has led to a combined conception of disability.

From here the issue of disability disclosure was explored this found it to be a major concern for employees with a learning disability (Bell, 2011 and Madaus, 2006). Previous research has looked at the issue of learning disability across the employment range without focusing on one area or context of employment (Harriss and Ricketts, 2009; Roberts and Hoff Macan, 2006 and Madaus et al., 2002). Self-disclosure was made on a risk assessment basis with employees fearing negative connotations towards learning disability (Madaus et al., 2008 and Gerber et al., 2004). Madaus et al. (2008) recommend that [individuals] must develop the skills of self-determination, self-advocacy, and self-awareness and of equal importance, is the use of 'transition specialists' who must be well informed in the process of disclosure.

The Employment Acts (1998-2011) include disability as a ground for discrimination and make provision for 'reasonable adjustments' however if employers are solely informed by legislation and operating from the medical model what are the implications for disclosure and organizational policy (Barclay, 2011; Macdonald, 2009 and Chappell et al., 2001). Previous research in the public sector has resulted in the following recommendations; increased support, disability awareness training, clear system of reporting and role models in the workplace (NDA, 2009). Bell (2011) notes that informed support can help individuals achieve their potential and therefore benefit the workforce to the advantage to society as a whole. This view echoes two comparative studies held by Gerber and Price (2003) which found that

though employers are eager to support disclosure and employee's needs, they [employers] need the employee's needs to be communicated in a timely fashion. This literature review has driven the formation of the research objective, which will now be addressed.

3 Research Objective and sub-objectives:

3.1 Research objective

“To explore how a learning disability and disclosure are conceptualised from the employer and employee perspectives”

The objective was formulated through a review of journal articles on the issue of disability disclosure, which found it to be a major concern for employees with an SLD (Bell, 2011 and Madaus, 2006). Furthermore the literature pointed to the need for employee’s to drive and educate employers on the specifics of SLD’s so as to engage with legal requirements for accommodations. (Madaus et al., 2008; Valenzuela and Martin, 2005; Chappell et al., 2001; Field et al., 1998 Campbell and Oliver, 1996; Field and Hoffman, 1994 and Gerber et al., 1992).

Four key areas evolved from the literature review that informed the sub objectives.

- To understand the concept of Learning Disability in the employment context.
- To establish the employee and employer view points on disclosure.
- To establish what policies and systems are in place to facilitate or hinder disclosure.
- To gain an understanding of what changes organizations could take to become more disclosure friendly.

3.2 Research Questions

Below are the research questions which have been formulated to explore and understand the research objectives and how this would be achieved.

How do employers and employees conceptualize learning disability?

By examining how and from where employers and employees conceptions of SLD are and constructed and informed.

By examining the affect of different conceptions of learning disability have on employer and employee attitudes.

By exploring the affect of the lack of understanding of learning disability

What issues do employees have with disclosure?

By exploring what employee's view as positive or negative aspects to disclosure.

By exploring the profile of reasoning for employee disclosure.

Identify employee's personal barriers or motivations for disclosing.

Identify if there is a stigma attached to disclosure.

Identify the profile of those who do or don't disclose, job titles, grades, age, gender etc.

What HR policies and systems are in place to facilitate disclosure?

By exploring the affect legislation has had on the creation of disclosure polices.

Identify employer and employee understanding and attitudes of 'Reasonable adjustments'.

Establish if and how employees are informed of disability disclosure policies.

Establish the primary potential benefits for both employers and employees for availing of disclosure polices.

How can organizations become more disclosure friendly?

By exploring what recommendations employers and employees make for aiding the disclosure process.

Identify employee knowledge and use of self-determination.

Establish what levels of disability training are being taken up.

Establish if the use 'role models' or 'change agents' are evident and useful where they are used.

4 Methodology Section

4.1 Introduction

This section will discuss the methodology used in this study for exploring and addressing the research aim, objectives and the research questions discussed above. The following will begin with a definition of research methodology and then look at the research strategy used, its principles and the process in which it was applied. It will provide explanations for the choices in methodology and strategy and why they are appropriate for this research. This section will conclude by looking at the limitations and analysis of the research.

Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009) define ‘Research Methodology’ as the theoretical and philosophical understanding of how research should be undertaken, including the assumptions upon which research is based and the implications of these for the method(s) adopted. They distinguish this from ‘Method’, which is the techniques and procedures used to acquire and analyze research data, for example surveys, interviews and statistical data. Methodology can be understood as an explanation of who, why, what, where, when and how you collected a specific data set and analyzed it. This ‘explanation’ seeks to provide an understanding of the justification of decisions made in this study. The primary decision was the defining of the research objective as “To assess how a learning disability is conceptualised affects the propensity to disclose” This objective was used as a focal point to drive the research and has driven the choices of the subjects, location, timing and reasoning of the research which will now be addressed.

4.2 Research Strategy

There are multiple types of research strategy that can be undertaken, for example Archival Research, Action Research, Case Study, Ethnography, Experimental Research and Grounded Theory. A grounded theory approach has been chosen as most appropriate for this study as Goulding (2002) notes grounded theory is suited to research, which seeks to explain behaviour while building and developing theory. This fits with the inductive research objective to gain an understanding of the

perceptions evolved in conceptualizing both SLD and the decision to disclose. And allowed for deductive analysis of policies and systems that are in situ.

The advantage to this approach is, as Saunders et al. (2009) note theory is developed from data generated by a series of observations, which can be tested in successive round(s) of data collection. Due to the topic area of ‘disclosing a learning disability’ as expressed in the literature review disclosure rates can be low. The use of both a survey and an interview stage facilitated an increased level of anonymity for the participants. This in turn increased the probability of a higher participation rate. The dual strategy produced both quantitative and qualitative data sets that allowed for theory to develop during the process. The disadvantages of this approach are its messy nature and it requires the researcher to have a tacit knowledge of the data (Saunders et al., 2009). This derives from the interpretive nature of the process, which is drawing theory from the data.

4.3 Principles

Saunders et al. (2009) note that reducing the possibility of getting the ‘wrong answer’ requires attention to the principles of research design predominantly reliability, validity and generalization.

Reliability refers to the extent that data is collected or analyzed to produce consistent findings (Saunders et al., 2009). For the purpose of this study and due to the interpretivist philosophy the author has taken great caution to account for and avoid participant bias, observer bias and observer error. The latter was a greater concern due to the nature of the semi-structured interview.

Validity is concerned with the findings of a study and that they really are what they appear to be about (Saunders et al., 2009). The author has to ensure face validity of the survey, this was achieved by ensuring the survey is clearly instructed, and that ambiguity is kept in check where possible. The requirement of open questions to achieve qualitative data, will in itself require a level of interpretation by participants, the interview stage allowed exploration of ambiguous results, this was dependent on the self-selection of participants. Validity during the interview stage was controlled by seeking clarification of participant’s replies and through

paraphrasing replies to ensure the author's interpretation was accurate. The findings of the interview stage were sent to the participants for review to increase validity.

Generalization is concerned with the ability to apply findings beyond the boundaries of the research. This research is concerned with gaining an understanding of SLD disclosure within a particular context and how this can inform future HR policies. The results therefore may not be over generalized to show a correlation between SLD disclosures across all employment environments or HR policies and disability disclosure as Cesare, Tannenbaum, and Dalessio (1990) warn researchers should exercise caution when drawing conclusions on the basis of disability studies, as results should be applied only to the particular disabilities examined.

4.4 Research Methods

Both primary and secondary methods were used during this research. Primary data takes the form of original data collected by the author through a survey and semi-structured interviews. Secondary data comes from data that has already been produced for example journal articles and government reports such as a census. The primary methods will be qualitative research and will be discussed in detail below. Secondary data that was used come from the Chartered Institute of Professional Development (CIPD), The Equality Authority, National College of Ireland (NCI) Library, electronic databases, census and surveys undertaken by AHEAD in Ireland, The Health Service Executive (HSE), International Dyslexia Association (USA) and legislation from Ireland, the UK and the USA.

4.5 Process

To understand the research process two theories will be examined, deductive reasoning and inductive reasoning. A deductive approach is in the tradition of scientific research, where by you develop theory and hypothesis and design a research strategy to test the hypothesis. This will result in confirmation of the theory or indicate the need for modification (Saunders et al., 2009). An inductive approach stemmed from social sciences skepticism of the deductive approach, where by you would collect data and develop theory as a result of data analysis, the focus is on

understanding why something is happening as apposed to describing what is happening (Saunders et al., 2009).

An inductive approach best suits the research objective of understanding the conceptualizing of learning disability and disclosure, as it allows for analysis to occur during data collection (Saunders et al., 2009). A deductive approach would require a hypothesis from which the data would be tested against (Saunders et al., 2009). However as the focus is on ‘conceptualizing and perceived affects’ this requires flexibility as alternative explanations could be produced during semi-structured interviews. An inductive approach enabled the theory to develop through a triangulation method of both a quantitative survey and qualitative semi-structured interviews. Triangulation is the use of different methods of data collection in order to ensure that the data is telling you what you think it is telling you (Saunders et al., 2009). As the research is concerned with the context in which the interaction of disclosure occurs, this reaffirms the use of the inductive approach. This will require an interpretivist philosophy as apposed to positivism or realism as Saunders et al., (2009) notes the interpretivist philosophy is necessary to explore the subjective meanings motivating participants actions. This reaffirmed the research objective to gain an understanding of the conceptualizing by participants. The primary research process was started in early April 2013, where a number of different agencies (DAI, AHEAD, CSO and Student Services in NCI) where contacted to solicit background and contextual information on the subject of SLD and disclosure. Correspondence where held between all of the above and the author and the author held an unstructured interview with Catherine Elliott the Learning Support Coordinator in NCI all of which helped guide the research in its infancy.

The online survey was administered between the 18th of June 2013 and the 3rd of July 2013. The semi-structured interview’s where held between the 15th and 27th of July 2013.

4.6 Sample

Saunders et al. (2009) note there are two types of sampling techniques available, probability samples where there is the probability that each case being selected from the population and it will equal for all cases and non-probability samples where the

probability of equal representation of all cases is unknown. The former is best suited to research where the focus is to produce statistical data on the population, the latter can draw certain generalizations but not on the statistical level of the former. There are a number of different techniques associated with probability and non-probability sampling (Figure 3.1)

As Saunders et al. (2009) note self-selection sampling, whereby individuals are allowed to identify their desire to take part in the research. The research publicizes the need for cases through the appropriate channels and the data is collected from those who respond.

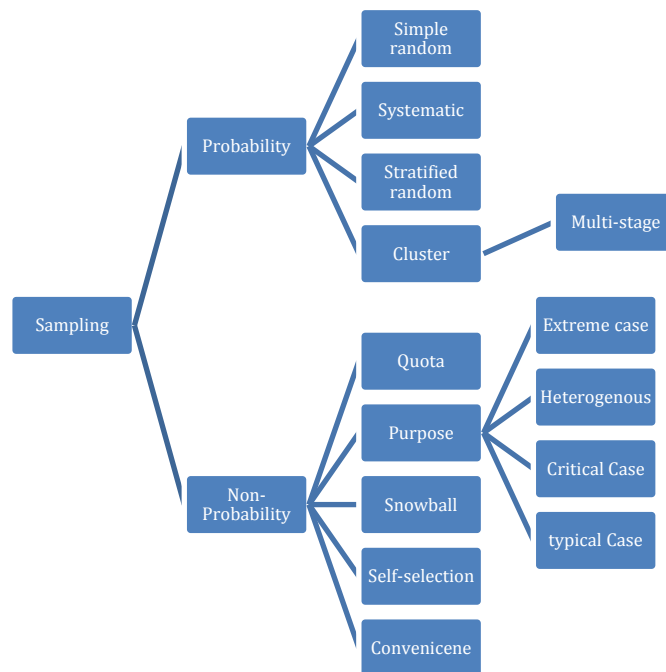


Figure 2 sampling techniques

This research used non-probability sampling; the focus was on both employers and employees (both employees with and without SLD) who could be involved with the disclosing of an SLD in the office environment. There are a wide variety of roles that can be found within the office environment, for example Recruitment Administrator, HR Analyst and Finance Project Manager. These roles produce a wide range of tasks and duties which require high levels of literacy and numeracy for example responding to emails, writing and placing adverts, completing reports, updating SAP, maintaining HR databases and financial accounting and analytical

skills. All of the above roles require strong user computer skills in particular Microsoft office Word Excel and Power Point.

For this reason the office environment was chosen due to the nature of office work, with a wide variety of roles; high levels of numeracy and literacy ability and the difficulties associated between these abilities and learning disabilities. The target group of employers will be managers, supervisors, co-workers and HR department personnel. This group was chosen, as they are the likely recipients of a disclosure from an employee who is seeking supports or accommodations. They are well placed to provide information from an organizational perspective of systems and policy in relation to disability, disclosure and accommodation there of.

The employee perspective was sought to seek out those who have an SLD and either have or would consider disclosing in the work environment. This is a vital perspective as the decision to disclose is a subjective one, which is based on the employee's judgment of the possible outcomes of disclosing. The sample was collected using self-sampling at both the survey and interview stages. The author chose to distribute an invitation to participate on eight groups on LinkedIn (Alumni of NCI, CIPD Midlands Ireland, CIPD Member, CIPD Official, HR in Ireland, Irish HR Professionals, Irish Employment Law, The Open University Alumni, Training and Development Ireland and Human Resources Ireland). This provided a potential large sample group. In any organization that was represented the sample group was affectively self-selected at both the survey and interview stage. This increased the likelihood of a sample that has interacted with multiple organizations, consequently enriching their qualitative experiences.

4.7 Piloting

According to Saunders et al. (2009) the purpose of piloting a survey or interview is to refine it so that the respondents will have no problems in answering the questions and there will be no problems in recovering the data. There are a number of possible methods for piloting the survey and the interviews, the first is to circulate them to associates or to contact organizations with a view to running a pilot study and finally to use social media to circulate to a wider cast.

The advantages with the first option are connections already exist, however due to the nature of the study personal connections maybe less willing to participate. The second option has the advantage of providing an end-to-end piloting of the entire research process in 'real terms'. The disadvantage would be the prospect of access and time constraints of interacting on the organizations 'time frame'. The final option has the advantage of reaching a wide sample and could be achieved in a relatively short space of time. The disadvantage lies in the lack of control over draft versions of questions. The author used the first option; the use of personal contacts and changes were made where needed.

4.8 Qualitative Approach

Saunders et al. (2009) note the distinguishing features of qualitative data as it is based on meanings expressed through words, collected results are in the form of non-standardized data which requires classification and finally analysis is conducted through the use of conceptualization. The goal of a qualitative approach is to gain an understanding of social and human activities, it is a subjective approach, which includes examining and reflecting on various viewpoints (Hussey and Hussey, 2007).

There are a number of types of qualitative methods, which can be used for example, interviews (structured, semi-structured and non-structured), surveys (self-administered or researcher administered) focus groups and participant observation (Saunders et al., 2009). The qualitative approach and methods are appropriate as it is the aim of this research to acquire data on SLD and disclosure in the workplace from the participants (managers and employees), which allowed for examination and evaluation of the research objectives.

The disadvantage of this approach for the research outlined above was they do lack the quantifiable standardization, which comes from a quantitative approach. However as this research objective is focused on the 'perceptions' of SLD and disclosure the qualitative approach is suitable.

