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Self-employment and Entrepreneurship for Youngs and Adults with Neurodevelopmental or Psychiatric Disorders: a Systematic Review

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ABSTRACT

Background: Self-employment and entrepreneurship are growing realities and represent a valid employment option for people with disabilities. Indeed, such strategies promote independence and reduce employment disparities, encourage innovative proposals, and create new jobs.

Methods: This paper provides an overview of self-employment and entrepreneurship for young and adults with neurodevelopmental or psychiatric disorders to support mental health professionals, employment support service providers, and transition educators. To fulfil this intention, we conducted a systematic review using the criteria of the PRISMA statement to examine the literature's scientific contributions up to 2021. We focused on entrepreneurship motivations, entrepreneurship education, associated clinical features, and barriers experienced. We also explored the support needed to start a business and the associated employment outcomes for the target population of this review.

Results: Self-employment and entrepreneurship can empower people with disabilities to mark the community through social and economic participation. Therefore, it is essential to develop evidence-based acceptable practices for entrepreneurship and self-employment for people with neurodevelopmental or psychiatric disorders.

Conclusions: If entrepreneurship and self-employment can become effective employment strategies, it is crucial to consider this population's experiences in developing employment programs and policies for people with disabilities.

Keywords: *Self-Employment; Entrepreneurship; Entrepreneurship Education; Neurodevelopmental Disorders; Psychiatric Disorders*

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Introduction

Young people and adults with neurodevelopmental disorders (NDs) have few opportunities to identify their work interests and are often entirely excluded from competitive job offers (Conroy et al., 2010; Grigal et al., 2011; O'Day et al., 2017). Many people with disabilities, even those who are qualified, are directed toward jobs that do not provide economic independence or social inclusion (Cadwell et al., 2016). Most of them are assigned to sheltered work environments and paid minimum wage for repetitive, non-functional tasks such as sorting and assembly (Brooks-Lane et al., 2005).

Despite a limited research base, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014 included customized employment as a definition of supported employment and a service option for people receiving vocational rehabilitation. WIOA (2014) emphasizes the importance of developing evidence-based practices to create a more comprehensive intervention package that includes specific quality and fidelity measures for these services. In addition to sheltered workshops, supported employment has created employment opportunities for people with disabilities due to a rapid expansion of services and funding (Dotson et al., 2013). All supported employment models have one thing in common: the person with an ND works for someone else in an environment usually chosen by a caregiver, teacher, or job coach (Dotson et al., 2013).

Compared to the general population, most people with disabilities who work do not work full-time (National Organization on Disability, 2010). This discrimination extends beyond wages and levels of employment to job roles as well. People with disabilities are under-represented in jobs that require communication and supervisory skills, such as those with higher pay and job security (Kaye, 2009). As a result, increasing the work participation rate of people with disabilities is a critical societal issue. In the context of people with disabilities, the terms self-employment, entrepreneurship, and social entrepreneurship are frequently used interchangeably (Yamamoto et al., 2011). This overlap is a challenge in developing effective disability programs and practices.

While these employment types share some characteristics, they represent distinct concepts (Cadwell et al., 2019). Self-employment is a customized employment strategy that is an alternative to salaried employment. This employment strategy is defined as an individual working for himself/herself as an individual owner, independent contractor, or company owner (Ostrow et al., 2018). The individual's goal is to achieve economic self-sufficiency and positive career outcomes. This work provides some benefits to people with disabilities, such as flexibility, autonomy, and vocation-based choice (Dotson et al., 2013; Maritz & La Ferriere, 2016). The emphasis on individual preferences and experiences in self-employment shifts the focus from illness to self-determination (Swarbrick & Stahl, 2009). From a purely socioeconomic standpoint, self-employment only employs one person.

Instead, what distinguishes entrepreneurship is establishing a profitable and growing business with the potential to employ others in the future. In this sense, entrepreneurship can be viewed as a poverty-reduction strategy (Parker Harris et al., 2014) because it brings something new to the market. It should be noted that not everyone who starts a business qualifies as an entrepreneur. To qualify, a company must have something innovative or change-oriented toward innovation (Caldwell, 2014). Among the many roles of entrepreneurs are the generation of new ideas, the transformation of these ideas into a business, the development of innovative strategies, and the creation of employment (Gelaidan & Abdullateef, 2017).

Social entrepreneurship is a growing topic of interest in the disability community (Cadwell et al., 2016). It refers to establishing a for-profit enterprise while also carrying a social mission. We can say that social entrepreneurs are motivated by a social problem or unsatisfied community needs (Shaw & Carter, 2007; Zahra et al., 2009). As a result, their company's mission is linked to social value.

As a result, the social enterprise is not a legal entity and retains some structural flexibility, allowing it to take various forms, such as not-for-profit, for-profit, and hybrid models (Caldwell, 2014). In other words, social entrepreneurship can be defined as a process that addresses social problems through various approaches (Bornstein & Davis, 2010). Social entrepreneurship is essential for improving one's quality of life, particularly for people with disabilities. This improvement is associated with increased employment rates and collaboration between organizations from various sectors in developing a community and self-confidence (Ali et al., 2019). Despite this, people face challenges in obtaining training, education, funding, and assistance (Harris et al., 2013). Examining and clarifying these barriers can thus be critical for integrating people with disabilities into society. Another critical consideration is whether education can encourage entrepreneurship (Barba-Sanchez and Atienza-Sahuquillo 2018). Indeed, running a business necessitates a diverse set of accounting, management, communication, technical (i.e., work-related), and general problem-solving abilities. In self-employment, the business owner must learn to manage all aspects of his business (Dotson et al., 2013). Entrepreneurship education can encourage people to start their businesses more confidently (Wilson et al., 2007).

