
Beyond The Job Description: An Autoethnography of the Emotional Dimension of
Disability Support Work

by

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DEDICATION

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ABSTRACT

This autoethnographic study explores the emotional dimensions of disability support work through the personal experiences of the researcher. The research investigates the long-term effects of emotional labour on support workers, focusing on both positive and negative impacts. Through detailed reflective narratives, the study highlights how emotional labour has enhanced emotional intelligence, professional growth, and commitment to advocacy. Conversely, it also examines the challenges of emotional exhaustion, mental health impacts, and strained personal relationships.

By employing an autoethnographic approach, the research provides an authentic portrayal of the daily emotional complexities faced by disability support workers. It emphasizes the importance of understanding and addressing these emotional demands to improve the well-being of both support workers and clients. The study also incorporates insights from an MSc in Disability Studies, which has influenced the researcher's approach to caregiving and emotional labour management.

The findings underscore the necessity for sustainable practices and organizational support systems to manage emotional labour effectively. Recommendations include regular emotional health check-ins, training programs in emotional regulation, supportive organizational policies, structured support systems, cultural competence training, systemic policy reforms, adequate resources and staffing, and involving support workers in management decisions. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of the emotional labour involved in disability support work and highlights the need for comprehensive strategies to support those in this vital field.

Keywords: emotional labour, disability support work, autoethnography, emotional intelligence, professional growth, advocacy, mental health, organizational support.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Background

Disability support services is essential in enhancing the autonomy and inclusion of people with disabilities. These services are designed to support various aspects of daily living, enabling people with disabilities to participate more fully in the society. These services range from personal care and mobility assistance to more complex needs such as communication support, educational opportunities, and employment facilitation. The ultimate aim is to improve the quality of life for people with disabilities by ensuring they can engage in the community as independently as possible. (Rimmerman, 2013, p. 81)

Disability support workers are at the heart of delivering these essential services. Their responsibilities extend far beyond basic care; they are involved in a wide array of tasks that support not only the physical but also the emotional and social needs of individuals with disabilities. Truong et al. (2021) note that these professionals assist with daily activities such as bathing, eating, and dressing, which are critical for maintaining personal hygiene and physical health.

Beyond physical assistance, disability support workers provide vital emotional (Costakis et al., 2021) and social support (Rimmerman, 2013). They often serve as one of the primary social contacts for their clients, offering companionship and emotional comfort, which Costakis et al. (2021) identify as essential for mental and emotional well-being. These workers also play a key role in advocacy and empowerment, helping clients access necessary services and supporting their rights in various settings. This involves promoting self-advocacy skills, which Rimmerman (2013) highlights as essential for empowering clients to navigate their own lives and decisions.

The scope of this disability support goes well beyond the confines of a simple job description, and it is deep and complex in many ways. Disability support professionals have a wide variety of duties, although those listed in job descriptions tend to get the most attention. This thesis employs an autoethnography to explore the emotional dimensions of providing services to people with disabilities. This was accomplished through my personal reflections on and experiences in the field of disability support. The need to delve deeper into these dimensions arises from the recognition that disability support work entails complexities that cannot be fully captured by a mere enumeration of tasks. These complexities are mainly not just assistance with physical needs but also the emotional support (Costakis et al., 2021), advocacy and empowerment (Yee & Weir, 2019). We often find ourselves performing roles that require intricate understanding of human emotions, behaviours, and social dynamics. For instance, they may need to negotiate complex family dynamics, addresses societal prejudices and advocate for the rights and needs of clients.

The depth of the role also includes fostering emotional resilience in clients, helping them navigate their disabilities in ways that promote self-esteem and independence. This often requires a deep personal commitment and an empathetic approach, which can be an emotionally taxing and is rarely acknowledged in a standard job description. The experiences, emotions, and ethical considerations inherent in this role significantly shape the quality of care and support provided to individuals with disabilities. Previous research has highlighted the importance of understanding the social, emotional, and ethical aspects of disability support work to improve outcomes for both support workers and individuals with disabilities (Costakis et al., 2021; Didi et al., 2018)

The personal experiences of the researcher as a disability support worker form the foundation for this study. Over the course of one year, the researcher has been directly involved in various aspects of disability support, including personal care, assistance with daily activities, emotional support, and advocacy. These firsthand experiences have provided valuable insights into the social interactions, emotional labour, and ethical challenges that accompany the role of a disability support worker. By engaging in self-reflection and employing an autoethnographic approach, this research aims to illuminate the lived experiences and provide an authentic portrayal of the emotional labour that extend beyond the job description.