4.9 Structured Survey

Saunders et al. (2009) note the survey can be used to collect data, which can suggest possible reasons for particular relationships between variables, and to enable the researcher to identify themes in the data set. For the purpose of this research the use of a self-administered survey has been chosen so as to enable the author to address the first two research questions: To conceptualize SLD in the employment context and to establish the employee view points on disclosure. This will allow the theory to be drawn from the data and then later tested during an interview stage.

The obvious advantages for the use of a survey were the potential for reaching a wider base of respondents; the survey in comparison to interviews is relatively quick for both researcher and participants. The draw back of the self-administered survey is its dependency on the participant to complete it with full enthusiasm. Which could affect the rate and quality of responses as the participant won't have any other guidance except for that which is provided in print with the survey. This can however be alleviated through piloting the survey as outlined above.

Survey Design

The survey was adapted from previous instrument designed by Madaus (2006). The structure will be broken into the following sections: Biographical information, Educational Experiences, Employment information and experiences and finally SLD experiences in employment, disclosure experiences and employer and co-worker viewpoints.

The survey was closed with an invitation for participants for semi-structured interviews. During both stages participants were encouraged to consider their answers based on the entirety of their career and not just their present employment. By encouraging self-reflection, participants were able to draw their own comparisons and actively contemplate on their qualitative experiences. It was the intention that the survey would have a minimum return of fifty participants from which the expectation was to conduct the interview stage with 6% (3) participants this was exceeded at both stages and will be addressed later. The survey was distributed to groups on LinkedIn with a link to the online survey site Kwicksurveys.com, which enabled both a quick return as apposed to a postal return

and the option for employees who would prefer privacy to complete the survey outside of work hours.

4.10 Semi-structured Interviews

This second qualitative approach was chosen, as it allowed for deep investigation on themes that were identified from the survey. This also allowed for the participants to divulge greater depth and meaning from their experiences. Which increased understanding of the first two sub objectives: To conceptualize Learning Disability in an employment context and to establish the employee viewpoints on disclosure. This then allowed the author to address the third and fourth sub objectives: To establish what policies and systems are in place to facilitate or hinder disclosure and to gain an understanding of what changes organizations could take to become more disclosure friendly. This use of semi-structured interviews located possible trends that are facilitators or inhibitors to disclosure and finally to locate possible trends and or a common framework of corrective suggestions to increase an organizational culture that is ‘disclosure friendly’.

Participants were given three options as to the format the one-to-one interview could be taken face-to-face, telephone or Skype. The nature of the research dictated a multifaceted approach to enable the optimum level of participants and to ensure the data set was complete. All of the interviewee’s chose to participate by telephone. The interviews lasted between 30-45 minutes each; the telephone interview had the advantage of allowing the participants a degree of anonymity and confidentiality as all but two were held outside of normal work hours. This also allowed the author to take notes without distracting the participant. The main disadvantage was the lack of face-to-face contact, which would have lost a degree of both personalization and recording of body language. This was address by the author by paraphrasing and checking for correct understanding and interpretation.

Interview Design

A thematic approach of semi-structured interviews will be taken as Saunders et al. (2009, p. 320) comment “interviews the researcher will have a list of themes and questions to be covered, although these may vary from interview to interview. This

means that you may omit some questions in particular interviews, given a specific organizational context that is encountered in relation to the research topic” The themes were drawn from the literature review and informed by the results of the survey outlined above. The questions were both open and closed depending on the information sought for example ‘Can you tell me about how your SLD affects you in employment’? Or ‘Have you ever had an employee and co-worker disclose an SLD to you’? This approach allowed for the responses of the interviewee to guide the line of questioning to explore their understanding and interpretations of SLD and disclosure.

4.11 Recording & Transcribing

Telephone interviews were recorded with ‘call recorder’ for the iPhone, which produced a digital recording, which was transferred to a pc for transcribing. This method eased the pressure of note taking during the interviews, however notes were taken. Before participants committed to the interview stage the options of interview recording was discussed and agreed upon. Assurances of privacy and correct data usage were agreed between the participants and the author.

4.12 Ethical Considerations

Research ethics relates to how we formulate and clarify the research topic, design of research, gain access, collect, process, store, analyze data and write up research and ultimately communicate this to the those involved (Saunders et al., 2009). The topic and its objectives may be considered as a sensitive area for both organizations and participants. The greatest care was taken to ensure confidentiality and to conduct the research in an empathic manner. It was a priority at the interview stage to ensure that the participants were partaking voluntarily and that they could withdraw at any time during or after the interview had concluded. Similarly the author had given due consideration to the interpretivist nature of the study to avoid misinterpretation in terms of cultural differences between the organizations and the participants.

During the research and especially during the semi-structured interview the author had kept in mind the possibility of bias and the effect omitting or adding questions

would have on the data set. The interpretivist approach could also lead to misinterpretation of the data collected. As Delbridge and Kirkpatrick note we are part of a social world and can not detach ourselves from it, or avoid relying on our common sense knowledge and life experiences when we interpret it (In Saunders et al., 2009, p. 297). The author had to be aware of and account for Acquiescence, Extremity and Social desirability bias amongst participants.

The author developed trust with participants by stating the purpose of the study and, assuring confidentiality of both organizations and individuals, as pseudonyms would be the only identifiers used. As Saunders et al. (2009) note knowledge of us [the author] means they [participants] should be able to trust our stated intentions and assurances given about the use of data provided.

4.13 Limitations

The research is concerned with gaining an understanding of SLD disclosure within a particular context and how this can inform future HR policies. The results therefore may not be over generalized to show a correlation between HR policies and disability or disclosure as Cesare et al. (1990) note researchers should exercise caution when drawing conclusions on the basis of disability studies; results should be applied only to the particular disabilities examined.

4.14 Analysis

Saunders et al. (2009, p. 587) define “analysis as the ability to break down data and to clarify the nature of the component parts and the relationship between them”. With both the survey and the interviews the analysis was conducted on a thematic approach, which seeks to identify the major themes from both sets of participants, cross reference these both between the participant’s responses and the two stages. The advantage is it creates a comparison based on the themes between the wider group at the survey stage and the more in depth findings of the limited smaller grouping of interviewees. The main disadvantage is the time spent on this part of the process, as error checking was a primary concern.

4.15 Summary

This section outlined the type of research, the methods and the process that will be used for this study and it provides the rationale as to why they were adopted. Saunders et al. (2009) comment of the concept of the ‘research onion’, which depicts the issues underlying the choice of data collection techniques and analysis procedures and that there are important layers of the onion that need to be peeled away during the research process. Figure 3.2 depicts my research onion as it reflects the choices of techniques and procedures taken during this research.

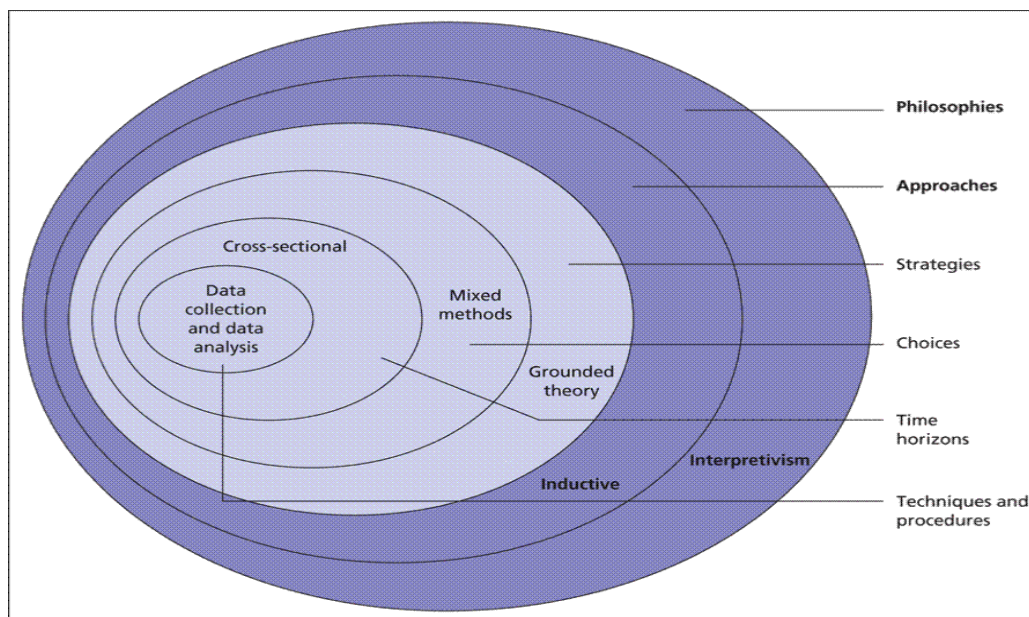


Figure 3 (adapted from Saunders et al 2009)

This researcher’s choices and direction are as follows; the philosophy is interpretivist, the approach is inductive, the strategy is grounded theory, the choice will be mixed method, the time frame will be cross-sectional and finally the techniques and procedures will be a qualitative survey and semi-structured interviews.

5 Findings and Analysis

5.1 Survey Findings

The survey was distributed on LinkedIn.com as this nullified the need to gain access to organizations, as the focus of the study is to gain an understanding of individual perceptions on disclosure of SLD. The survey was distributed around eight groups on LinkedIn.com (Alumni of NCI, CIPD Midlands Ireland, CIPD Member, CIPD Official, HR in Ireland, Irish HR Professionals, Irish Employment Law, The Open University Alumni, Training and Development Ireland and Human Resources Ireland), which produced a population of over thirty-five thousand. The survey was ran from the 18th of June to the 3rd of July 2013 and had 70 responses. Although 5 did not complete the survey beyond the Biographical section and a further 4 were living outside of the Republic of Ireland, as such both groups were omitted from the findings. This left the response rate at 61 surveys recorded. The survey had four sections, Biographical, SLD experiences (The Employee Group), Non-SLD experiences (The Employer Group) and disclosure policies (Employee and Employer Groups). Therefore there are two groups, those with an SLD (Employee Group) and those without an SLD (Employer Group). The survey was analyzed on a thematic approach, which was looking for key trends among the employee and employer groups.

5.2 Biographical

The demographical breakdown of all respondents is as follows:

Gender:

39.3% male and 60.7% Female.

Age:

42.6% where between the age of 26-35

23% where between the age of 36-45

31.1% where 46+

Ethnicity:

Irish 83.6%
European 9.8%
Other 6.6% (of which there were five from the UK, one Irish American and one Australian)

English as first language:

Yes 98.4%
No 1.6% (First language was Spanish)

Type of employment:

Business 29.9%
Technology 22.4%
Other 19.4%

The average length in present position is 5.5 years.

5.3 Employee Group (Experiences of those with an SLD)

Of those surveyed 7% have a documented SLD (Fig 4) this accounts for 4 responses (All noted as having Dyslexia). This group had their SLD identified in either primary school 50% or at third level 50% (Fig 5). All availed of learning supports during education. All had achieved a third level degree with one completing a postgraduate diploma (Fig 6).

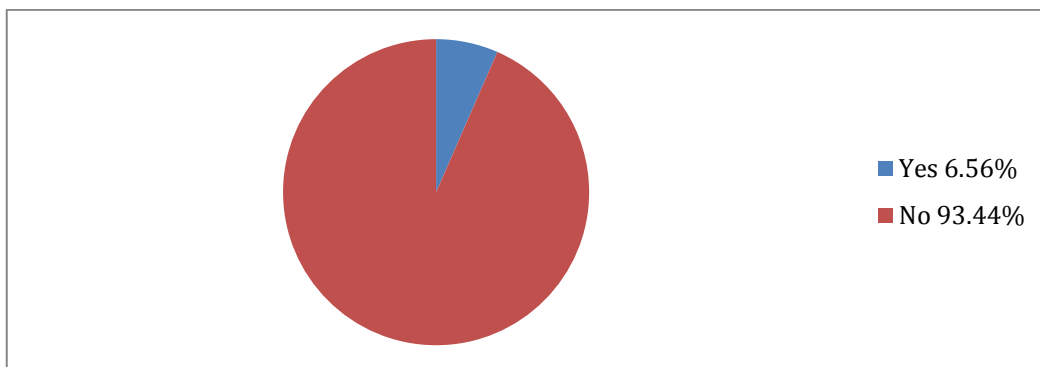


Figure 4 Documented SLD (Employee Group)

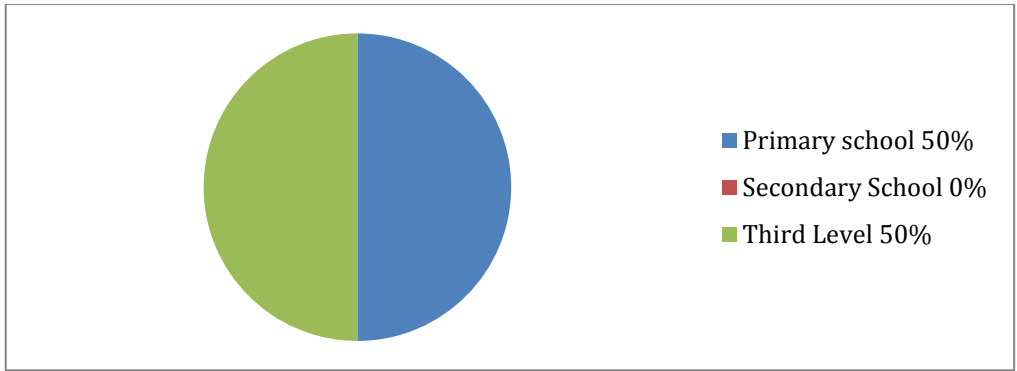


Figure 5. Identification of SLD

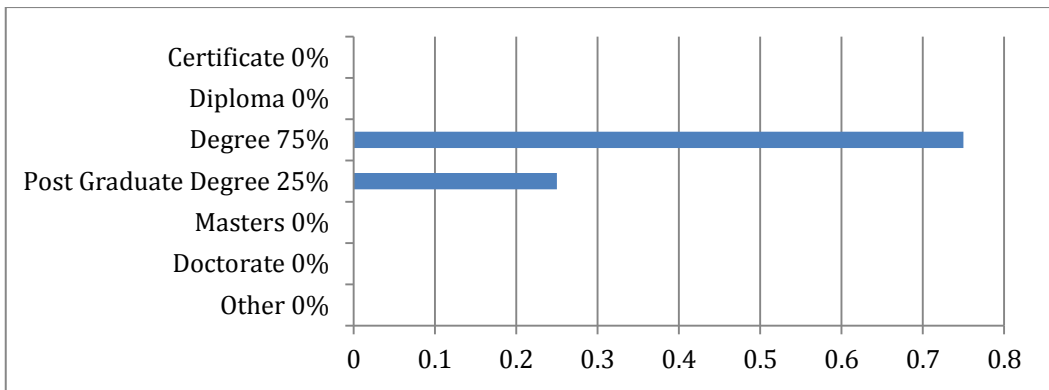


Figure 6 Level of Education achieved

5.4 Impact of SLD:

All relate that having a SLD impacts their work in some way.