Rationale and objective of the review

Self-employment and entrepreneurship are becoming increasingly popular among people with NDs. This shift reflects a shift in current policy toward innovative strategies as potential employment options for people with disabilities. Entrepreneurship and self-employment can promote independence and self-determination while decreasing reliance on entitlement-based services. At the

same time, they can help to reduce employment disparities while also encouraging new businesses and job creation.

Few studies, to our knowledge, have looked into self-employment and entrepreneurship among people with NDs. The literature has generally focused on people with disabilities since the early 2000s. Most studies on this topic regard entrepreneurship as a suggestion, and most research is theoretical.

This review examines the scientific contributions of the literature on self-employment and entrepreneurship for young people and adults with NDs and psychiatric disorders up to 2021. The goal is to provide a comprehensive summary of studies on this topic to mental health professionals, employment support service providers, and transition educators. How do self-employment and entrepreneurship for young adults with NDs and psychiatric disorders compare with the same work practices in the general population? Therefore, the following research questions were developed:

1. What are the primary motivators for young people and adults with NDs or psychiatric disorders to pursue an entrepreneurial career?
2. Are there any entrepreneurship education programs tailored to this demographic?
3. Are some clinical characteristics of NDs adaptable in an entrepreneurial setting?
4. What are the main barriers to entrepreneurship for people with NDs or psychiatric disorders, and where can they get help?
5. What are the outcomes related to the use of these innovative strategies?

The following section describes the research methodology, including a rigorous explanation of data collection and analysis procedures.

Method

Inclusion and exclusion criteria

A systematic review was conducted using the PRISMA Statement's criteria (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) (Page et al., 2021).

To be included in the review, the articles had to meet the following criteria:

- 1) Characteristics of participants: young people and adults with NDs (i.e., intellectual disability, autism, ADHD) and psychiatric disorders, aged 18 and over. Studies conducted only with physical disabilities participants were excluded unless the sample also included participants with mental disorders. This choice was motivated by the small number of studies in this area.
- 2) English language: only English-language studies were included, thus excluding papers published in languages other than English;

3) Article type: research articles of quantitative and qualitative studies were included; literature reviews, books, dissertations, and conference proceedings were excluded from the analysis.

Research and selection of studies

The search for bibliographic material was carried out by consulting both databases, particularly PsycInfo, Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar, and secondary sources, such as the reference lists of the retrieved articles. Searches included papers published up to and including 31st October 2021. The keywords used for the bibliographic research were “self-employment”, “social entrepreneurship”, “entrepreneurship education” combined with “intellectual disability”, “mental retardation”, “developmental disability”, “autism”, “ADHD”. The authors independently performed an eligibility assessment, and consensus resolved disagreements.

As shown in figure 1, 166 articles have been identified in the databases through these keywords, and four articles through manual search.

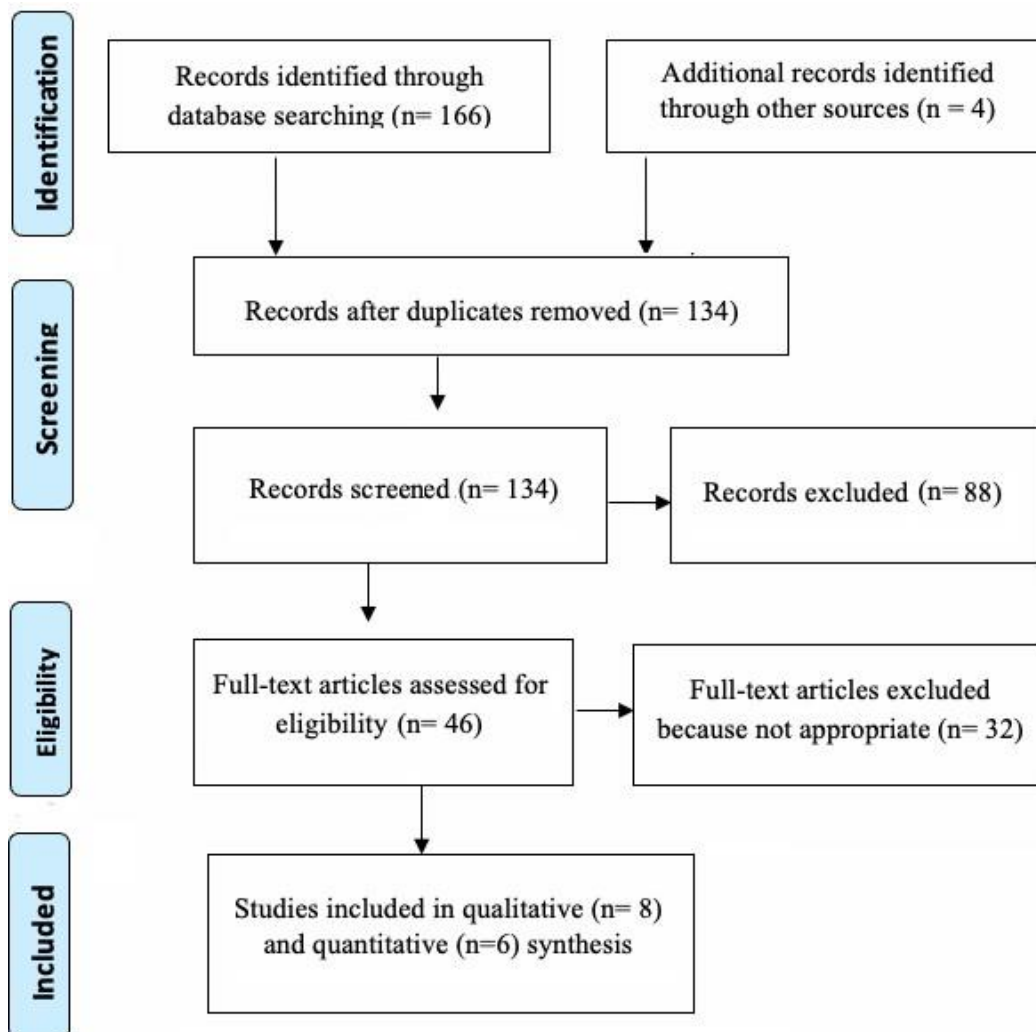


Figure 1 – Flow diagram describing the document selection steps

After identifying the articles, a macro-step selection and analysis of the material were carried out in three steps. The first step involved the elimination of 36 duplicates through a comparison of titles and authors. The second phase involved screening 134 articles by analyzing abstracts and study objectives. This process allowed us to exclude 88 articles.