My journey into disability support work was significantly shaped by my educational background in Disability and Rehabilitation Studies. During my undergraduate studies, I pursued a bachelor's degree in this field, which provided me with a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by people with disabilities and the importance of promoting their independence, inclusion, and well-being. Through coursework and practical experiences, I gained insights into various disability-related theories, models, and interventions which further deepened my interest and passion for supporting people with disabilities.

Continuing my academic journey, I made a conscious decision to pursue a Master's degree in Disability Studies, which allowed me to delve even deeper into the field. The program has provided me with a solid foundation in disability policy, research methodologies, and person-centred approaches to support.

Also, a personal encounter deeply impacted my perspective and ignited my passion for this field. Years ago, on an educational field trip, I had the opportunity to meet an individual with a disability who was determined to live life to the fullest despite facing various barriers. We visited a community center to meet with a couple of individuals with various disabilities. There, I

met an individual whose vibrancy and passion for life were undiminished by the physical and environmental limitations they faced daily. This person, who navigated their environment in a wheelchair, not only participated in various activities but also led projects that aimed to enhance accessibility within the community. Their leadership role and active participation in societal improvement were not just inspiring; they were a powerful testament to the capabilities and potential of individuals with disabilities when provided with appropriate support and opportunities. What struck me most was not merely their involvement in activities, but their infectious enthusiasm and confidence which challenged many of the preconceived notions held by society and, admittedly, some of my own about disability. Witnessing their strength, resilience, and desire for independence profoundly inspired me. It was through this encounter that I realized the transformative power of providing support and advocacy for disabled people.

These educational experiences and personal encounters with people with disabilities significantly influenced my career trajectory and solidified my commitment to disability support work. For instance, I met with a young man back in undergraduate school who, despite significant impairment (Down syndrome), strives to participate fully in community activities. It influenced my perspective. Such interactions highlight the resilience and determination of individuals with disabilities and underscore the crucial role of support workers in facilitating independence and inclusion. These encounters not only deepened my empathy but also enhanced my ability to connect with people with disabilities on a personal level, recognizing their potential and advocating for their needs effectively.

The knowledge and skills I acquired during my undergraduate and graduate studies, including a deep understanding of disability theories such as the social model of disability, have greatly influenced my understanding of the intricate nature of this field. Additionally, my

comprehensive knowledge of disability policy and legislation is relevant for effective advocacy. This awareness has equipped me to approach disability support with a critical eye, questioning traditional perceptions and advocating for systemic changes. Combining with practical experiences, these have been instrumental in shaping my understanding of the complexities inherent in this field. They have provided me with a comprehensive framework to navigate the emotional labour that underpins disability support work, enabling me to provide compassionate, person-centred care and advocacy for individuals with disabilities. This framework emphasizes the importance of creating supportive, empowering environments. It informs my daily practice, enabling me to provide care that is compassionate, informed, and centered on enhancing the independence and well-being of individuals with disabilities. By combining academic theory with practical applications, my educational background in Disability Studies has uniquely positioned me to address the complexities of disability support work. This robust foundation allows me to navigate the multifaceted aspects of the role, from direct care and advocacy to emotional support and ethical issues.

Over the course of two years, I have been privileged to engage directly with individuals with disabilities, witnessing their strengths and resilience firsthand, such as their ability to overcome daily physical challenges, their creativity in communication, and their firm determination to achieve personal goals. These experiences have provided invaluable insights such as the importance of tailored communication strategies, the need for adaptive and flexible support systems, and a deeper understanding of the personal and systemic barriers that individuals with disabilities often face. These insights have profoundly shaped my approach to this job, emphasizing the necessity of a person-centered care model that actively incorporates the voices and preferences of those we support.