On the frequency of the impact of their SLD, 50% said 'frequently' and a further 25% said 'Rarely' & 25% said 'Always' (Fig 7). The key areas affected are reading and writing at 17.6% and organizational skills and time management and rate of processing information at 12%. Affecting social interactions had a response rate at 6%. (Fig 8)

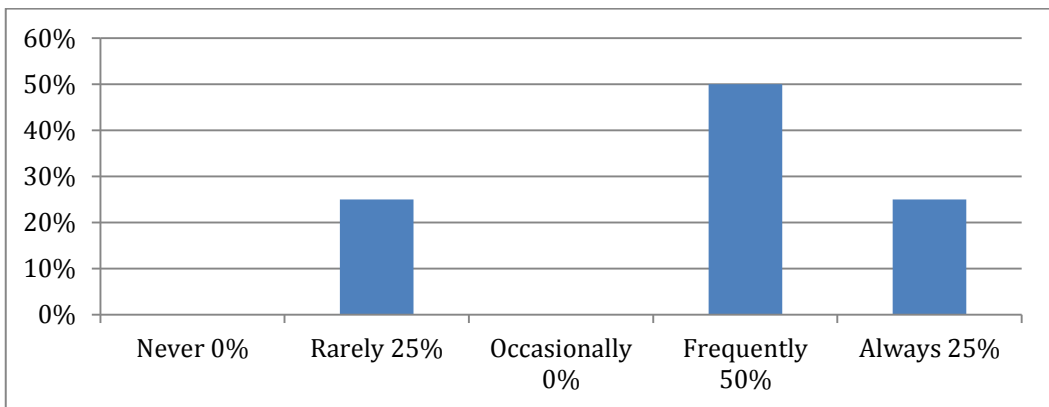


Figure 7 Frequency of Impact of SLD

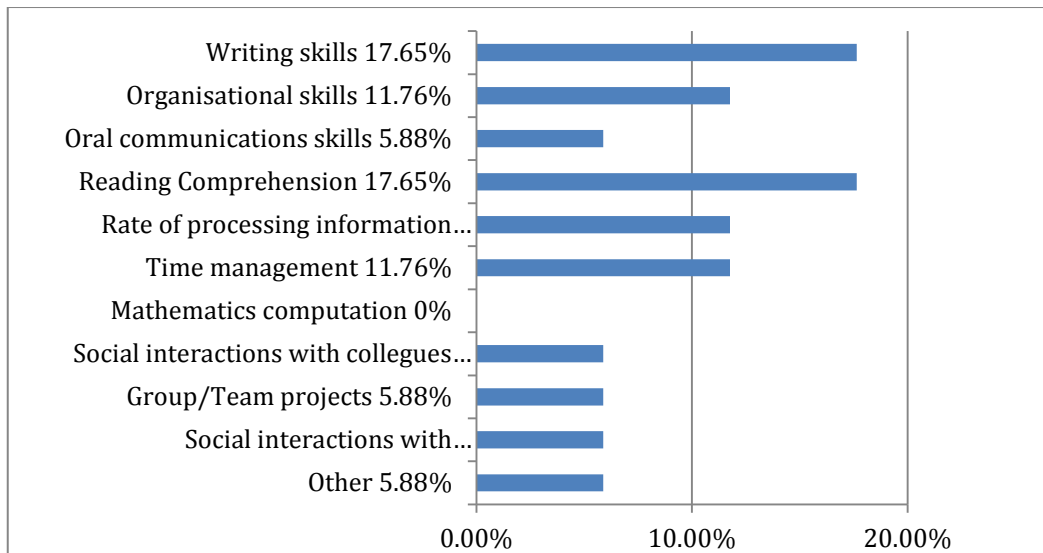


Figure 8 Key areas affected by SLD

5.5 Disclosure:

All had disclosed their SLD with either their present or previous employer.

Disclosure was predominately made to a supervisor followed by coworkers. One did disclose on an internal ‘Annual Disability Census’ (Fig 9).

The main reason for disclosure was ‘to make supervisor aware of SLD’ followed by ‘To make coworkers aware of SLD’ and then ‘use of technology as an accommodation’ (Fig 10) however 50% reported negative effects of disclosure (Fig 11). Only one individual requested formal workplace accommodations, which are similar to the rate of requests, made to the employer group (Fig 12). One individual has chosen not to disclose due to problems created after disclosure in previous employment (which will be address during the interviews).

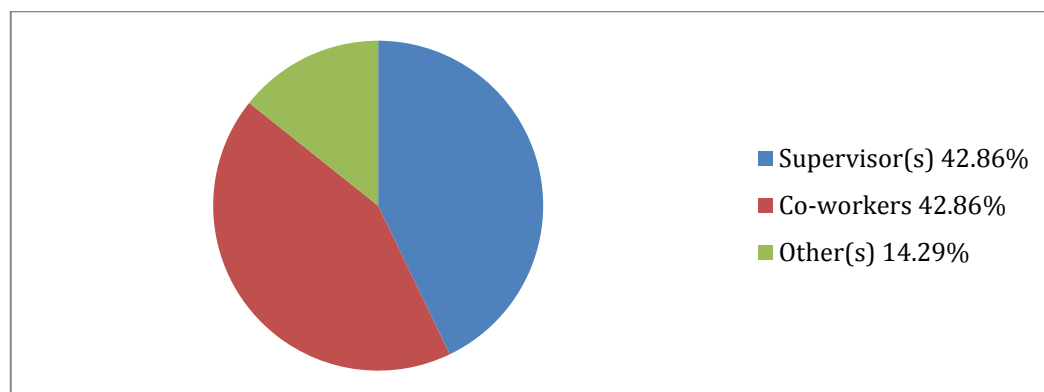


Figure 9 who disclosures were made to

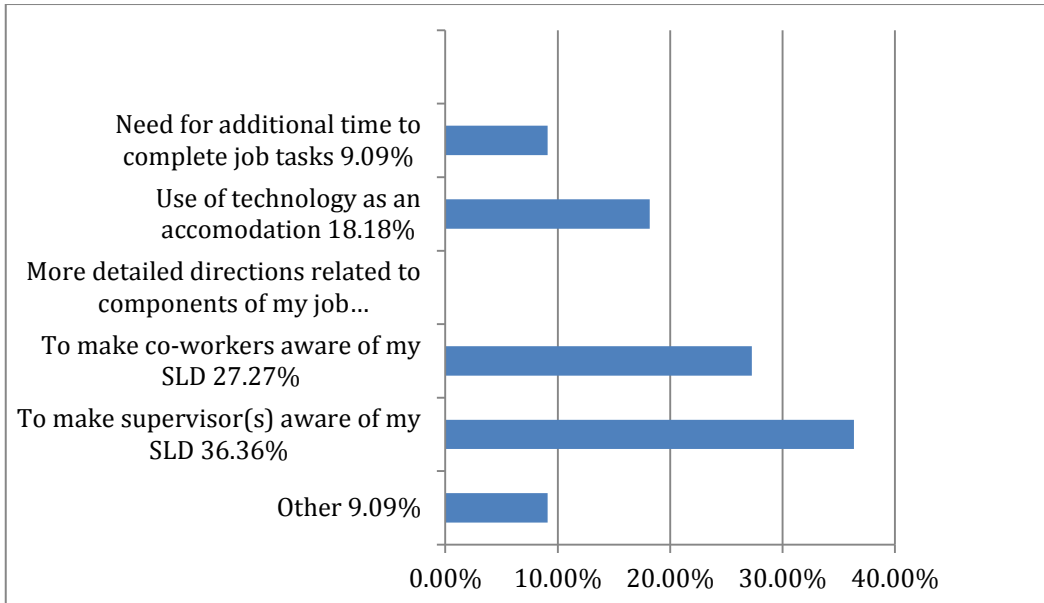


Figure 10 Reason for disclosure

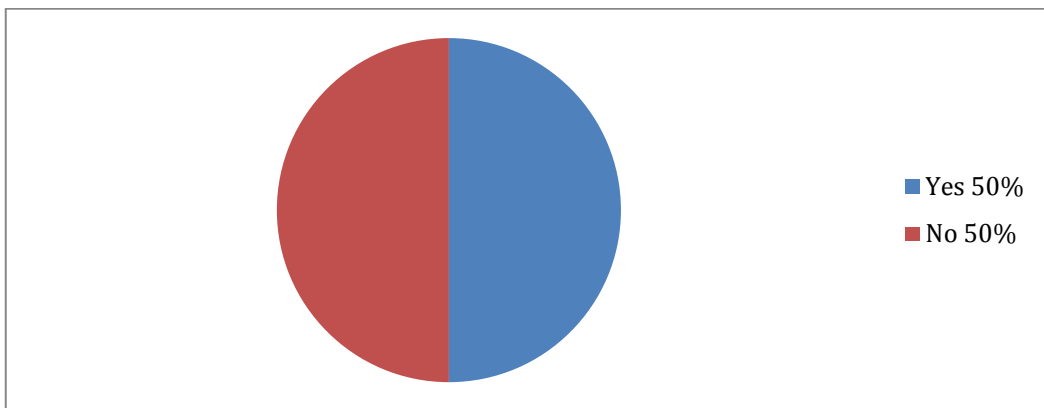


Figure 11 has negative Response to disclosing

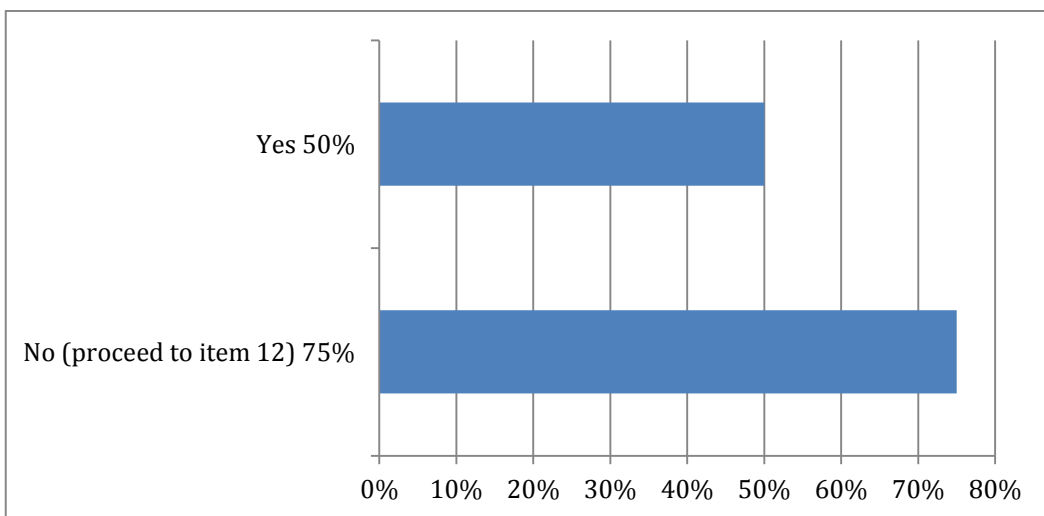


Figure 12 requested workplace accommodations

5.6 Personal strategies:

There is a wide spread of strategies and accommodations used by this group, with the dominant being ‘Time management’ ‘setting goals and priorities’ ‘problem solving/brainstorming’ at 13% each. The second most used strategies are ‘Assistive technology’ ‘stay late’ ‘time outside of work’ & ‘self-advocacy’ at 8.7% each (Fig 13).

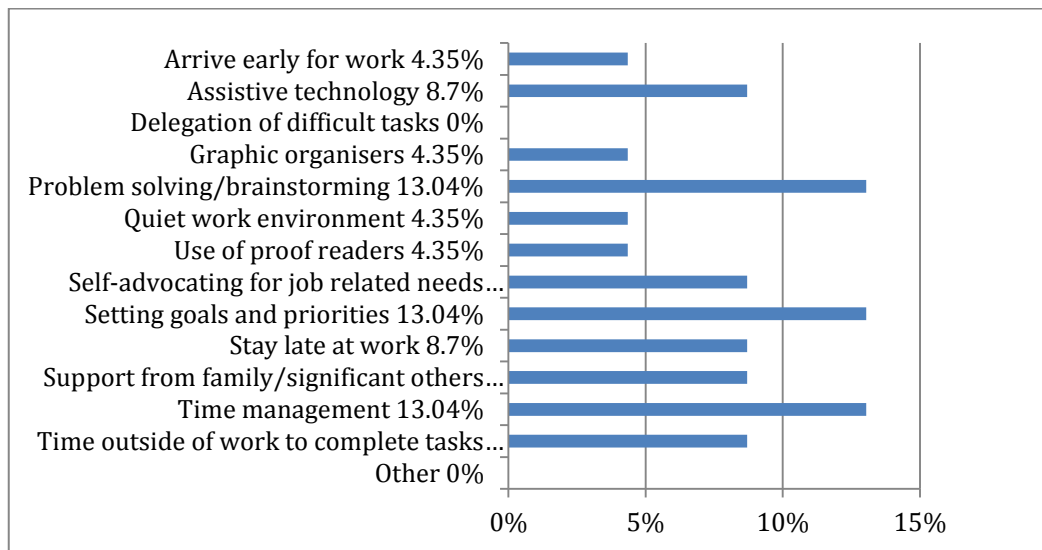


Figure 13 Strategies and accommodations used.

5.7 Employer group (those without an Documented SLD)

Of those surveyed 93% did not have a documented SLD this accounts for 57 responses (Fig 14).

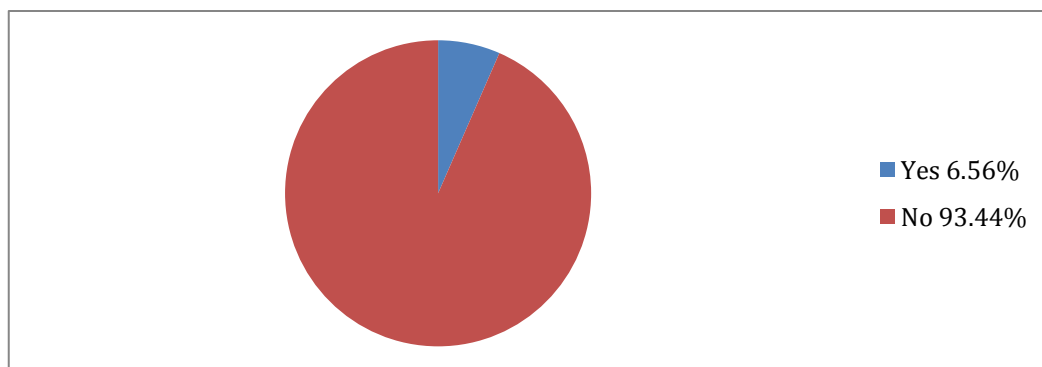


Figure 14 those without an SLD (Employer group)

5.8 Impact of SLD:

The most common known SLD to this group was Dyslexia at 42% followed by ADHD at 33% (Fig 15).