The remaining 46 articles were subjected to detailed and complete text analysis.

Of the reviewed articles, 14 were considered suitable for screening, while 32 articles were eliminated for unrelated topics based on the exclusion criteria.

The following review presents a comparison of 14 research articles, eight of which are qualitative studies and six quantitative studies.

Data extraction and synthesis

Data were extracted from included studies using a data extraction form, with consensus resolution of decisions. Selected studies were represented in rows with data items in columns. This technique helped extract information from each study and reduced the time and effort needed to identify similarities and differences. The data extracted for this review were as follows: author(s), year of publication, country, characteristics of participants (i.e., sample type and size; gender and age), method, and critical study results. A narrative synthesis of results was undertaken to address the research questions related to the identified motivations, entrepreneurship education programs, barriers, supports, and outcomes of self-employment and entrepreneurship for people with NDs and psychiatric disorders. This process was made possible by the first two authors reading all reviewed papers and identifying and discussing factors aligned with the review's stated goals.

Table 1 summarises the main characteristics and results of the studies included in the review. Regardless of cultural context, factors that appear to be universal are highlighted.

Participants' characteristics

The participants in the majority of the studies were older than 18 years (Caldwell et al., 2016; Caldwell et al., 2019; Caldwell et al., 2020; Conroy et al., 2010; Dimic & Orlow, 2014; Dotson et al., 2013; Hagner & Davies, 2002; Ostrow et al., 2019; Thoresen et al., 2018; Wiklund et al., 2016). However, in some studies (Abbas & Md Khair, 2017; Nurbaity et al., 2019; Olufemi et al., 2017; Shaheen, 2016), the participant's age was not specified. Despite this, these studies were included in the review, as the information provided suggested that they were 18 years or older (e.g., "attending university" or when referring to the participants as "adults"). A study only does not specify the sample size (Olufemi et al., 2017).

Table 1. *Synthesis of the studies included in the systematic review*

| Authors | Country | Sample | Diagnosis | Type of study | Method | Results |
|------------------------|----------|---|---|-----------------------|--|--|
| Abbas & Md Khair, 2017 | Malaysia | N= 90 (M= 42, F=48); Age = NA | Students with special educational needs of 3 polytechnics. | Quantitative | Questionnaire to investigate business intentions; divided into 4 sections: a) willingness to be entrepreneurs; b) factors that influence the willingness to be entrepreneurs; c) sociodemographic information; d) entrepreneurship knowledge | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Entrepreneurship is a motivating factor that influences people to pursue an entrepreneurial career; - One motivation was to improve the life of their family. |
| Caldwell et al., 2016 | USA | N= 27 (Gender =N/A); Age range= 18-65 years | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - From physical disability to mental disability, head trauma and autism; - Social entrepreneurs | Qualitative | <p>Exploratory analysis: Focus groups and interviews with entrepreneurs with disabilities and their stakeholders to answer 3 research questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) do people with disabilities continue to face attitudinal barriers and to what extent these barriers differ from those encountered in their previous employment; 2) what motivates people with disabilities to pursue entrepreneurship compared to other employment options; 3) how do these motivational and attitudinal factors affect their entrepreneurship | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - People with disabilities encounter attitudinal barriers and discrimination in their employment decisions; - Policy makers and service providers give priority to needs-based entrepreneurship over opportunities, while for social entrepreneurs with disabilities, unmet need seems to be a crucial source of generating ideas and social value; - Motivational and attitudinal factors influence the way people with disabilities participate in social entrepreneurship on multiple levels, in multiple phases of their business development. |
| Caldwell et al., 2019 | USA | <p>N=14 (M=4, F=3); Age: range= 19-40; Mean age= 25</p> <p>Support persons: (M=3, F=4); Age range= 24-61; Mean age = 49</p> | <p>7 participants with Intellectual Disability (ID) and 7 support persons. 4 of the participants with ID were social entrepreneurs; 3 were working in companies (2 of them were about to start a business).</p> <p>-All participants had ID</p> | from mild to moderate | | <p>Qualitative Dyadic interviews:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1- person with ID; 2- support person to provide additional info; 3 -follow up |