To learn more about the aspects of disability support work that go beyond the job description, I used an autoethnographic technique to conduct this research. By engaging in self-reflection and drawing upon my personal experiences, the aim is to shed light on the emotional aspects that shape the nature of support provided to individuals with disabilities. By employing autoethnography in exploring these roles, I was able to gain a comprehensive and detailed understanding of the emotional aspects that are involved in being a disability support worker. To recognize and communicate the emotional challenges and benefits that we face in our work, support workers can benefit by reflecting on their own personal experiences in the field. Using this method, useful insights into the day-to-day realities of disability support were gathered. These insights highlight the emotional labour that is frequently overlooked in regulated job descriptions but is essential to providing good caregiving.

Research Problem/ Context

Typical Job description from first care agency:

Referring to Interaction Disability Services (2024) as a guideline disability support workers are responsible for assisting individuals with daily living activities, self-care, medical care, emotional support, community access, and travel assistance. Their duties include:

- **Household Tasks:** Managing daily chores such as cleaning, laundry, meal preparation, and gardening, ensuring a safe and comfortable home environment.
- **Self-Care:** Developing tailored self-care plans, focusing on nutrition, exercise, sleep, and hygiene to ensure overall well-being.

- **Medical Care:** Managing appointments, monitoring health conditions, developing treatment plans, and ensuring safe administration of medication.
- **Emotional Support:** Engaging socially with clients, providing companionship, and helping them set personal goals to build trust and emotional well-being.
- **Community Access:** Facilitating social and community activities to promote inclusion, confidence, and safety, connecting clients with suitable employment opportunities and social groups.
- **Travel Assistance:** Planning and facilitating safe transportation for appointments, social activities, and other needs (Interaction Disability Services, 2024).

Typical Job description from second care agency

According to Rowney (2024)'s study as a guideline, what our employees do daily will vary depending on the personal goals and interests of the person or people they are assisting. Some things you could do in your role of a disability support worker include:

1. **Personal Support:** Assist with daily activities like personal care, hygiene, meal preparation, and other domestic tasks. Help service users develop skills for independent living, such as managing finances.
2. **Effective Communication:** Facilitate communication for service users, helping them stay connected with friends and family, and support those with communication difficulties using sensory aids if needed.
3. **Community Involvement:** Encourage participation in community activities and day trips.

4. **Emotional Support:** Provide emotional support to service users and their families, ensure a safe environment, and encourage independent decision-making and goal achievement.
5. **Medication Management:** Support medical needs, including attending appointments and administering medication when necessary (Rowney, 2024).

In providing essential services that go beyond the typical job descriptions, disability support workers play a critical role in improving the quality of life for people with disabilities. Despite its importance, this area is frequently neglected, and its intricacies remain unexplored, especially emotional aspects of the job.

Research on disability support has mostly concentrated on its physical and practical components, ignoring the emotional labour, social interactions, and ethical dilemmas that workers face daily (Costakis et al., 2021; Didi et al., 2018). Disability support workers confront a wide range of difficulties, and their emotional and ethical contributions are underappreciated because of this gap in literature that fails to adequately address these issues.

According to Hochschild (2012a), the concept of emotional labour involves regulating one's own emotions as well as the outward displays of those emotions that are expected on the work: "Emotional labour in disability support is complex, requiring self-regulation as well as the ability to promote clients' emotional health, frequently in delicate or difficult situations" (p. 140). Unfortunately, neither job descriptions nor professional training programs often mention this crucial component of fostering a supportive environment.

To understand the emotional aspects of disability support work, it is important to grasp certain key concepts. It is essential in environments where employees frequently face

emotionally intense events that demand compassion and self-control (Hochschild, 2012). Disability support work inherently involves emotionally charged interactions that require workers to manage both their emotions and the emotions they display to maintain a compassionate and professional demeanor. This is necessary in situations ranging from daily challenges to acute crises where clients may experience intense distress or frustration. The concept of emotional labour, as defined by Hochschild, highlights the importance of this emotional management. It includes techniques such as surface acting, where workers modify their outward emotional expressions regardless of their internal feelings, and deep acting, where they align their internal emotions with those outwardly expressed. Such emotional strategies ensure that workers provide calm and supportive responses to clients, crucial for effective care and maintaining a therapeutic environment.