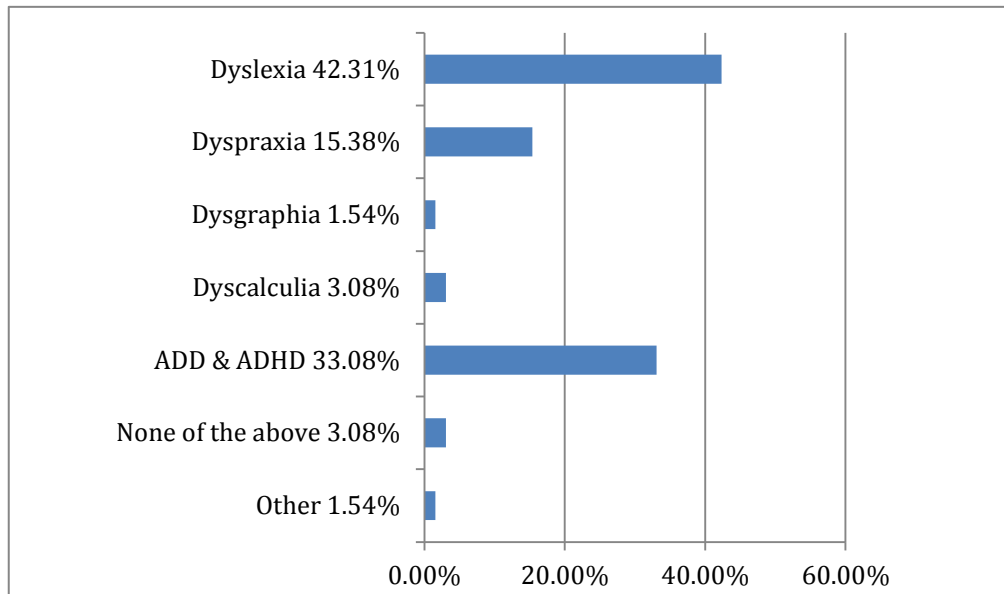


Figure 15 most known SLD's

The understanding of these is varied, most cited reading, writing and spelling as characteristics of Dyslexia and hyperactive, concentration and behavioral problems with ADHD. Other verbatim responses included:

- 'In my experience confidence'
- 'Frustration'
- 'An individual may approach a task in a different style'
- 'Process information differently' & 'permanent'
- 'The ability to read is more time consuming'
- 'Minimal understanding'

This group felt the frequency in which a SLD affects an individual was at 36% for 'occasionally', 28% for 'frequently' and 14% for always. 18% responded as 'unknown' and a further 4 individuals did not respond (Fig 16).

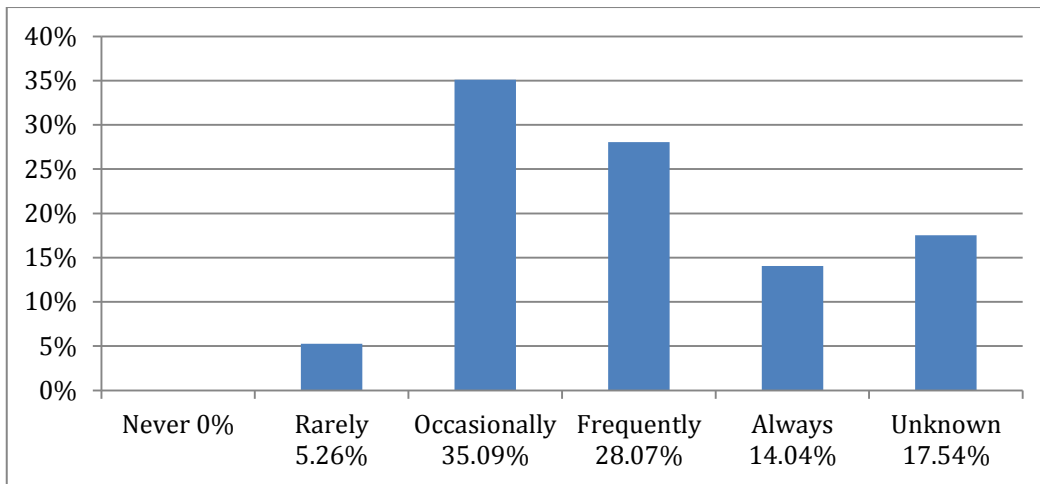


Figure 16 Frequency of Impact of SLD

In relation to what areas an employee would be affected by an SLD employers reflected the views of the employee group, with writing, reading, organizational skills and mathematics having 17%, 15% & 10% response rates. Interestingly ‘social interactions with colleagues’ ‘group/team projects’ & ‘social interactions with supervisors’ had 8%, & 7% response rates. This is slightly higher than the employee group (Fig 17).

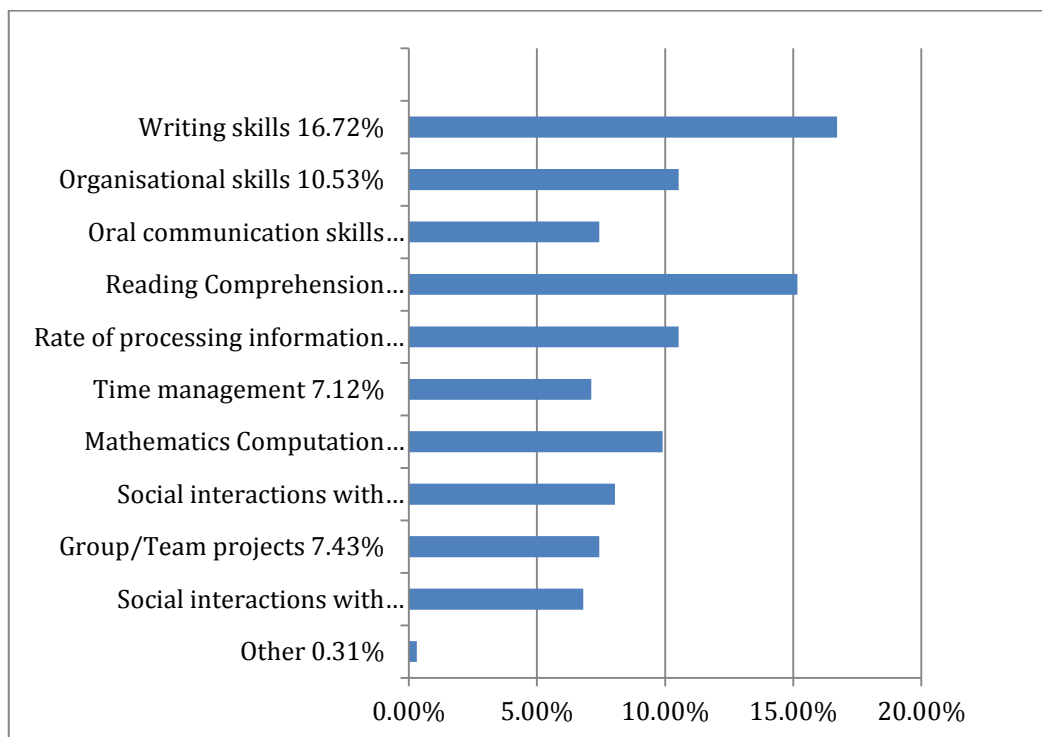


Figure 17 Key areas affected by SLD

5.9 Disclosure:

The disclosure rate to employers or coworkers is 28% the majority of disclosures happening after the person were hired 16%. However 40% have never had a SLD disclosure made to them (Fig 18). Reflecting the views of those with a SLD, the majority of disclosures are made to supervisors 50% followed by coworkers at 27% (Fig 19). The reasons for disclosure are focused on the need for supports and accommodations; with the ‘need for additional time’ 12% ‘assistive technology’ 12% and ‘more detailed directions’ 17% as the key reasons given (Fig 20). Both the employer and employee groups found the same reasons an employee would choose to not disclose, that there is great concern for negatively affecting relationships, with ‘negatively affecting coworker relationships’ at 22% and ‘negatively affecting supervisor relationships’ at 21% (Fig 21). Finally only 16% of employers had a request made for workplace accommodations. This does reflect the SLD groups low up take of requesting workplace accommodations.

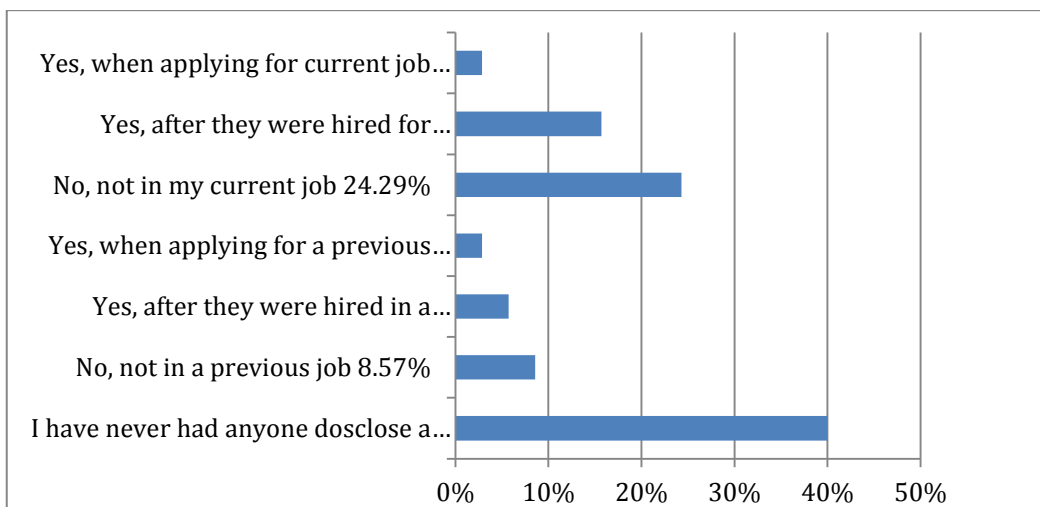


Figure 18 Rate of disclosures to employers

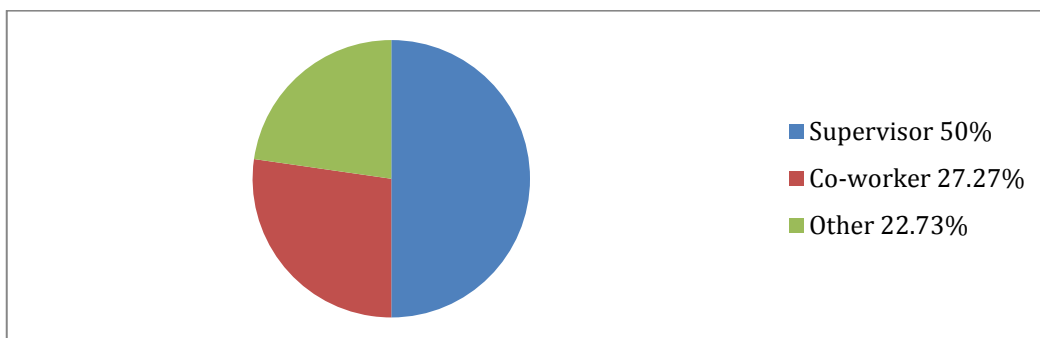


Figure 19 Relationship to employee disclosing

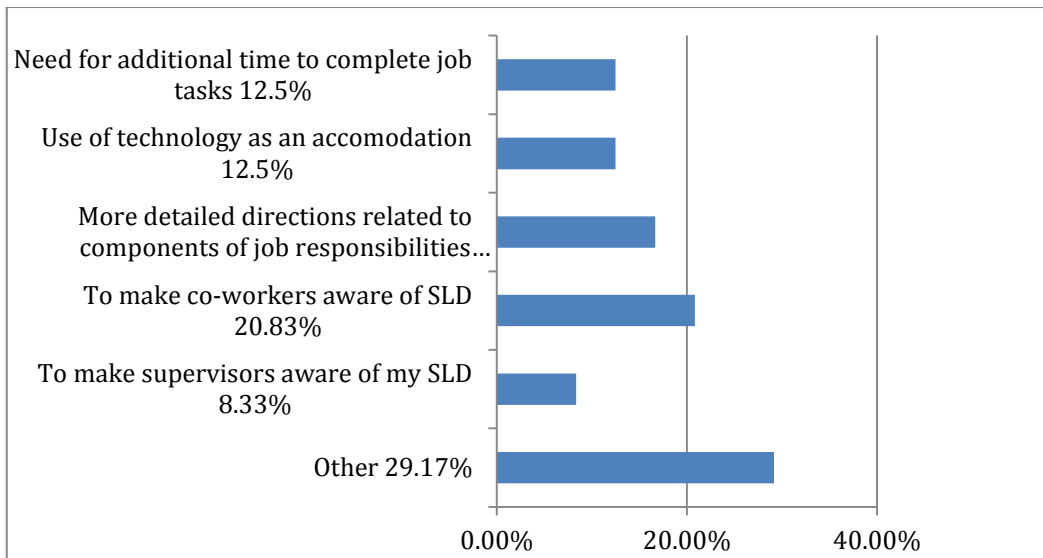


Figure 20 reason given for disclosure

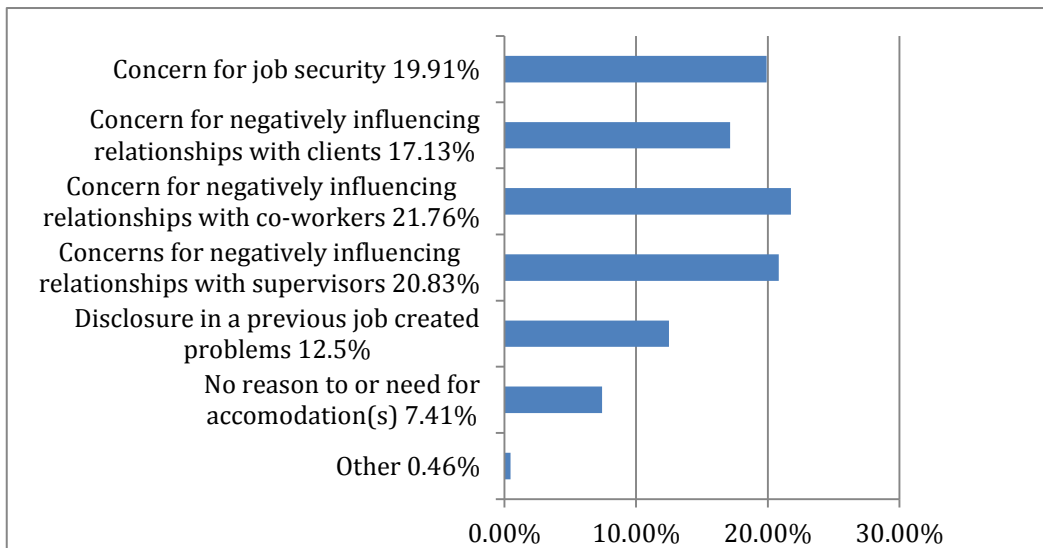


Figure 21 reasons to not disclose (Employers perspective)

5.10 Strategies and Accommodations:

Employers were asked to choose from a list of strategies, which they are aware of; there is an equal spread across the categories with the majority receiving between 7-11%. What was most noteworthy was the awareness of 'self-advocacy' dips to 4% (Fig 22). The understanding of the different strategies was limited with the survey only generating 10 responses. Finally this group were asked which if any of the strategies do they use (Fig 23). Both the employee and employer groups had an equal spread across the categories with the majority receiving between 7-13%,

however there what was unexpected was the uptake in ‘proof readers’ at 12% in comparison to those with a SLD who had only a 1.4% use of proof-readers. Both groups had equal up take of ‘setting goals and priorities’ at 13%.