- The presence of a job coach and/or a personal assistant is important for entrepreneurs with ID interviewed;
 - An informal support (e.g., family and friends) seems essential to start and run a business;
 - Participants like to work with their family;
 - Barriers in receiving support and structures
 - Need for funds
-

| Authors | Country | Sample | Diagnosis | Type of study | Method | Results |
|-----------------------|---------|--|--|---------------|---|--|
| Caldwell et al., 2020 | USA | N=14 (M=4, F=3); Age: range= 19-40; Mean= 25 Support persons: (M=3, F=4); Age: range= 24-61; Mean= 49 | 7 participants with Intellectual Disability (ID) from mild to moderate and 7 support persons. 4 of the participants with ID were social entrepreneurs; 3 were working in companies (2 of them were about to start a business). | Qualitative | Dyadic interviews: 1- person with ID 2- support person to provide additional info 3 -follow up | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social entrepreneurship as a means to achieve self-determination in work; - Profit means that entrepreneurs with ID can continue to do the job they love to benefit themselves and the community; - Entrepreneurs with ID encounter financial and support barriers. |
| Conroy et al., 2010 | USA | N= 27 (M=14,F=13); Age range= 23-61 years; Mean age = 33 years | -ID and NDs - Other comorbidities: borderline personality disorder, ADHD, infantile cerebral palsy, depression, Tourette's syndrome and other conditions. | Quantitative | Questionnaires of evaluation on: - quality of the participants' working life before and after their involvement in the company - quality of working life of support workers - how they spent time before and after starting the new activity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improving working life, both for participants and support workers in all 17 areas surveyed; - For all participants the total number of hours dedicated to daily activities decreased by about a quarter during the development of the micro-enterprise; - The total amount of income did not change. |
| Dimic & Orlow, 2014 | Finland | N=270 (M=38%, F= 62%); Age = 18+ | Adults with ADHD (+ control group without ADHD) | Quantitative | Survey to study the relationship between ADHD and employment choice. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - People with ADHD are less likely to become entrepreneurs; - ADHD does not affect the possibility of earning a salary or being unemployed; - People with ADHD show higher values in the trend towards entrepreneurship; - ADHD has a positive impact on many business characteristics |

| Authors | Country | Sample | Diagnosis | Type of study | Method | Results |
|-----------------------|-----------|--|---|---------------|--|--|
| Dotson et al., 2013 | USA | N= 8 (M= 3, F=5); Age range= 19-30 years; Mean age= 28 years | Autism, Mental Retardation, PPD-NOS, Down syndrome; students from a Transition Academy | Quantitative | Multiple probe design between jobs (with a comparison of generalization conditions) to determine: 1) whether a group teaching procedure was effective in increasing the skill levels of participants learning a subset of self-employment skills to start a recycling company; 2) assess the effects of extending teaching to the natural environment on task performance during a shift in a similar work setting. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - They increase skills related to many possibilities of self-employment; - Extension of treatment to shifts in the building resulted in high skill levels; - It is possible to teach self-employment skills to young adults with NDs. |
| Hagner & Davies, 2002 | USA | N= 8 (M=3, F=5); Age =18+ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ID in comorbidity with movement disorders or physical disability - Owners of a company | Qualitative | Interviews to assess the significance of self-employment for owners, understand the structure, function and viability of the business, and examine the types and sources of support provided | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enterprises related to genuine interests of participants; - Increased contacts and social relations; - Various support figures (e.g., family, organizations for the disabled and business assistance groups) |
| Nurbaity et al., 2019 | Indonesia | N= 6 (M=3, F=3); Age = N/A | 2 with autism, 4 with physical disability; | Qualitative | Case study: through interviews 3 themes are identified: 1) elements of interest; 2) characteristics of an entrepreneur and 3) ethics of a company | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Becoming an entrepreneur means making an effort to improve the economy in the community; - High interest of participants in entrepreneurship: women have the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills as a priority; males think more about having capital to start a business; - Everyone shows they know what it means entrepreneurship; - Some develop business ideas while they are students thanks to family and friends entrepreneurs. |

| Authors | Country | Sample | Diagnosis | Type of study | Method | Results |
|----------------------|---------|---|---|---------------|--|---|
| Olufemi et al., 2017 | Nigeria | N= N/A; Age= N/A | Students with ID of a rehabilitation center and other schools for people with intellectual disabilities in which entrepreneurship education was taught. | Quantitative | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Questionnaires on entrepreneurship education for teachers and high school students in Nigeria - Secondary data obtained from newspapers, periodicals, internet sources and textbooks - Descriptive data analysis | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Most of the respondents believed vocational education is relevant for people with ID; - Entrepreneurship education can lead people with ID to live an independent life; - The government should invest more in entrepreneurship education for people with ID; - Schools for people with ID should be well equipped to ensure the adequacy and relevance of education |
| Ostrow et al., 2019 | USA | N= 60 (M=9, F=50, Self-Identity= 1); Age range: 18-65+; Mean age= N/A | Self-employed workers with psychiatric disorders | Quantitative | Exploratory study: web survey to discover demographic information, disability experiences, motivations for self-employment and characteristics of the enterprise | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Most of the interviewees ran part-time new, very small, unincorporated home service companies; - Respondents were educated, typically with a long working history, but had experienced discrimination and unpleasant attitudes from colleagues and supervisors. - The responses highlighted the importance of freedom and work-life balance. |
| Shaheen, 2016 | USA | N= 204 (Gender= N/A); Age = N/A | Adults with psychiatric disabilities | Qualitative | Description of the Program "Startup NY: creation, objectives, outcomes. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Imagining a future life for people with mental illnesses and other people with disabilities that is not bound by a disability label imposed as "incapable" is an essential first step to becoming an entrepreneur; - Vocational rehabilitation professionals, working with partner agencies, do not need to take on the entire burden of deciding who receives their financial support for self-employment and who does not, if consumers are better prepared with their business feasibility plans and their set of feasible personal and business goals and needs. |

| Authors | Country | Sample | Diagnosis | Type of study | Method | Results |
|-----------------------|----------------|---|-------------------------|----------------------|--|--|
| Thoresen et al., 2018 | Australia | N= 4 (M=4); Age= 18+ | Adults with ID | Qualitative | Case studies: Interviews with support persons and other reference figures | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The study provides examples of families who have built businesses on specific interests, skills and needs of their children with ID and very high support needs. - Parents have a key role in starting and continuing these activities. |
| Wiklund et al., 2016 | USA | N= 14 (M=9, F=5); Age range=20s-60s | Entrepreneurs with ADHD | Qualitative | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Multiple case study - Live and telephone interviews on 4 main topics: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Personal history 2) Entrepreneurial paths 3) Nature of the diagnosis 4) Diagnosis and entrepreneurship | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Everyone has said that one of the biggest advantages of being an entrepreneur is that you can adapt your work to your energy level; - Several respondents said they started their business on impulse because they were bored with their previous jobs, and found something else they felt passionate about and wanted to pursue; - In the business environment some symptoms of ADHD have a positive effect |

Most of the studies selected included participants of American origin, specifically USA (n = 9); other studies included participants from Malaysia (n=1), Indonesia (n=1), Finland (n=1), Nigeria (n=1), and Australia (n=1).