Understanding and managing emotional labour in disability support work is essential for several reasons. First, it directly impacts the well-being of the workers, as continual engagement in emotional labour, especially surface acting, can lead to emotional dissonance and burnout. Secondly, it affects the quality of care provided to clients, with effective emotional regulation leading to better outcomes. Thus, incorporating a deep understanding of emotional labour into training and organizational support systems can enhance worker resilience and effectiveness. Training programs that focus on emotional intelligence and strategies for managing emotional labour can prepare disability support workers to handle the emotional complexities of their roles more effectively, ultimately leading to improved care for clients and enhanced worker satisfaction (Hochschild, 2012).

The ongoing need to regulate emotions can result in substantial psychological stress, which can have a negative influence on the mental health and job satisfaction of disability

support workers (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002). Research has found that if individuals do not have enough support systems, extended involvement in emotional labour can result in burnout, emotional tiredness, and high employee turnover. This highlights the necessity for interventions that can effectively manage these (Maslach & Jackson, 1981)

Diefendorff et al. (2005) and Grandey (2000) argue that organizational support plays an important part in effectively handling the negative consequences of emotional labour. Organizations that offer comprehensive training, abundant resources, and a nurturing workplace atmosphere effectively alleviate the adverse effects of emotional labour. Efficient support systems encompass instruction in emotional intelligence, availability of counselling services, and policies that advocate for a harmonious work-life equilibrium

Disability support work frequently presents ethical challenges such as respecting client autonomy while ensuring their safety, handling confidentiality issues, and managing conflicts of interest, requiring workers to navigate the delicate balance between their emotional reactions and professional ethics. The necessity to make decisions that impact the provision of care and the quality of life for individuals with disabilities presents intricate ethical dilemmas that necessitate meticulous deliberation and assistance. Research emphasizes the importance of considering these ethical factors as an integral part of comprehending emotional labour in this particular profession (Hochschild, 2012a).

Intersectionality also influences the way disability support workers experience emotional labour. This concept, developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991), underscores how various factors such as ethnicity, gender, and cultural background intersect to create unique challenges for individuals. In disability support, a worker's intersectional identity can influence their emotional labour by shaping how they handle their emotions and how they are perceived by clients and

colleagues. For example, cultural expectations about emotion expression can vary widely, and workers from cultures where emotional restraint is valued might find the emotional display norms of their workplace challenging. Additionally, workers who are minorities might face biases that add layers of emotional labour due to the need to navigate and counteract these prejudices while maintaining professionalism and empathy in care (Crenshaw, 1991).

Significance of the Study

This research is significant because it may lead to better theories and methods for assisting people with disabilities. This study adds to our knowledge of the difficulties and potential payoffs of providing care for people with disabilities by analyzing the interpersonal dynamics, emotional labour, and moral dilemmas that arise in the course of this work.

Incorporating my personal observations and observations from the literature, this study offers a novel perspective. The link between theory and practice is strengthened as a result. It is intended that through this study, a better grasp of the emotional dimensions of disability support work will emerge. As a result, people with disabilities would have more agency and access to better support services.

Research Questions

1. How do disability support workers experience and manage emotional labour in their day-to-day interactions with clients, and what impact does this have on their personal well-being and job satisfaction?
2. What supports and resources can enhance the ability of disability support workers to effectively manage the emotional labour associated with their roles, and how do these supports contribute to the quality of care provided to individuals with disabilities?

Research Objectives

General Research Objective: To explore the nature of emotional labour within disability support work, examining how support workers experience and manage emotional labour, its impact on their well-being and job satisfaction, and the role of supports and resources in enhancing their ability to manage emotional labour effectively.