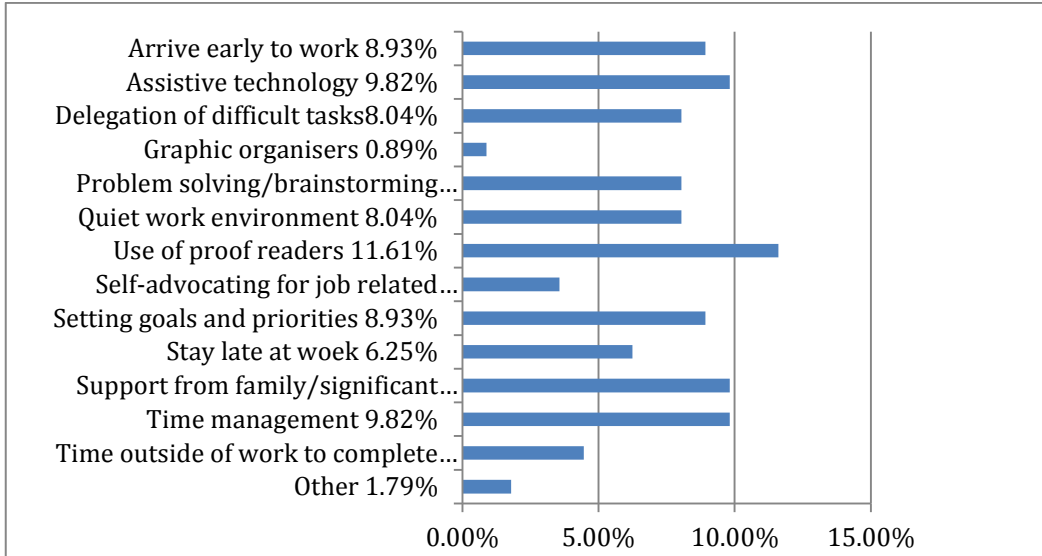


Figure 22 Strategies employers are aware of

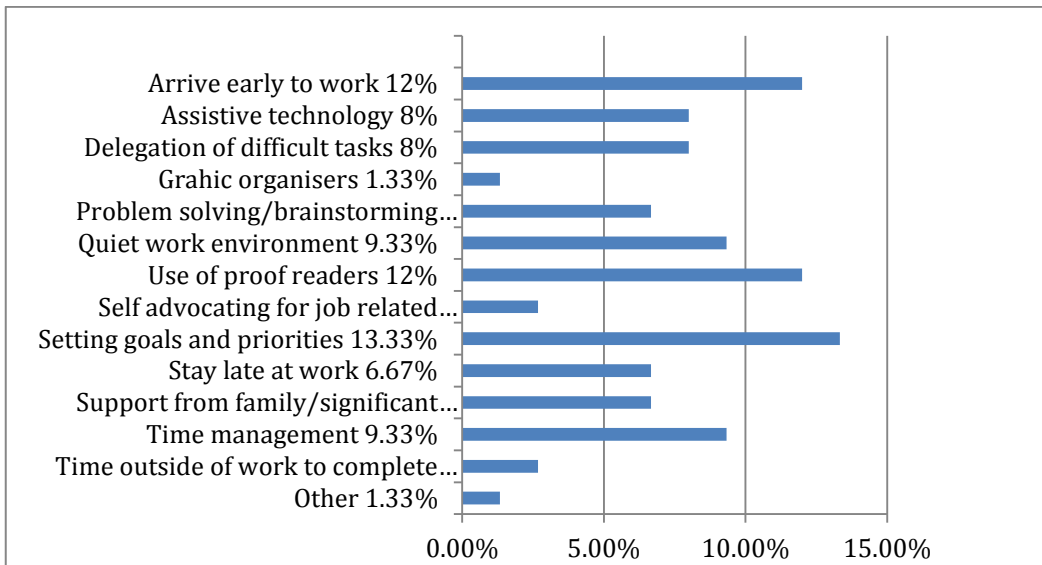


Figure 23 Strategies used by employers

5.11 Disclosure Policy (Groups 1&2):

Only 15% could confirm their present organization has a disclosure policy. 40% didn't know and 45% did not have a disability disclosure policy (Fig 24).

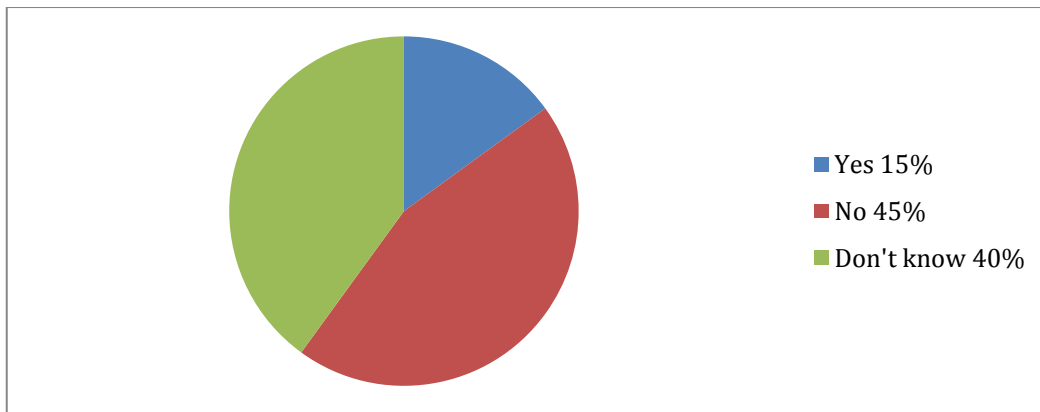


Figure 24 Presence of disclosure policy

When pressed for awareness of disclosure policies outside of their organization the majority was unaware of any. Finally the survey looked at any recommendations for aiding the disclosure process. The consensus was to increase communication of disability laws, and company policies and in general communication within an organization i.e. between employees at all levels:

- “Better communication of policies”
- “Have a policy in place, outline the procedure that would result following disclosure, confirm the potential consequences of disclosure”
- “Communication and accessibility to information is key. Also have trained professionals on hand to deal with employees. Currently our EAP programme is out sourced with 24/7 availability to employees.”
- “Designated contact people. " A friendly but trained face"”
- “Personally I never accepted my dyslexia as a disability, so sensitivity is very important.”
- “From the employers side I would recommend that they ensure it is made evident that any disclosure is purely so that the employees life can be made less stressful if there are things that currently cause them difficulty as a result of their SLD.”
- “Have co-workers express there feelings on the issue”

5.12 Summary

The survey produced a considerable amount of information from both groups. In conceptualizing an SLD it was noted of the 4 respondents they were initially identified in either primary school or at third level education. All availed of learning supports during their education. They revealed that their SLD impacting their work in some way, with 50% recording it impacted 'frequently' which is in contrast to the employer group who recorded a 'frequently' at 28%. Both groups located the areas of reading, writing and mathematics as those most affected. In relation to disclosure the majority of disclosures were made to supervisors across both groups. The reasons for disclosure were viewed as to increase awareness from the employee perspective however the employer's recorded higher rates in the need for assistance and accommodations. One employee has chosen not to disclose due to negative effects of disclosure. The employer group was however aware and understanding of the potential of negative affects, as they cited negatively affecting relationships with supervisors and co-workers as reasons why an individual would choose not to disclose. Both groups were surveyed for the type of strategies they used during their employment, employee's focused on time management, setting goals and problem solving the employer group echoed these approaches, however they were more inclined to use a proof-reader and were less aware of self-advocacy than the employees. Both groups were homogeneously surveyed on disclosure policies with only 15% having some form of disability policy; however the majority was unaware of or did not have a disclosure policy. Finally there was consensus that an increase in communication of information relating to disability and having a disclosure policy was recommended.

5.13 Interview Findings

5.14 Introduction

The participants were self-selected from the survey by reregistering their interest to continue to the interview stage, this produce a total population of 24 individuals. From this 6 were taken forward to interview as they best represented the sample group. There were 3 who had a documented SLD and 3 who did not; for the purpose of this study they have been categorized as the employer group Joan, Sarah and Michael and the employee group Paul, Vicky and Rachel. The biographical details of the participants are detailed in table 1 below. They best represented the total population in terms of age, position and length of experience and SLD disclosure experience. The interviews were held between the 15th and 27th of July 2013.

Name	Age	Type of industry	Position	Length in position	Documented SLD	Disclosure Status
Joan (Employer)	56-65	Real Estate	Associate HR Director	15 Years	No	Has received a Disclosure
Sarah (Employer)	26-35	Technology	In House Recruiter specialist	4 Years	No	Has received a Disclosure
Michael (Employer)	26-35	Recruitment	Recruitment consultant	Less than 1 Year	No	Has received a Disclosure
Paul (Employee)	46-55	IT	IT Tutor/ Formally IT Support	1 Year	Yes	Has previously Disclosed
Vicky (Employee)	26-35	Social Care	Key Worker	7 Years	Yes	Has previously Disclosed
Rachel (Employee)	26-35	Public Body	HR Advisor	7 Years	Yes	Has previously Disclosed

Table 1: Biographical details of interviewees

5.15 Analysis

A thematic approach was taken to analyzing data produced from the semi-structured interviews. Each interview transcript was analyzed first to locate key passages, which were then examined for reoccurring themes such as emotions, behaviours, events and meanings given to them. From this list of codes, qualitative categories were created which were then filled with corresponding verbatim excerpts. There were 163 excerpts recorded. The analysis focused on locating and exploring connections between the themes in an attempt to conceptualize the disclosure process from both the employer and employee perspectives. There are considerable similarities in the employer and employee perspectives both are highly aware of the consequences of negative reactions to disclosure and overall view self-determination, communication and understanding as vital to successful disclosure and policy. All of which is time specific, as noted in the literature pro-active disclosure can be positive however reactive disclosure can lead to adversarial situations and is key to avail of reasonable adjustments (Madaus, 2006; Roberts and Hoff Macan, 2006; Price et al., 2003 and Dickinson and Verbeek, 2002). To ensure the validity and accuracy of the coding and themes the findings were distributed to the participants to ensure interpretation did not lead to misrepresentation of the data or the participants.

5.16 Interview Findings

Self-determination and communication and understanding emerged as two main themes from the findings, with each being comprised of a number of interdependent elements. Each theme can be conceptualised as a cycle within three interdependent phases of disclosing an SLD, pre-disclosure, disclosure and post disclosure (Fig 25).



Figure 25 the phases of disclosure

5.17 Self-determination

Self-determination was constructed by the following elements: previous responses to SLD; stigma; personal conception of SLD; perceived advantages and disadvantages and level of self-determination (Fig 26).

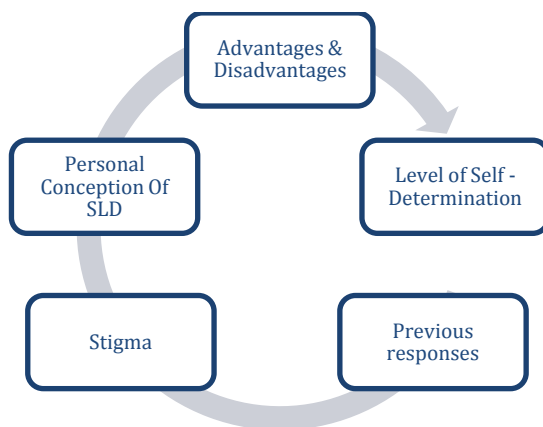


Figure 26 Self-determination Cycle

When discussing the personal experiences of having an SLD the responses of others came to light as a powerful driving element in the identity of SLD, particularly the negative responses which would often linger long after the interaction for each of the three participants in the employee group.

“She (Principle, in secondary school) said we don’t take mentally handicapped children here. Well that shows you the lack of knowledge that was out there”

Rachel (Employee)

“When was this?” Interviewer

“ [19]92” Rachel (Employee)

“So I said basically I’m dyslexic and I find it difficult. And she was like ‘we should have known that all along’ and I asked why? Why should I have to say that to you?’ ‘Would it have made a difference in my job?’ and she said ‘yeah’ so yeah I always remember that I guess” Vicky (Employee)

“Because it [disclosure] ends up being very costly for the individual, effort, money, time and everything else” Paul (Employee)

Conversely employers were aware of the potential for negative responses occurring and, that they should be avoided.

“You see resentment can build up if people leave it [disclosing] for 6 months or a year” Joan (Employer)

“[To avoid a negative disclosure situation] I would probably also put something in [a policy] about you know this will not reflect on you in anyway. To reassure the individual” Joan (Employer)

The verbatim from both groups highlighted the importance given to the response to a disclosure, however those with an SLD felt the negative responses more intently, as some of the incidents happened many years ago.

This was the driving force in the construction of stigma that can be attached to SLD. Stigma came to the fore in the discourse as being central to SLD and Self-determination, the employers seen it as a controlling factor in the ability to disclose, noting the affect this had on individuals who wish to disclose.

“It [disclosing] was obviously playing on his mind a lot more then myself... I just think in his head he saw it as a burden” Michael (Employer)

“I suppose it depends on what the information is and depends on your own confidence as well... they are making it more of an issue than it [disclosing] probably needs to be” Sarah (Employer)

“I would imagine some people would feel vulnerable about disclosing or they could feel [that] they would appear less than [others]” Joan (Employer)

Where those with an SLD relate stigma as an element of having an SLD, deriving from interactions with others. This perspective points to the lifelong attachment to interactions with others and its layered effect.

“[In primary school] Like most people they probably thought I was a trouble maker” Rachel (Employee)

“I always knew there was something, people used to think I was lazy in school” Vicky (Employee)

“Ok so that’s a long time ago so I’m not going to... [go into that]” Paul (Employee)

The stigma of SLD is in part, built over successive interactions both positive and negative, and can lead to an internal stigma that has a lasting effect on the individual.

“You fall behind in stuff, and self-confidence and all that, is affected” Vicky (Employee)

Both employers and employees approached the issue of stigma from different perspectives. The employers could see it in the actions and reactions of those with an SLD. While the employees felt it and described it in terms of how others perceived them and the meaning that they attached to the interaction. As one related:

“I remember talking to a colleague... and he was “like yeah you have a learning disability” and I was kinda really offended I was like “no I don’t” and then I kinda was, well I guess it is technically in a way. But I wouldn’t see it that way... I guess its just difficulty with [pause] slower cognitive stuff” Vicky (Employee)

The interdependency between the responses to SLD and the perceived stigma point to the importance of how an individual conceptualizes the effect an SLD has on their life as being very personal to them, in the mode of the medical model of disability.

“I just have to structure what I do down to the wire because, I do find my attention to detail and my attention span if I don’t do that [structure], can be poor sometimes which isn’t great” Rachel (Employee)

“If I have to read something I can’t, if I look at something, it takes my brain awhile to get what it is. The same, numbers would be a huge thing for me it just doesn’t work” Vicky (Employee)

“The fact that I am working with computers would hide the fact that my spelling would be appalling and my hand writing is all over the place... the dyslexia originally, that’s what got me into IT” Paul (Employee)

There was an interesting connection in how both groups would relate the effects of SLD; the employers also looked to the practical day-to-day issues of an SLD being from within the individual.

“My understanding of dyslexia is that they [dyslexic’s] see the words slightly jumbled up or just in the wrong order” Sarah (Employer)

“His spelling would be absolutely atrocious! And how he phrases things wouldn’t be great, in the written word. But verbally you would never know” Joan (Employer)

“I would consider it primarily a writing issue, in that if they were writing e mails or notes or whatever you might get the odd jumble up word it might take them a bit longer to write the e mail or word it in an effective way” Michael (Employer)

A vital element in the process of Self-determination derives from how the personal conception of SLD is the ability to discern the advantages or disadvantages of a SLD. The employers were more impassioned to point out the advantages of SLD.