In this review, participants with NDs and psychiatric disorders were mainly university students (Abbas & Md Khair, 2017; Nurbaity et al., 2019; Olufemi et al., 2017), social entrepreneurs (Caldwell et al., 2016, 2019, 2020; Thoresen et al., 2018), self-employed and business owners (Hagner & Davies, 2002; Ostrow et al., 2002), 2019, Wiklund et al., 2016), adults included in educational and entrepreneurship development programs (Conroy et al., 2010; Dotson et al., 2013; Shaheen, 2016) and adults with NDs included to assess motivations for entrepreneurship and associated clinical features (Dimic & Orlov, 2014).

The studies with participants diagnosed with intellectual disability were the majority (n=6). Some of these studies (n=2) included participants with intellectual disabilities in comorbidity with other disorders, such as borderline personality disorder, ADHD, infantile cerebral palsy, depressive disorder, and Tourette's syndrome. Two studies (n=2) had participants diagnosed with ADHD, and in two other studies, participants had psychiatric disorders (n=2). Finally, the remaining studies (n=4) included various diagnoses, including autism, head trauma, Down syndrome, and Generalized Developmental Disorder not otherwise specified (PPD-NOS).

Characteristics of selected articles and types of interventions

Qualitative studies included in this review used methodologies including mainly interviews (Cadwell et al., 2019, 2020; Hagner & Davies, 2002; Nurbaity et al., 2019; Thoresen et al., 2018; Wiklund et al., 2016), sometimes combined with focus groups (Cadwell et al., 2016). Shaheen's study (2016) describes a model of entrepreneurship education following the "Startup NY" program to develop inclusive entrepreneurship practices for people with disabilities.

Quantitative studies were mainly exploratory studies using different methodologies, including evaluation questionnaires and web surveys (Abbas & Md Khair, 2017; Conroy et al., 2010; Dimic & Orlov, 2014; Olufemi et al., 2017; Ostrow et al., 2019).

Dotson et al. (2013) used a multiple-behavior probe design to assess a teaching package's effectiveness on participants' ability to complete tasks related to three jobs related to starting a recycling company.

Characteristics of entrepreneurial and self-employment activities

In the study of Caldwell et al. (2016), the company's structure could be profit-oriented, non-profit, or a hybrid social enterprise operating in the free market. Examples of social enterprises run by adults with intellectual disabilities (Caldwell et al., 2019, 2020) included organic coffee fair-trade companies, press and consulting offices, jewelry design, and bakery sales. These companies'

characteristics were that each social entrepreneur was involved in developing the business idea. Other companies were dedicated to handicraft production of necklaces and other jewelry, decorative gift baskets, and painting figures and letters on wood (Hagner & Davies, 2002). Some entrepreneurs ran toy stores, gifts, and household items or were involved in home childcare (Hagner & Davies, 2002). Further activities included health care, training and education, art, communication, catering or housing, transport, retail, and construction (Ostrow et al., 2019; Wiklund et al., 2016).

Conroy et al. (2010) describe a program for creating individual micro-enterprises for adults with intellectual disabilities without specifying the type of activities in which they were engaged.

In the case study of Thoresen et al. (2018), the activities described revolved around the participants' interests and strengths and aimed to increase their inclusion in the community. For example, one of the participants had developed a business that eliminated the need for people to stay home from work to wait for a dealer or delivery. The business was to do the waiting. The worker arrived at the person's home with a support worker and waited for the service person's arrival, and during the wait, he did some tasks agreed upon with the homeowner, such as sweeping or cleaning the car. Other activities included a courier service that offered mail collection and delivery, a company that collected and reused newspapers turned into lighters, and artwork for sale. Another example of business included a company that sold various birdseed mixtures and related products suitable for wild and domestic birds.

Results

This section presents the results of the systematic revision process, organized according to the research questions that guided our search and analysis.

Entrepreneurial motivations

Entrepreneurial motivation is regarded as a factor influencing behavior, where the intention itself demonstrates how the person is willing to use effort to achieve behavior. In this review, two studies used questionnaires and interviews to investigate the motivation to pursue an entrepreneurial career in university students with special educational needs and NDs (Abbas & Md Khair, 2017; Nurbaity et al., 2019). According to the findings, university students with disabilities are very interested in entrepreneurship (Abbas & Md Khair, 2017; Nurbaity et al., 2019). One of the most common reasons students gave was to improve the quality of life for their families (Abbas & Md Khair, 2017). According to the studies, female students appear to be more interested in entrepreneurship than male students (Abbas & Md Khair, 2017; Nurbaity et al., 2019).

Furthermore, female respondents prioritize their entrepreneurship skills and experience, whereas male respondents are more concerned with capital when running a business (Nurbaity et al., 2019).

According to Nurbaity et al. (2019), entrepreneurship has been well-known among most participants since their school days. Such knowledge had been obtained from the surrounding environment, such as from parents, relatives, and several friends who were food and product entrepreneurs.