Specific Objectives:

1. To investigate the experience and management of emotional labour by disability support workers during their day-to-day interactions with clients and to assess its impact on their personal well-being and job satisfaction.
2. To discover the supports and resources available to disability support workers for managing the emotional labour inherent in their roles and to determine how these supports impact the quality of care provided to individuals with disabilities.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Emotional Labour and Disability Support

Emotional labour, as conceptualized by Hochschild (2012), refers to “the management of emotions to meet organizational expectations” (p. 136). This phenomenon is prevalent across various occupational contexts, including those involving disability support services. In the context of caring labour, emotional labour plays a crucial role in shaping interactions between support providers and individuals with disabilities. While traditional views of emotional labour have focused on economically driven, scripted processes, recent research highlights “the complexities of emotional labour in professions where altruistic ethics of care and service to others are paramount” (Grandey et al., 2013, p. 180).

In the field of disability support, emotional labour takes on a unique dimension due to the inherent emotional challenges and complexities involved in providing care and assistance to individuals with disabilities. Lu & Guy (2019) emphasize the significance of emotional labour in disability support work, highlighting its influence on client satisfaction: “Managing the heart is crucial in human services because the worker’s emotional engagement directly influences client satisfaction” (p. 11). This statement emphasizes the notion that the way support workers manage their emotions and the emotions they exhibit can have a substantial impact on the standard of care provided. There is a clear correlation between the efficacy of emotional labour and the overall contentment of clients, highlighting the importance for disability support workers to cultivate proficient emotional management abilities.

Moreover, Hochschild (2012) found that self-efficacy serves as a mediator and moderator between emotional labour and job satisfaction among public service employees, indicating the significant impact of emotional labour on well-being in the disability support sector.

Research by Brotheridge & Grandey (2002) states “the need to differentiate emotional labour across various job roles, emphasizing that the emotional demands placed on disability support providers differ significantly from those in other professions” (p. 31). The emotional skills required to support individuals with disabilities, including those with complex needs, extend beyond surface-level interactions to encompass deep emotional engagement and understanding. This depth of emotional labour is essential for building trust, rapport, and a supportive environment conducive to the well-being of individuals with disabilities.

Moreover, the emotional labour involved in disability support intersects with issues of power dynamics, identity, and social hierarchies. Hochschild (2012) states how “emotional management in caring contexts reflects and reinforces societal norms related to gender, race, and class” (p. 21). In the context of disability support, these dynamics can influence the quality of care provided and the experiences of both support providers and individuals with disabilities (Hochschild, 2012a). Understanding and addressing these power dynamics are crucial for promoting equitable and inclusive support services. These dynamics, influenced by factors such as race, gender, and class, significantly dictate the level of control and influence each party holds over care decisions (Crenshaw, 1991). Without proper management, these dynamics can lead to imbalances where clients may feel disempowered or marginalized (Sue et al., 2007).

Hochschild’s (2012) exploration of emotional labour illustrates how managing emotions in professional settings can inadvertently reinforce societal norms and affect power dynamics. By recognizing and actively addressing these issues

through training in cultural competence and awareness of unconscious biases, organizations can ensure that all clients, regardless of their backgrounds, receive fair and respectful treatment. This approach improves the quality of care and enhances client satisfaction and trust in the support services provided. The literature also points to the impact of emotional labour on the mental health and job satisfaction of disability support providers. Studies by Brotheridge & Grandey (2002) and Lu & Guy (2019) emphasize the link between emotional labour, burnout, and job satisfaction in the disability support sector. The emotional demands of supporting individuals with disabilities, coupled with organizational expectations and performance goals, can contribute to emotional exhaustion and decreased well-being among support providers (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002). The findings suggest that without adequate strategies to manage these emotional demands, support providers may experience high levels of stress and burnout, which not only affects their health and job satisfaction but also the quality of care they can provide. Strategies such as targeted training programs to enhance emotional resilience, self-care practices, and organizational support are essential for mitigating burnout and promoting the long-term sustainability of quality support services.