“I don’t really see a massive disadvantage in having a SLD, I really don’t. You can have the personality of the great salesman... Just because it might take an extra five minutes to write out an invoice, that’s not a disability that’s just your strengths are far out weighing weaknesses” Michael (Employer)

“I think a lot of people who have disabilities... they are a lot better at the one thing they are trying to mask or that they need to accommodate, they master it more so than somebody who wouldn’t normally see it as a problem” Sarah (Employer)

“He’s [Employee who has disclosed dyslexia] a good leader, you know he is very straight talking and I think he just inspired the others. He just led them. And he wasn’t afraid of the process” Joan (Employer)

“I’ve often seen him put presentations together on the mac, funnily enough he is a wiz on the mac, like when it comes to creative stuff, doing presentations and things that doesn’t seem to... the fact that he’s dyslexic seems to have increased his creative capacity” Joan (Employer)

The employee group where more subdued on exhorting the advantages of having and SLD.

“I’d say as apart from trying to work as structured as I can, so yeah my whole time management is very important to me, I do find that if I don’t do that [time management] I find I can get a bit scattered” Rachel (Employee)

“Yes, you know you see unusual patterns” Paul (Employee)

“For me I’d be more creative, but I would say a lot of dyslexic people would be more creative, more artistic” Vicky (Employee)

Where the employers could see the whole person and point out the strengths and strategies that are formed from having a SLD as an advantage to an organization, the employees seen advantages more in a practical sense that was personal to them but did not relate it as a organizational advantage. The level of self-determination is the combination of the interdependent elements of responses to SLD, stigma, personal conception of SLD and the perceived advantages or disadvantages. There is a gap in the responses from the employee perspective with one showing a high level of self-determination.

“See from the very start my mum has always pushed me from the back and said you have to work harder than everyone else to get to the same level. So I did crap in my Leaving Cert and then when I went to England even with the supports I didn’t push my self but when I went to study over here I was older and began to see the results”. Rachel (Employee)

“I was nearly 30 by that stage [returning to college from post graduate studies] so I think I came to the stage where I was able to get a handle on it, on what I had to do myself to be able to get through” Rachel (Employee)

“Its never really had a big impact on how I work so, like at the end the day I always get the job done so I would never have a reason not to tell anybody” Rachel (Employee)

While another although as noted above was able to reframe SLD as “its just difficulty with slower cognitive stuff” conversely was not going to proactively disclose.

“So in terms of why you would choose to disclose or how you would go about it, you would be more from the standpoint of ‘only when necessary?’”

Interviewer

“Yeah” Vicky (Employee)

“And would that be down to seek accommodations or to let people know or...”

Interviewer

“Why I would disclose?, it would be because of any work that I would have to do and wouldn’t be efficient at or might have difficulty with” Vicky (Employee)

The importance of this cycle of elements, which constructs self-determination, is key in understanding how an individual gets to the point of disclosure. The effect of timing becomes a major issue on the interdependent nature of the phases, as the willingness to disclose controls how a disclosure transpires. This evolves the process into the second phase, disclosure, which is underpinned by the theme of communication and understanding

5.18 Communication and understanding

The communication cycle was constructed by the following elements: Timing; information needed by employers; legislation and policy; understanding the employee and support and accommodation (Fig 27 above).

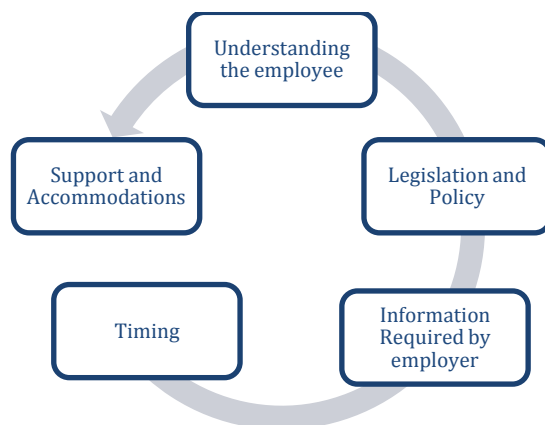


Figure 27 Communication & Understanding Cycle

The timing of disclosure was a major concern for the participants especially the employer group. It is seen as key to avoiding negative responses and to aiding the accommodation process.

“I think if I had anything to disclose I would prefer to say it to the recruiter on the phone and make sure that its all done and dusted” Sarah (Employer)

“I think I would say please advise us at the earliest possible time so that we can make whatever adjustments are necessary” Joan (Employer)

“I’m not saying they disclose at interview but certainly once they had been employed in a company, fairly on in the relationship” Joan (Employer)

The importance of the connectivity between timing and self-determination are shown in the ability of an individual to proactively disclose. Within the employee group there is an understanding for the need of proactive disclosure.

Rachel (Employee) “Personally I think get it out there as quick, you know like most things brooding over things usually makes it seem worse than it is” Rachel (Employee)

“You need to hit the ground running... you do need to disclose the disability as early as possible” Paul (Employee)

“If I knew something was going to be a problem I’d give it a shot and maybe if it wasn’t happening I’d say something” Vicky (Employee)

The timing of disclosure is dependent on the level of self-determination of the individual as shown by the last verbatim. As the disclosure process evolves the element of organizational need comes into play, which draws directly from self-determination of the individual. The information needed by employers is, from their perspective vital to advance the disclosure process.

“Unless I know what their requirements are I cant provide for their needs. So until I know what exactly they need there is nothing I can do to help them” Michael (Employer)

“I think depending on what the issue is I think, yeah just be as open and honest as possible” Sarah (Employer)

“Honesty is the best policy. But I think A, they would be respected for saying it and B, it stops problems evolving that could be avoided” Joan (Employer)

“He said he received this help in college with the software and so we just bought it for him” Joan (Employer)

This was the general trend among employers, the need for employees with an SLD to inform the employer before any support could be arranged and to avoid the possibility of negative situations arising. This was echoed in the employee group.

“Well I think just have it out there, there’s no point in not having it out there... I think in this day and age that most places have to be kind of, facilitating as they can. And most of the time it doesn’t actually mean that anything has to be done” Rachel (Employee)

For the disclosure process to evolve it is dependent on the information provided by the employee with an SLD. This need pointed to the level of knowledge in both groups to their understanding of organizational policy and national legislation. In both groups all but two could report having a disclosure policy in their employment. The rest had none or were unaware of any policy.

“Well when I started... under section 5 in the disability Act, public bodies have to record and disclose to the MBNA stats and you know it was 2008 before we had done our first disability census. So that was the first time I officially disclosed anything” Rachel (Employee)

“It would be part of the initial forms that they would fill in ‘agency’ [Recruitment] to say if there is anything they you need to tell us. With being ‘in house’ [Recruitment] generally it would be in the email before they would come for onsite interview” Sarah (Employer)

“I can’t honestly say I don’t know” Michael (Employer)

The final verbatim was typical of the respondents at both the interview and survey stages. The other atypical responses can be explained by the nature of the organizations, with the first representing public bodies and the other representative of American technology multinationals.

“Because I’ve worked for American companies for the last 4 years we are very much policed by US laws not just the Irish laws, so I don’t have a huge understanding of the Irish legislation” Sarah (Employer)

The level of awareness of legislation was again limited for both groups.

“I presume there is one [legislation on disability and disclosure] out there but I honestly couldn’t tell you what it’s called or what year what it was done or something like that” Michael (Employer)

“no, not very much I wouldn’t know it” Vicky (Employee)

With only the one respondent who worked in the Public Sector knowing the legislation that would cover SLD disclosure as noted above. The gaps in official knowledge however do not seem to impede the willingness from the participants to engage with a disclosure process. This was predicated on understanding the employee.

“There would be away around it [Dyslexia], [he] would dictate everything. Because even though a lot of people type a lot of their own [work] an awful lot is still dictated and typed by secretaries... So there would have been away round that for [him]” Joan (Employer)

“The most important thing is time and patience. If you have an understanding of what the person is going through, you know you can work with them” Michael (Employer)

“If we find the right person for the role and the right person for the team the right culture fit for the company then we want them to work for us so we’ll make sure that they can do that. We want the person we don’t care that they have some kind of disability to get over” Sarah (Employer)

The understanding of the employee perspective drives successful support and accommodation of an individual with an SLD. Support and accommodation are the final element in the second cycle and moves the disclosure process into the final phase post disclosure. Both groups noted the readily availability of support and accommodation.

“I said look I’m dyslexic and it would have been a bit of an issue for me the forms, and I do remember him offering me supports around it ‘is there anything you’d need’ and I said just more time to do it, to complete it.” Vicky (Employee)

“I think in this day and age that most places have to be kind of facilitating as they can. And most of the time it doesn’t actually mean that anything has to be done, out of all the people that we have that have disclosed only one or two have ever come to look for any assistance.” Rachel (Employee)

The employers were able to expand on the various ways in which an individual could be supported and accommodated through both official and unofficial channels.

“I remember asking him is there anything I need to do for you to make this happen. And he said ‘no nothing, you know just have an understanding that sometimes it will take me a wee bit longer’” Michael (Employer)

“Technology that we would install on peoples computers before they would start to help them, to read things properly” Sarah (Employer)

“He just told us that in college they had got him some computer programme, which helped him greatly and just corrected any misspellings or grammatical

errors. So we just said tell us what it is and we'll get it for you... you just have to do whatever is needed, like that software package that sorted him out but there could be other ones, other adjustments that you'd need to do" Joan (Employer)

Concerns were raised about the availability of support and accommodations as predicated on early disclosure. This does reinforce the employer understanding and the need for early disclosure, so as to increase the availability of accommodations and reduce the opportunity for negative responses.

"I wonder though in other places if you didn't disclose and then along the line you needed assistive technologies or something... they might say then 'well you didn't disclose' you know" Rachel (Employee)

"I was getting the impression that 'well you wouldn't be doing this job had we known that'" Vicky (Employee)

"Ok and how did that progress after that?" Interviewer

"I basically left my job, she, they wanted me to move... she told me 'where you wouldn't have to do any of that kind of stuff'." Vicky (Employee)

"So their solution was to just remove you from the necessity of paper work as apposed to finding another way round it?" Interviewer

"as far as I could see yeah, yeah" Vicky (Employee)

These verbatim quotes show the complex nature of the disclosure process, which is dependent on the key themes of Self-determination and communication with timing being a key factor in the successful exchange of disclosing an SLD. Both groups where able to expand on how the process could be improved or hindered.

"That there be no discrimination and job circumstances just wouldn't change. Yeah and that some support would be given... I guess it would be to policies and procedures, if it's clearly outlined that there is support there" Vicky (Employee)

“Make it as casual as possible, friendly and outgoing as possible” Michael (Employer)

“Put it in as many places to make people as comfortable as possible in disclosing... if there is no area for you to disclose, if there is nothing for you, you can't, you won't” Sarah (Employer)

“Policy, because if there is that policy there it's a good starting point... I would cover in induction... its important to communicate it up front and early... I suppose the fact that there wouldn't be a policy at all, so someone is left wondering if 'I say this what's going to happen to me!'" Joan (Employer)

“Ensure people about its confidentiality and that the benefits that can be for them to disclose... So that really is the stuff you have to emphasize is the confidentiality and who is going to have access” Rachel (Employee)

“Make the employer actually recognize that there's, a problem here, because if it's left on the back burner, it's going to become a bigger problem” Paul (Employee)

The key findings show that the disclosure is a complex process, which can be conceptualised as a two cycle process (figures 26 & 27 above) which occurs over three phases which are summarized in the above figure 25.

6 Discussion

6.1 Discussion

The findings point to a strong commitment from employers to aiding disclosure of SLD's and supporting and accommodating employees, which reflects the data from the survey where employers expressed their awareness of the difficulties for employees to disclose. However this is reliant on the timing and willingness of the employee to disclose. Employers also depend on employees to fill in knowledge gaps on the nature of SLD's and the accommodations needed. This concurs with the prominence within the literature of self-determination as a key factor in disclosure (Madaus et al., 2008; Campbell and Oliver, 1996 and Gerber et al., 1992). There is evidence that employees are committed to the disclosure process, however to a lesser extent, as commitment is dependent on the level of self-determination achieved by the individual this corresponds with the findings of Goldberg et al. (2003) and Madaus et al. (2008). Predominantly employers and employees seem to conceptualize SLD's from a medical perspective, as being from and within the individual. However this is consistent with a key finding of Gerber et al. (1992) both reconcile the ability of social solutions as key to accommodation, such as extra time and supportive cooperation. This is reflective of the wider results from the survey, where employers and employees found key areas of reading, writing and mathematics as difficult for those with an SLD and both groups valuing supporting strategies. There was a lean knowledge of both policies and legislation on disclosure and disability in general as the survey recorded that 85% did not have or were unaware of a disclosure policy; the general consensus between the two groups was that any negative action in relation to disclosure and SLD's would be understood as a form of discrimination. In relation to improving organizations disclosure friendliness there was a unanimous agreement during the survey and the interviews that, a disclosure policy and the communication of it would be central, the bases of which would be the understanding of the individual with an SLD.

6.2 Conceptualizing SLD Disclosure

As highlighted in the findings, disclosure can be conceptualised as occurring over three phases; pre-disclosure, disclosure and post-disclosure (fig 25), within these

phases are two distinct yet co-dependent cycles, the self-determination cycle and the communication and understanding cycle (Fig 26 & 27). The pre-disclosure phase can be described as what occurs leading into a disclosure; this is predominantly internal (limited external influences are present) to the individual with an SLD. The disclosure phase begins with the disclosing of an SLD and moves through the interexchange of information between employee, employers, legislation and policy. The post-disclosure phase is when the disclosure moves forward to accommodation of the individual.

The cycles within disclosure have four trajectories, which can be understood as evolutionary and regressive in course. They are Evolution within a cycle, Evolution between the cycles (Fig 28), and Regression between the cycles and Regression within a cycle (Fig 29).

The survey results pointed that the employee group could relate both the frequency and areas affected by their SLD, what type of accommodations they needed and their willingness to disclose. Highlighting for an employee to become self-determined they must have control over how they perceive SLD how it affects them, the accommodations needed (if any), know their own strengths and weaknesses and be capable of relating this to others. This is demonstrated in how they respond to previous interactions with others on the topic of their SLD, has this formed a level of stigma within them to their SLD, which controls their conception of the SLD. This reflects the literatures acknowledgment of reframing of disability (Bell, 2010 and Madaus et al., 2008). How an SLD is conceptualized affects the ability for an individual to locate the advantages or disadvantages of the SLD. This produces the level of self-determination at which an individual is at, the findings point to a variation from one participant to another which was reflected across both the survey and the interviews. The final step in self-determination is the ability to evolve from one cycle to another, whereby the individual takes full control over the SLD and discloses it as a part of him or herself.