Also, concerning university students with special needs, we should consider that they might often not have a clear idea of the business project to undertake or the methods for obtaining funding and other business-related issues (Abbas & Md Khair, 2017). Despite this, their interest in an entrepreneurial career may be high (Abbas & Md Khair, 2017).

Adults with intellectual disabilities and other NDs pursuing an entrepreneurial career have different motivations than university students (Caldwell et al., 2016; Dimic & Orlov, 2014; Hagner & Davies, 2002; Ostrow et al., 2019; Wiklund et al., 2016).

One of the primary reasons people with NDs decide to start their businesses is the ability to work from home. This reason is a significant opportunity for entrepreneurs with ADHD, who must adapt their work hours to their energy level (i.e., working when their energy level is high and taking time for themselves when it is low, regardless of the time of day) (Wiklund et al., 2016). Other reasons include having a self-sufficient income and the opportunity for innovation (Caldwell et al., 2016; Dimic & Orlov, 2014; Hagner & Davies, 2002; Ostrow et al., 2019; Wiklund et al., 2016).

In addition to these motivations, we must consider the scarcity of alternative employment opportunities (Hagner & Davies, 2002; Caldwell et al., 2016). According to some participants in the Caldwell et al. (2016) study, social entrepreneurship represents an excellent opportunity for people with disabilities who have difficulty finding a competitive job but have a set of unique characteristics and skills that would give them an advantage in starting their own business. However, these entrepreneurs must weigh their desire to become economically independent against their reliance on government services, which limits their ability to do so (Caldwell et al., 2016).

Although a lack of other job opportunities is an essential motivator for most entrepreneurs with intellectual disabilities, businesses have been formed based on the interests and values of the entrepreneurs (Hagner & Davies, 2002).

Another motivator to engage in entrepreneurial activity is boredom caused by previous jobs and a desire to find something to be passionate about (Wiklund et al., 2016). Caldwell et al. (2020) found that social entrepreneurs with intellectual disabilities were motivated to show that people with NDs can own a business and to contrast the stigma associated with people with disabilities.

Clinical characteristics associated with entrepreneurship

Two studies have examined how some characteristic symptoms of ADHD can be adaptive in the business environment (Dimic & Orlov, 2014; Wiklund et al., 2016).

Dimic and Orlov (2014) surveyed adults with ADHD and without, studying the relationship between ADHD and employment choice. The questions concerned some dimensions: five entrepreneurial trends, age, gender, race, employment status, marital status, presence of ADHD, and involvement in entrepreneurship. The survey included questions on the type of employment (i.e., full-time or part-time) and the company (i.e., organization and management) to assess entrepreneurship aspects.

The results showed that ADHD did not influence the probability of earning a salary or being unemployed. Furthermore, ADHD may positively impact some characteristics, such as achieving autonomy and independence, being creative, and having a moderate risk-taking attitude.

Wiklund et al. (2016) conducted 14 interviews with ADHD entrepreneurs on four major topics: 1) personal background, 2) entrepreneurial experiences, 3) nature of diagnoses, and 4) diagnosis and entrepreneurship. The findings revealed that the characteristics of ADHD permeated the study participants' entrepreneurial paths.

The entrepreneurs' ADHD behaviors were influenced by impulsiveness, activity level, and attention style. They acted without thinking, for example, even when making important decisions. In an entrepreneurial setting, this action mode is associated with a more intuitive decision-making process that is emotionally driven.

This impatient component is a fundamental drive for new working behaviors and keeps entrepreneurs looking for new opportunities.

People with ADHD simultaneously engage in new activities and always generate new ideas. The study by Wiklund et al. (2016) suggests that despite the negative connotation, the clinical features of ADHD seem to be in tune with entrepreneurial action.

Entrepreneurship education

According to studies, entrepreneurship education enables people to plan their careers and be self-sufficient after graduating high school (Dotson et al., 2013; Olufemi et al., 2019; Shaheen, 2016). Entrepreneurship education boosts people with intellectual disabilities' self-esteem and helps them develop their ability to work independently (Olufemi et al., 2019).

In Oyo, Nigeria, Olufemi et al. (2019) investigated the effectiveness of vocational training as an integral part of entrepreneurship education as a transition program for people with intellectual disabilities. According to the findings, most students with disabilities believed that vocational education was critical in allowing students with intellectual disabilities to contribute to society and achieve self-actualization.

Dotson et al. (2013) investigated the effects of a behavioral teaching procedure on acquiring three broad classes of self-employment-related skills (worker, supervisor, and office worker) in young adults with NDs working in a recycling company. Participants increased many self-employment skills

taught and generalized learning in the natural environment due to the program. This study demonstrates that adults with NDs can learn business-starting skills.

Shaheen (2016) describes a four-step inclusive entrepreneurship model based on the "Start-UP NY" project's goal of evaluating and demonstrating business support practices for people with various disabilities, including mental disabilities. The project's concept was that people with disabilities could start their businesses even if they lacked confidence.

The model's first stage (Shaheen, 2016) describes an entrepreneur who has no idea how to start a business or write a business plan. The "Business Navigator" figure will then guide him through the initial process, assisting him in identifying his strengths, skills, and aspirations for his entrepreneurial goal. The potential entrepreneur learns how to write a formal business plan and conduct industry and market research in the second stage. In stage 3, the entrepreneur is in charge of accounting, sales, and management, as well as the business plan and marketing. Finally, stage 4 represents an entrepreneur who has established a business but requires assistance with growth and support.