The intersection of emotional labour and disability support also raises questions about the role of performance goal orientation and burnout in this context. In the context of disability support, performance goals often emphasize efficiency and client satisfaction, which can exacerbate the emotional labour required from support workers. These workers must navigate their own emotional responses while maintaining professionalism and empathy toward clients, a dual demand that can lead to burnout if not managed appropriately. Burnout in this context not only diminishes the well-being of the workers, but also impacts the quality of care they can provide, potentially leading to less effective support for individuals with disabilities. A

comparative study by Lu & Guy (2019) between the United States and China provides insightful data on these dynamics. “Improperly managed emotional labour practices can result in substantial burnout, impacting employee well-being and causing undesirable organizational consequences” (p. 867). This study emphasizes the importance for organizations comprehending and applying emotional labour practices to safeguard workers from burnout. Strategies in disability support settings may involve giving sufficient breaks, offering emotional regulation training, and establishing a supportive work atmosphere that acknowledges employees’ emotional issues. Organizations can improve the quality of care for individuals with disabilities by resolving these concerns, which will assist maintain the health and motivation of their personnel.

Furthermore, exploring the experiences of individuals with disabilities in relation to emotional labour is essential for a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics at play. Gaeta’s (2019) work on “Crippling Emotional Labour,” a report she made on emotional labour of individuals with disabilities, sheds light on the emotional labour experiences of a individuals with disabilities and the impact of societal perceptions on their well-being. Gaeta (2019) points out, “Individuals with disabilities frequently perform emotional labour by managing public perceptions of disability and their own emotional responses to societal barriers and stigma” (p. 2). This emphasizes that emotional labour is not only a challenge faced by support providers but also a significant aspect of the daily lives of those with disabilities. Acknowledging this dual aspect of emotional labour is essential for organizations aiming to foster a truly inclusive and supportive environment. It highlights the need for strategies that address the unique challenges faced by both support providers and individuals with disabilities, such as stigma,

miscommunication, and the exhaustion that comes from constant self-advocacy and the need to conform to societal expectations.

Banks (2016) explores the nature and impact of emotional labour in disability support work through the narrative of Vic, a support worker. Vic's story reveals the emotional complexity faced by support workers: "Vic constantly juggles the demands of being empathetic and maintaining professional detachment, illustrating the high emotional stakes involved in disability support" (Banks, 2016, p. 665). This showcases the challenges of managing emotions while providing assistance to individuals with disabilities. The narrative also highlights the conflicting role demands that support workers like Vic encounter, requiring them to navigate being an enabler, mentor, and risk manager, which contributes to the emotional labour inherent in their roles.

Additionally, Banks (2016) emphasizes the importance of emotion work and relationship mediation in disability support work, noting, "The emotional labour of support workers includes mediating relationships and managing the emotional climate to ensure a supportive environment" (p. 669). Support workers like Vic are tasked with addressing the emotional needs of those they support while maintaining professional boundaries, showcasing the intricate balance required in their roles. As Banks (2016) explains, "Support workers must carefully balance empathy with professional boundaries, ensuring that their emotional involvement does not compromise the quality of care" (p. 669). The impact of emotional labour on relationships and support dynamics is evident in Vic's narrative, illustrating how normalization, surveillance, and management play a significant role in shaping the interactions within the support relationship.

Costakis et al. (2021) also highlight the nature and impact of emotional labour in disability support work within not-for-profit human service organizations. They note,

‘Supervisors and front-line direct care workers report the highest levels of emotional labour, reflecting the intense demands placed on those in direct support roles’ (Costakis et al., 2021, p. 42). The study indicates that emotional regulation strategies, such as deep acting, can increase job satisfaction among employees in disability support work, while surface acting can lead to increased burnout and turnover intention. This underscores the importance of addressing emotional labour regulation strategies within human service organizations to support employees and improve work outcomes in disability support work. Implementing effective emotional regulation strategies helps in mitigating burnout and enhancing job satisfaction, ultimately leading to better retention and higher quality care for individuals with disabilities.

The literature on emotional labour and disability support underscores the intricate relationship between emotional management, quality of care, and well-being in the context of supporting individuals with disabilities. Future research should continue to explore the nuances of emotional labour practices in disability support settings to enhance support services and promote the holistic well-being of both support providers and individuals with disabilities.