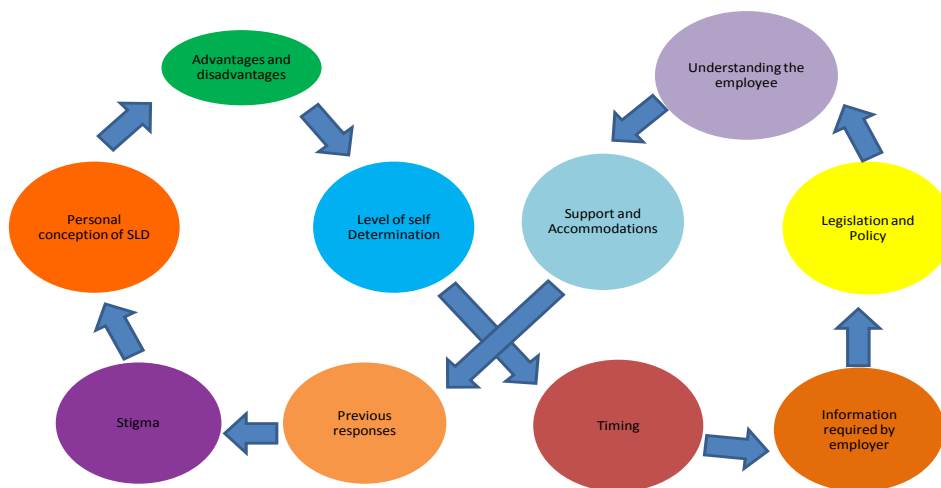


Figure 28 Evolution within and between the cycles

Success of the second cycle, communication and understanding of disclosure is highly controlled by the timing of disclosure. As one participant was unable to proactively choose the timing of her disclosure, this led to a negative reaction and ultimately to regression to the first cycle and her terminating her employment. This was first noted during the survey as two respondents noted negative response to disclosing and was further explored during the interviews outlined above. The employers perspective noted a similar incident whereby a disclosure was made under similar circumstances, where work produced was questioned but was handled in a different manner. This pinpointed the importance of timing of disclosure as the key link between the two cycles and as a central premise of disclosure, which is concurrent in the literature (Roberts & Hoff Macan, 2006 and Gerber and Price, 2003). This cycle evolves to the exchange of information between employee and employer, as noted during the survey both groups reported supervisors followed by co-workers are the likely recipient of a disclosure. The end goal is to reach accommodation and understanding of the SLD. Similar to findings in the literature (Price et al., 2003 and Dickinson and Verbeek, 2002) employers voiced the need for information from employees on the subject of SLD; how this affects the individual

and what supports are needed. This is supported by the survey findings which pointed to an individual conception of SLD as located in reading, writing and comprehension difficulties. This in turn evolves to the level of understanding of policy and legislation on this topic. Both employers and employees had limited knowledge as only 15% of those surveyed had a disclosure policy, which is concurrent with previous research. The level of knowledge or lack of, evolves the process to understanding the employee, which was seen as a priority for employers, who wished to engage with employees on disclosure. The importance of timing was again stressed at this stage as early disclosure is seen as imperative to successful and uncomplicated evolution to the final element of the second cycle, support and accommodation. Supporting and accommodating employees was seen as ‘a given’ from the employer perspective, no major concerns were raised with relation to cost or provision. However the one concern that was raised was timing and the effect of late or reactive disclosure would have on accommodation. This final point runs through both the literature and this study, until an employer has been made aware of an SLD there is nothing that can be done to support employees, the timing of the disclosure can affect the nature of the response.

As noted above, the disclosure process is not just evolutionary, as it has a number of elements that can if conducted unsatisfactorily for either employers or employees, regress the disclosure process. This can happen within and between the two cycles. If the level of self-determination is not sufficient for an employee to pro-actively disclose then they will need to regress through the first cycle till they can positively reframe their SLD to the point where they identify strengths and minimize their SLD from negatively impacting on their choices. This could include, retracing back to previous experiences and negating any residual stigma that may be held, then evolving through the process as previously discussed. This was highlighted in the findings by the different attitudes among the employees of which one preferred pro-active disclosure while another would only reactively disclose.

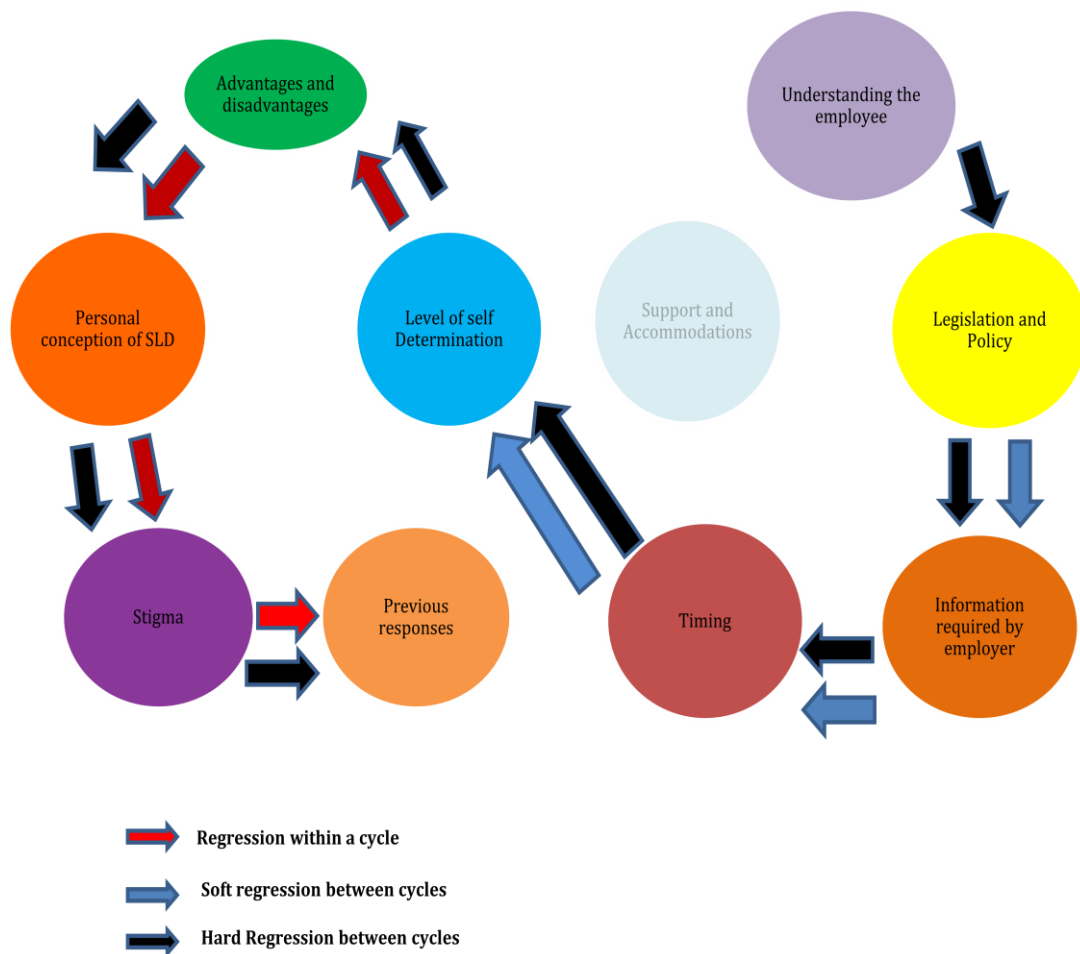


Figure 29 Regression within and between cycles

Regression between the cycles is founded on two key elements, timing and the level of self-determination which reflects the literatures focus on timing and self-determination (Madaus et al., 2008; Roberts & Hoff Macan, 2006; Gerber and Price, 2003 and Chappell at al., 2001). The level of self-determination can also be a cause for regression within the second cycle, as support and accommodation, understanding the employee and information needed by employers are all based on the ability of the employee to clearly detail and communicate their SLD, their strengths and difficulties. If this is not effectively managed, the process will need to regress to the first cycle whereby the employee will need to adequately reframe their SLD (Madaus et al., 2008 and Goldberg and Killen, 2005). This can be considered as a soft regression, which can be taken in part with support of employers, who as both the literature and findings have shown are willing to support employees during the disclosure process.

However there is also hard regression, whereby the employee will regress to the first stage but without the same level of support and understanding. This can happen in a number of ways, if the employer fails to express and correctly communicate understanding of the employee, this can be perceived as a negative response, likewise if the employer fails to adequately support and accommodate the employee this would be a negative response. Both of which regress the employee back to the beginning of the first cycle as was expressed in the findings. Timing is the major cause of hard regression and potentially hard evolution, whereby reactive disclosure, evolves the second cycle directly to understanding and accommodations, which are mismanaged, and then regresses to the first cycle (all other elements are bypassed) as a negative response to SLD disclosure (Fig 30).

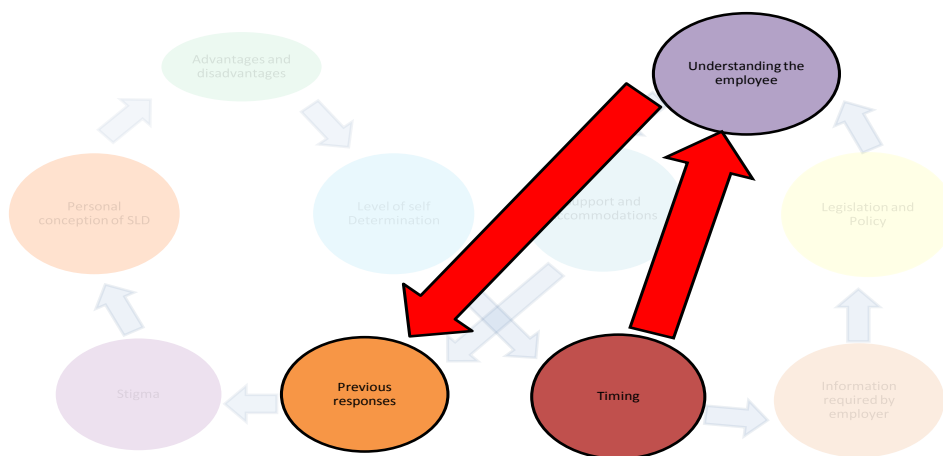


Figure 30 Hard evolution followed by hard regression

The findings have found two central themes, which are underpinned by elements, which both employers and employees use to understand both disclosure and SLD's. Employers and employees are congruent on a number of elements, negative responses, timing, information needed, knowledge of policy and legislation and support and accommodation. There are a number of elements in which the

employers and employees are acknowledging from different perspectives, stigma, personal conception of SLD and the advantages and disadvantages of SLD. Overall both employers and employees want to engage in the disclosure process as shown in both the survey responses and the verbatim quotes from the interviews. For the best part they do so successfully, and all noted the improvement of disclosure is founded on ensuring a process free of discrimination with confidentiality, empathy and a policy at the center, which is communicated clearly and stresses the importance of timing.

7 Conclusion

7.1 Overview

This chapter outlines the main conclusions from this study. The research objective and sub-objectives of this research was:

“To explore how a learning disability and disclosure are conceptualised from the employer and employee perspectives”

- To understand the concept of SLD in the employment context.
- To establish the employee and employer view points on disclosure.
- To establish what policies and systems are in place to facilitate or hinder disclosure.
- To gain an understanding of what changes organizations could take to become more disclosure friendly.

The main research questions to be addressed were:

- How do employers and employees conceptualize SLD?
- What issues do employees have with disclosure?
- What HR policies and systems are in place to facilitate disclosure?
- How can organizations become more disclosure friendly?

7.2 Main Findings

The main findings were as follows:

- i. It was found that both the employers and employees conceptualize SLD's as particular to the individual, and locate them as difficulties in reading, writing and mathematics, and to a lesser extent organization, planning and social exchanges. These difficulties however could be alleviated through social solutions, which were perceived as the responsibility of the wider employment community, the employee with an SLD, co-workers and supervisors. Employees are uncomfortable with

the term disability and felt it did not relate to them, however they did acknowledge that this was particular to them personally and that there are other with SLD's where the use of the term disability was appropriate.

This finding appears to homogenize the perspectives of both employers and employees, as both relate a relatively basic understanding of SLD's, to which they conceptualize them in terms of everyday practicalities, though the use of the term 'disability' was contentious.

- ii. Employers view disclosure as essential to supporting and accommodation of employees. They also expressed the need for proactive disclosure, which would enable the accommodation process to move more swiftly. The highlighted the importance of timing asserting that disclosure could come either too early or too late. The latter (reactive disclosure) was cited as a potential source of negative responses between employers and employees. Self-determination is the key component in the disclosure process, as it effects the employee conception of SLD's, disclosure and timing and finally it is the bases for driving disclosure. Employees viewed disclosure as necessary to avail of both accommodations and ensuring their protection from discrimination. However disclosure itself is understood by employees to be a potential source for discrimination. Finally employees viewed disclosure as an opportunity to raise awareness of their particular differences, as gaining understanding was key to their disclosure.

This finding acknowledges the importance of self-determination, timing and communication and understanding between employers and employees.

- iii. Both employers and employees have a lean knowledge of policies that were in situ. With only a minority confirming that they had some form of disability disclosure policy. It was accepted that facilitation of

disclosure would be enabled by having a disclosure policy and was hindered by a lack of knowledge of SLD's and disclosure.

This finding shows the buried nature of SLD's as a hidden disability, which is an important social factor in the disabling of those with an SLD.

- iv. Both employers and employees were completely congruent in their assertion, that it is imperative for organizations to become more disclosure friendly. They must increase their awareness and understanding of SLD's, legislation and the process of disclosure. This would be best achieved through open communication and the presence of a disclosure policy.

This finding points the potential minimizing of the negative effects of SLD disclosure for employers, employees and organizations by communication, policy and awareness.

7.3 Findings in relation to literature

SLD's are being conceptualized as from and within the individual as outlined by Oliver and Barnes (1998). This however is just part of the modern concept of disability which is seen as in this instance alleviated by social interventions as argued by (Bell, 2011; Lawson, 2011; Goering, 2010; Poole, 2003 and Chappell et al., 2001). This has seen the confirmation of SLD's as being conceptualised as a medically induced social state as argued by (Bell, 2011; Barclay, 2011; Poole, 2003; Chappell et al., 2001 and Gerber, Ginsberg and Reiff, 1992). Disclosure is seen as necessary by, both employers and employees for availing of accommodation and protection under legislation as outlined by (Madaus et al., 2008; Roberts and Hoff Macan, 2006; Madaus, 2006; Price et al., 2004 and Gerber and Price, 2003). Employees are cautious about disclosing and do so by weighing the positives and negatives as argued by Madaus et al. (2002). Self-determination is central to the process of both conceptualizing SLD's and disclosing as outline by Gerber et al. (1992) and argued by (Bell, 2011; Madaus et al., 2008; Goldberg and Killeen, 2005; Chappell et al., 2001; Campbell and Oliver, 1996) There is limited understanding of

both SLD's and disability disclosure which is congruent with the findings of Gerber and Price (2003) and Price et al. (2003). Finally to invoke legislative rights an employee must disclose as outlined by Dickinson & Verbeek, (2002).

7.4 Generalization of findings

This study used self-selection of a wide range of participants who at both the survey and interview stages were different ages, genders, and stages of their career and from different organizations. It only tentatively crossed industry sectors from the private to public, and only looked at one particular type of disability. The following however may be generalized:

- The conception of SLD is constantly evolving and as such it is difficult for individuals to finalize their view of it.
- Disclosure is taken as necessary but complicated process which is predicated on self-determination, communication and timing.
- There is a need form an increase in knowledge, understanding and definition of SLD's

7.5 Recommendations

Increase disability awareness, including awareness of SLD's, this can be assisted through contacting the DAI and AHEAD.