The StartUP project (Shaheen, 2016) assisted practitioners in understanding that developing a business plan is not always the first step in assisting people with disabilities to become small business owners. This step should be followed by a personal self-evaluation and a business feasibility plan. Future entrepreneurs can make an informed and objective decision about becoming self-employed if they examine, evaluate, challenge, and research their motivation for self-employment, the types of businesses, and the support needed to start and sustain the business. Before moving on to more formal business planning, this process assists them in determining whether that particular activity is personally and financially viable. As a result of this process, a person may decide not to start a business and instead pursue another career goal more aligned with their skills, aspirations, strengths, and support needs.

Barriers to entrepreneurship

According to our review, social entrepreneurs with intellectual disabilities face financial, economic, and attitudinal barriers related to traditional expectations, availability, growth, systemic, and support (Caldwell et al., 2020). The main financial and economic barriers stem from social entrepreneurs' lack of financial literacy, and support persons do not involve them in financial activity. The cognitive barriers expressed by social entrepreneurs with intellectual disabilities are related to their motivation to start a social enterprise, demonstrating that people with intellectual disabilities can own a business. These obstacles are closely related to the stigma associated with disabled people who choose to become entrepreneurs. Some participants in Caldwell et al. (2020) initially hesitated to identify any barriers. This reluctance stems from a desire to be perceived as independent entrepreneurs rather than people who cannot run their businesses.

Another barrier is the willingness to start a business and its development and growth. Writing a business plan and conducting a feasibility analysis appears to be the first steps in starting a successful business. However, the social entrepreneurs interviewed appear to have used disability-specific planning tools rather than formal plans.

Other barriers include reliance on word-of-mouth marketing and a lack of understanding of their core clientele (Caldwell et al., 2020).

Although some studies have shown the value of entrepreneurship education for starting a business (Dotson et al., 2013; Olufemi et al., 2019; Shaheen, 2016), social entrepreneurs with intellectual disabilities face barriers not only to education, training, and business information but also to equal access to education (Caldwell et al., 2020).

Hagner and Davies (2002) find it challenging to manage the business and obtain the necessary support and services. There is also a need for fair accounting while also allowing the company the necessary time to generate income.

Support in business start-up and management

This review demonstrates the significance of formal and informal forms of assistance in business start-ups (Hagner & Davies, 2002; Caldwell et al., 2019, 2020).

In the study of Hagner and Davies (2002), most companies required substantial funding. Most entrepreneurs with intellectual disabilities have used personal (e.g., family funds) and public (e.g., vocational rehabilitation funds) funding to start their businesses. No one had applied for or received bank loans or written a formal business plan. Seven of the eight business owners' primary support was for a disability agency (e.g., development services or staff of a special educational program).

In social entrepreneurship, formal and informal support overlap, and personal and professional intertwine (Caldwell et al., 2020). Working with a family member can be difficult because separating the personal and professional spheres is difficult. When roles and responsibilities within a company are not clearly defined, this problem becomes extremely real. Support people may manage some aspects of the business because they believe the disabled entrepreneur cannot. This approach may jeopardize freedom of action and self-determination, as well as the extent to which a social entrepreneur with intellectual disabilities participates in business decisions (Caldwell et al., 2020).

Supporting figures may perceive entrepreneurship differently than entrepreneurs with disabilities (Caldwell et al., 2019, 2020; Hagner & Davies, 2002). In Hagner and Davies's (2002) study, for example, the support figures felt it was challenging to combine personal and business support; for some, it was difficult to separate support for self-employment from more traditional employment support. They also reported that business support took a long time and exceeded their expectations.

Furthermore, Caldwell et al. (2019) reported that support figures of social entrepreneurs with intellectual disabilities recognized the potential for enterprise innovation, but this concerned the disability of social entrepreneurs. In other words, while the support persons recognized the skills and talent of social entrepreneurs with intellectual disabilities, they believed that the marketability of the product/service was related to the disability.

Some of these figures claimed that entrepreneurs with intellectual disabilities did not understand the concept of profit. According to the support persons, a lack of understanding of profit was related to financial difficulties. According to Caldwell et al. (2019), entrepreneurs with intellectual disabilities understand what profit is. They understood that profit meant being able to keep working. This example explains the disparities in perceptions between entrepreneurs with NDs and those who support them.

Outcomes

Entrepreneurs with NDs can use outcome measures to better manage their company or enterprise in self-employment and entrepreneurship (Caldwell et al., 2019).

All business owners in Hagner and Davies's (2002) study were satisfied with their work and saw the role of supporting people as beneficial to them. The individual's ability to draw on additional support from various sources, including family, friends, disability support organizations, business consulting organizations, and different access skills, appeared critical to the business's success and helped prevent burnout. Most businesses paid their owners a relatively small amount of money. They were, however, new businesses, and it is typical for new businesses to require time to become self-sufficient. Most entrepreneurs supplemented their income from sources other than the company to meet their financial needs. Although businesses were not always a significant source of income, they did provide a valuable social role as entrepreneurs, reduced social isolation, and increased individual choice and control. Even businesses where the production work was done solely by the entrepreneurs increased their social contacts. Some of them have generated new business expansion ideas due to networking. All the entrepreneurs interviewed stated they intend to expand their businesses (Hagner & Davies, 2002). They all valued their work because it matched their values and lifestyle preferences. Although secondary in importance, the interviewees mentioned contact with clients and the ability to satisfy them as additional positive aspects of self-employment (Hagner & Davies, 2002).

Conroy et al. (2010) describe a "microenterprise" program for 27 people with intellectual and developmental disabilities as part of the broader professional services provided by an agency in Michigan, USA, and the results show that after the creation of individual micro-enterprises, improvements in all areas of the quality of working life of both entrepreneurs and support persons were found. These enhancements were discovered to be socially significant.