The formulation and implementation of a disclosure policy for both new and existing employees.

The promotion of self-determination techniques for all employees both with and without an SLD.

The promotion of increased and better communication of SLD's and disclosure in employment

7.6 Validity, Reliability and Limitations of Research

The researcher has attempted to ensure the validity of this study by using an instrument previously tested during the survey. During the interviews participants views were paraphrased to ensure the right interpretation was taken and the findings were sent to participants for checking. The reliability of the research findings is consistent with previous research on this topic and also within this research from the survey to interview stage showed a high level of consistence. The research limitations lie in the low levels achieved during the survey and the small amount of interviews. It must be noted that the levels achieved are congruent with national levels of individuals with an SLD in employment.

7.7 Future Research

This research has highlighted the need for further research on this topic in the Irish context in regards to:

The affect of a disclosure leading to a negative response, how it's handled and its implications.

How disclosure of SLD's are conceptualized outside the office environment.

What are the implications of late disclosure how does this effect the employer and employee relationship.

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Appendcies

Appendix A

Notice on LinkedIn.com

Survey on Specific Learning Disability Disclosure

Hi my name is Terry Webster and I am currently undertaking a Masters in HRM with the National College of Ireland. The focus of my Dissertation is as follows: To gain an understanding of specific learning disability (SLD) disclosure, in the office environment, as viewed by both those with or without a SLD.

The survey will take between 5-10 minutes to complete. To ensure confidentiality and anonymity, no identifying details regarding an organization's name or an employee's names will be gathered.

Thank you for your time,

Terry.

Interview invitation Letter

Dear

I would like to thank you for taking part in my recent survey on disclosure of a specific learning disability. As you know I will be staging a second round for the survey, this will entail an interview. I would like to invite you to interview within the next two weeks (15th -31st July) at a time that is convenient for you. The interview will take between 30-40 minutes. As mentioned in the survey the interviews can be held either face-to-face, telephone or Skype the choice is entirely up to you. As with the survey no names of individuals or organisations will be gathered, and any such references will be omitted.

If you can reply to this at your earliest convenience we can arrange the details of how to proceed.

Kind Regards

Terry Webster.

Appendix B

Page 1

Overview of the Survey – Specific Learning Disability Disclosure.

Survey Overview

Thank you for taking the time to help me. This survey should only take a few minutes of your time!

My name is Terry and I am currently in the process of doing a Masters in Human Resources with the National College of Ireland. As part of this course, I am carrying out research on issues relating to the disclosure of a Specific Learning Disability in employment.

In order for me to conduct this research, I would really appreciate if you could fill in this short questionnaire. It will ask questions about your demographics, your experiences of disclosure in employment for both an employer and employee point of view.

Confidentiality:

This survey is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw at any time. No person's name or organization's name will be collected and all data gathered will remain anonymous and confidential. The data will only be used for the purpose of this study.

If you have any questions, please feel free to email me on terence.webster@student.ncirl.ie

Thank you for your Time and Support. Terry

Please state your consent in taking part in this survey:

I agree to take part in this survey

Page 2







Instructions:

Please check the appropriate box or type the appropriate information in the text box provided. Feel free to add additional comments or insights in the space provided at the end of this survey.

Biographical Information

1: Gender:

- Male
- Female

 Edit  Copy  Delete  Shrink  Move to page  Drag to move

2: Age:

- 18-25
- 26-35
- 36-45
- 46-55
- 56-65
- Over 65

3: Ethnicity:

- Irish
- Irish Traveler
- European
- Asian
- African
- Other (Please Specify):

4: Is English a second language for you?

- no
- Yes (Please Specify First Language):

5: In what county do you live?

6: What type of employment are you currently in? (check all that apply)

- Agriculture
- Education
- Government
- Homemaker
- Media
- Recreation
- Technology
- Business
- Health Care
- Military Service
- Non-Profit
- Social Services

Other (Please Specify):

7: What is your current job title?

8: How long have you held your current job?

9: Have you a documented specific learning disability?

- No
 - Yes
-

Page 3

This is a new page. You can change the options with the button above, or start dragging widgets to the space below.

10: If yes to item 9, Please specify which specific learning disability you have?

11: How many full-time jobs (35 or more hours per week, excluding Summer and/or Temporary) have you held?

12: Have you ever been let go from a job?

- Yes
- No

13: If Yes, what was the reason?

- Company closed
- Company bought out
- Redundancy
- Performance based

Other (Please Specify):

Educational Experiences

1: When were you initially identified with a learning disability?

- Primary School
- Secondary School
- Third Level
- Other (Please Specify):

2: Have you ever availed of Learning Supports during your education?

- Yes
 - no
-

3: If Yes, Please specify

4: What year did you complete school/college?

5: What was your main area of study?

6: Highest qualification earned (from any institution):

- Certificate
- Diploma
- Degree
- Post Graduate Diploma
- Masters
- Doctorate
- Other (Please Specify):

Page 4

Enter your page description

Your Specific Learning Disability (SLD) and Work Experiences

1: Does your SLD impact your work in some way?

- Yes
 - No (Proceed to item 4)
-

2: If yes to item 1, please circle the term that best describes how frequently your SLD impacts your work:

	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

3: If yes to #1, in what areas does your SLD disability impact your work? (check all that apply)

- Writing Skills
- Organisational Skills
- Oral Communications Skills
- Reading Comprehension
- Rate of Processing Information
- Time Management
- Mathematics Computation
- Social interactions with colleagues
- Group/Team projects
- Social interactions with supervisor(s)

Other (Please Specify):

4: Have you ever disclosed your specific learning disability to an employer?

(Check all that apply)

- Yes, when applying for my current job
 - Yes, after I was hired in my current job
 - No, not in my current job
 - Yes, when applying for a previous job
 - Yes, after I was hired in a previous job
 - No, not in a previous job
 - I have never disclosed my SLD to an employer (proceed to item 11)
-

5: If you have disclosed, to whom did you disclose your learning disability?

(check all that apply)

- Supervisor(s)
- Co-workers

Other(s) (Please Specify):

6: Check the reason(s) you chose to disclose your learning disability in the workplace

- Need for additional time to complete job tasks
- Use of technology as an accommodation
- More detailed directions related to components of my job responsibilities
- To make co-workers aware of my SLD
- To make supervisors aware of my SLD

Other (Please Specify):

7: If you have self-disclosed in a job, have you ever experienced negative effects?

- Yes
 - No (proceed to item 9)
-

8: If yes to item 7, can you provide examples?

9: Have you ever requested formal workplace accommodations?

- Yes
 - No (proceed to item 12)
-

10: If yes to item 9, have you ever been denied formal workplace accommodations?

- Yes
- No

11: Check the reason(s) you chose to not disclose your SLD in any professional job since graduating: (check all that apply)

- Concern for job security
- Concern for negatively influencing relationships with clients
- Concern for negatively influencing relationships with coworkers
- Concern for negatively influencing relationships with supervisors
- Disclosure in a previous job created problems
- No reason to or need for accommodation(s)
- Not applicable; I have disclosed in each of my professional jobs

Other (Please Specify):

12: Which, if any, of the following strategies and accommodations do you use in your

job? (check all that apply)

- Arrive early to work
- Assistive technology
- Delegation of difficult tasks
- Graphic organizers
- Problem solving/brainstorming
- Quiet work environment
- Use of proof-readers
- Self-advocating for job related needs
- Setting goals and priorities
- Stay late at work
- Support from family/significant others
- Time management
- Time outside of work to complete tasks

Other (Please Specify):

This is a new page. You can change the options with the button above, or start dragging widgets to the space below.

Knowlegde of Specific Learning Disability (SLD) and Work Experiences

1: Which of the following SLD are you aware of?

- Dyslexia
- Dyspraxia
- Dysgraphia
- Dyscalculia
- ADD & ADHD
- None of the above (proceed to item 3)

Other (Please Specify):

2: What is your understanding of how an individual is affected by any of the SLD listed above?

3: What term best describes how frequently a SLD impacts an individual's work:

	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequentl
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

4: In what areas does a SLD disability impact an individual's work? (check all that apply)

- Writing Skills
- Organisational Skills
- Oral Communications Skills
- Reading Comprehension
- Rate of Processing Information
- Time Management
- Mathematics Computation
- Social interactions with colleagues
- Group/Team projects
- Social interactions with supervisor(s)

Other (Please Specify):

4: In what areas does a SLD disability impact an individual's work? (check all that apply)

- Writing Skills
- Organisational Skills
- Oral Communications Skills
- Reading Comprehension
- Rate of Processing Information
- Time Management
- Mathematics Computation
- Social interactions with colleagues
- Group/Team projects
- Social interactions with supervisor(s)

Other (Please Specify):

5: Has an employee/co-worker ever disclosed a SLD to you? (Check all that apply)

- Yes, when applying for current job
- Yes, after they were hired for current job
- No, not in my current job
- Yes, when applying for a previous job
- Yes, after they were hired in a previous job
- No, not in a previous job
- I have never had anyone disclose a SLD to me (proceed to item 11)

6: If you have had an individual disclose a SLD to you, what position were you in relation to them (check all that apply)

- Supervisor
- Co-worker

Other (Please Specify):

7: What was the reason(s) they had for disclosing their learning disability in the workplace?

- Need for additional time to complete job tasks
- Use of technology as an accommodation
- More detailed directions related to components of job responsibilities
- To make co-workers aware of SLD
- To make supervisors aware of SLD

Other (Please Specify):

8: Which, if any, of the following strategies and accommodations are you aware of? (Check all that apply)

- Arrive early to work
- Assistive technology
- Delegation of difficult tasks
- Graphic organizers
- Problem solving/brainstorming
- Quiet work environment
- Use of proof-readers
- Self-advocating for job related needs
- Setting goals and priorities
- Stay late at work
- Support from family/significant others
- Time management
- Time outside of work to complete tasks

Other (Please Specify):

9: What is your understanding of any of the above?

10: Which, if any, of the following strategies and accommodations do you use?

(Check all that apply)

- Arrive early to work
- Assistive technology
- Delegation of difficult tasks
- Graphic organizers
- Problem solving/brainstorming
- Quiet work environment
- Use of proof-readers
- Self-advocating for job related needs
- Setting goals and priorities
- Stay late at work
- Support from family/significant others
- Time management
- Time outside of work to complete tasks

Other (Please Specify):

11: Has an employee/coworker ever requested formal workplace accommodations?

- Yes
- No (proceed to item 13)

12: If yes to item 11, to your knowledge was the request for formal workplace accommodations granted?

- Yes
- No

13: Check the reason(s) an individual may choose to not disclose a SLD in any professional job: (check all that apply)

- Concern for job security
- Concern for negatively influencing relationships with clients
- Concern for negatively influencing relationships with coworkers
- Concern for negatively influencing relationships with supervisors
- Disclosure in a previous job created problems
- No reason to or need for accommodation(s)

Other (Please Specify):

Disclsoure policies

1: Does your present employment have a disability disclosure policy?

- Yes
 - No
 - Don't know
-

2: If Yes, How is this communicated to employees?

Please specify:

3: What other policies and systems are you aware of that would facilitate disability disclosure?

Please specify:

4: Were they in a previous employment or your present employment?

- Present Employment
- Previous Employment
- Both
- None of the above

Other (Please Specify):

5: How are these policies communicated to staff and potential recruits?

Please specify:

6: What recommendations would you have for aiding the disclosure process?

Please specify

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS OR INSIGHTS

Feel free to add additional comments or insights in the space provided

Further Research

The second stage of this research will take the form of a short one to one interview, which can be conducted either face to face, telephone or Skype.

Confidentiality

The interviews would be voluntary and you have the right to withdraw at any time. No person's name or organization's name will be collected and all data gathered will remain anonymous and confidential. The data will only be used for the purpose of this study.

If you would like to participate in the second stage of this research please indicate below.

1: If you would like to participate in the next round of this research, please indicate below.

- Yes
 - No
-

2: If yes, please provide an email address where you can be contacted?
Email Address:

Appendix C

Interview Sheets for both Employer and Employee Groups

RESPONDENT INFORMATION (Both Groups)

Gender: _____

Age: _____

County: _____

Industry type: _____

How long are you in your current role?

Can you tell me about your role as?

SLD Specific (Group 1) Conceptualizing SLD

When where you initially identified with a learning disability?

Have you ever used Learning Supports during your education?

What were they?

How did you access them?

What is SLD/Dyslexia to you?

What are the advantages/disadvantages of having a SLD?

Does your LD impact your work in some way? How?

Are there any office procedures or policies which impact on your SLD positively or negatively?

What strategies do you use to control your SLD?

What workplace accommodations would help you?

Could any of these be applied across the entire organization to include those without a SLD?

Disclosure: Issues on Disclosure

Have you ever disclosed your learning disability to an employer?

Can you tell me about the experience of disclosing?

Why did you choose to disclose?

Are there any reasons you would not disclose?

How do you choose to disclose?

What advice would you have for anyone considering disclosing?

Disclosure policy: Research Question 3 & 4 Policies & Becoming Disclosure Friendly

Does your present employment have a disability disclosure policy?

What legislation covers disability and disclosure?

What is your understanding of 'Reasonable Adjustments'?

How are they obtained?

What would you put into a disclosure policy?

How and when would you communicate this to employees?

Who would be best placed to receive a disclosure?

What help's or hinders disclosure?

Interview questions: For non SLD participants (The Employer Group)

RESPONDENT INFORMATION

Gender: _____

Age: _____

County: _____

Industry type: _____

How long are you in your current role?

Can you tell me about your role as?

Employers/ co-workers: (Group 2) Conceptualizing SLD

What does dyslexia or learning disability mean to you?

What might be the advantages/disadvantages of having a SLD?

Does having a SLD affect a person's work? In what ways?

How do office procedures or policies impact a person SLD?

Disclosure: Issues on Disclosure

Has an employee/coworker disclosed a SLD to you?

What can you tell me about it?

What did you do?

Would you do anything differently having been through the process?

What personal work strategies do you use that could help a person with an SLD?

Any advice on how a person could disclose a SLD in the future?

Disclosure policy: (Both groups) Policies & Becoming Disclosure Friendly

Does your present employment have a disability disclosure policy?

What legislation covers disability and disclosure?

What is your understanding of 'Reasonable Adjustments'?

How are they obtained?

What would you put into a disclosure policy?

How and when would you communicate this to employees?

Who would be best placed to receive a disclosure?

What help's or hinders disclosure?

Appendix D

Personal reflection

This was one of the most difficult and yet rewarding tasks I have taken to do in a long time. However, I achieved a huge amount of satisfaction when it was completed. I felt a sense of fulfilment at the final reading and felt I had done the best I could.

It was a personal journey of discovery and enlightenment. It opened my eyes to understanding research, developing theories and arguing points, and engaging with research participants.

What would I do differently? I need to become more critical of other writers and theorists, develop a better mode of argument and develop a more focussed approach to research.

I could have had a more critical stance, fine tuned my research a little better and I would also move more directly to a pure qualitative stance so I could increase the numbers for interviews, which I would also ensure were held face-to-face, and are probably more appropriate.

Overall, I was pleased with myself and I know I gave a fair representation of my skills as a researcher.