Thoresen et al. (2018) described the outcomes of four types of enterprises created for adults with intellectual disabilities in their study. The case studies provided examples of families who have built thriving businesses around the unique interests, skills, and needs of children with intellectual disabilities. The results demonstrated the importance of identifying and capitalizing on competitive advantages. This passage had to be done through a person-centered process within the businesses described. Another critical success factor identified is the combination of formal and informal support and planning to ensure that informal involvement is substantial, significantly when parental support is reduced. Thoresen et al. (2018)'s findings confirm the significance of economic sustainability in determining the viability of a business.

The studies suggest that social entrepreneurship outcomes for people with NDs should be assessed on several levels and differ depending on where entrepreneurs are in the business's development (Caldwell et al., 2019). For this population, growth meant expanding a market to reach new customers and hiring employees to increase their capacity. These results indicate and emphasize the need to increase access to entrepreneurial training for these people.

Discussion

This review aimed to provide mental health professionals with an overview of the self-employment and business realities of young people and adults with NDs and psychiatric disorders. The amount of bibliographic material examined is undeniably substantial, emphasizing the need for additional research in this field.

In general, entrepreneurs with NDs are highly motivated to pursue an entrepreneurial path, which offers numerous benefits such as flexibility, the ability to be self-sufficient, and the ability to generate innovation (Caldwell et al., 2016; Dimic & Orlov, 2014; Hagner & Davies, 2002; Ostrow et al., 2019; Wiklund et al., 2016). They report an improvement in their overall quality of life, particularly job satisfaction and happiness (Caldwell et al., 2016, 2019, 2020; Conroy et al., 2010; Hagner & Davies, 2002; Thoresen et al., 2018). These findings point to entrepreneurship as a job option that can boost the self-determination of people with NDs (Swarbrick & Stahl, 2009).

Another intriguing finding from the study is that some clinical characteristics, such as impulsivity in ADHD, can be a resource for entrepreneurial action (Dimic & Orlov; Wiklund et al., 2016). People with ADHD tend to act without thinking or waiting, which leads them to seek new experiences. This approach appears adaptable in an entrepreneurial context and opens up new research avenues in this field.

Currently, self-employed workers and entrepreneurs with NDs and psychiatric disorders face several challenges, including financial, economic, attitudinal, and supportive barriers (Caldwell et al., 2020;

Hagner & Davies, 2002). These considerations highlight the importance of promoting entrepreneurship education programs for people with NDs and mental illnesses (Dotson et al., 2013; Shaheen, 2016). As a result, it is essential to recognize that personal choice is a fundamental feature of self-employment and entrepreneurship. As a result, it may be necessary to develop entrepreneurship models that take into account the preferences of entrepreneurs with NDs (Hagner & Davies, 2002) in order for them to become agents of social change (Caldwell et al., 2019).

Another point to emphasize is that employment outcomes should assist entrepreneurs in growing and supporting their businesses, not just politicians and service providers (Caldwell et al., 2019). Social entrepreneurship is a relational process that involves many non-monetary and indirect forms of profit. As a result, we should shift away from practices solely focused on individual self-sufficiency, better understanding, and encouraging innovative and growth-oriented entrepreneurship among people with NDs and other psychological disorders. In addition, outcomes should be evaluated at multiple levels. It is not difficult to imagine how an individual who participates and is supported in his or her entrepreneurship will change as he or she progresses from idea development to business start-up and will continue to change from initial development to growth and sustainability (Caldwell et al., 2019). As a result, service providers may assist entrepreneurs with NDs in connecting with other services required to start a business (e.g., legal services, job coaching) and other independent living areas. If a person is not in contact with a service provider or a community body, networking with other organizations for people with disabilities could be a useful alternative tool for marketing, promoting the business, and building a customer base.

Limitations

Most existing research on self-employment and entrepreneurship among young people and adults with NDs has been conducted in the United States, which is a limitation. As a result, the findings may not represent the general population. Another limitation is that most data come from measurement tools such as questionnaires and interviews, so participants' lack of awareness may influence them. Finally, as previously stated, some articles do not provide information about the sample characteristics (e.g., sample size and participant age), which makes the results less reliable.

This review also highlights some methodological shortcomings. The analysis, for example, included some studies in which participants had physical disabilities and focused primarily on qualitative studies, the publishability of which is not dependent on statistical significance. Furthermore, the inclusion of participants with various disorders may indicate different types of entrepreneurial paths and outcomes. Given the specificity of the research topic, inclusion criteria were defined to include a more significant number of studies. Indeed, some studies were included in which essential

characteristics, such as the age of the participants, were not specified, affecting the review's actual systematicity.

Conclusions

Despite its methodological limitations, the findings of this review emphasize the importance of developing evidence-based acceptable practices for people with NDs and psychiatric disorders who want to work for themselves. According to the literature review, this population chooses and is capable of pursuing these innovative employment strategies. Self-employment and entrepreneurship can help people with NDs make a difference in their communities through social and economic participation. Future research could operationalize the descriptive framework from the various studies in a model that considers specific issues, indicators, and evidence sources. If entrepreneurship becomes an effective employment strategy for people with NDs, it is critical to consider the experiences of this population when developing employment programs and policies for people with disabilities. Researchers, mental health professionals, and policymakers should look beyond stigmatized perceptions of impairment to identify market barriers faced by entrepreneurs with NDs and psychiatric disorders. In this regard, developing guidelines or models to assist entrepreneurs with NDs in starting and supporting their businesses appear appropriate.

Finally, this review emphasizes the need for a better understanding of entrepreneurship and self-employment's psychological and social effects on the population under study. People with NDs and psychiatric disorders may have unique knowledge derived from their experiences in a disadvantaged society, so research and practice in this area should be person-centered. In the future, this approach could help these people become social innovators and effect social change.

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