Strategies for Managing Emotional Labour in Disability Support Work

This theme investigates the strategies and coping mechanisms employed by disability support workers to manage emotional labour, as well as the role of organizational policies and practices in facilitating or impeding this process. Pugliesi (1999) highlights the importance of differentiating between self-focused and other-focused emotional labour in understanding its impact on workers: “Self-focused emotional labour involves managing one’s own emotions, while other-focused emotional labour pertains to managing the emotions of others” (p. 147). The study suggests that self-focused emotional labour may have particularly negative consequences

for workers, emphasizing the need for effective coping strategies at the individual level to mitigate these impacts.

Thi Lam & Kirby (2002) delve into the effects of emotional labour on workers and emphasize the role of organizational factors in mitigating its negative impact. They argue, "Organizational support, such as providing autonomy, complexity, and control, can diminish the adverse effects of emotional labour" (p. 137). This suggests that enhancing workers' sense of autonomy and control can help reduce the stress associated with emotional labour. However, the external validity of these findings may be limited by the specific organizational context studied, highlighting the need for broader research encompassing diverse workplaces to verify these conclusions.

Petriceks (2023) suggests that lumping all emotion workers and jobs together restricts workers' ability to advocate for recognition as highly skilled professionals. This differentiation is crucial for understanding the nuances of emotional labour within specific contexts, such as health care settings. By exploring the contours of emotion management within health care contexts, researchers can gain insights into the unique challenges and coping strategies employed by workers in these environments.

Grandey et al. (2013) emphasize the complexity of emotional labour in caring contexts, where frontline human service workers are expected to navigate intricate webs of emotional experiences while maintaining a nurturing yet authoritative demeanor. They state, "The complexity of emotional labour in caring contexts necessitates a broader, dialectical approach that integrates various perspectives on emotion management" (p. 176). This study underscores the need to move beyond simplistic dualistic tendencies in emotional labour research and adopt a

more nuanced framework that captures the multifaceted nature of emotion management in caring labour.

In disability support work, managing emotional labour is crucial for maintaining the well-being of both the support workers and the individuals they assist. Some strategies that may include:

- i. **Self-care:** Encouraging support workers to prioritize self-care activities such as exercise, mindfulness, and seeking support from colleagues or supervisors to prevent burnout and emotional exhaustion (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002).
- ii. **Setting boundaries:** Establishing clear boundaries between personal and professional life to prevent emotional spillover and maintain a healthy work-life balance (Grandey, 2000).
- iii. **Emotional regulation:** Providing training on emotional intelligence and coping mechanisms to help support workers effectively manage their emotions in challenging situations (Grandey et al., 2013).
- iv. **Seeking supervision:** Encouraging regular supervision sessions where support workers can debrief, reflect on their experiences, and receive guidance on managing emotional challenge (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002).
- v. **Building a supportive work environment:** Fostering a culture of support and open communication within the workplace to create a safe space for discussing emotional difficulties and seeking help when needed (Thi Lam & Kirby, 2002).

Pugliesi (1999) also suggests that strategies such as promoting self-care practices, providing training on emotional intelligence and communication skills, and fostering a

supportive supervisory environment can help mitigate the emotional challenges inherent in this field. He notes, “Self-focused emotional labour involves managing one’s own emotions, while other-focused emotional labour pertains to managing the emotions of others” (Pugliesi, 1999, p.147). The study suggests that self-focused emotional labour may have particularly negative consequences for workers, emphasizing the need for effective coping strategies at the individual level. Pugliesi (1999) also suggests that “strategies such as promoting self-care practices, providing training on emotional intelligence and communication skills, and fostering a supportive supervisory environment can help mitigate the emotional challenges inherent in this field” (Pugliesi, 1999, p. 129). By prioritizing the mental and emotional health of workers, offering tools to enhance their emotional resilience, and creating a culture of open communication and support, organizations can empower their staff to navigate the complexities of emotional labour in disability support work more effectively, ultimately leading to improved outcomes for both workers and the individuals they serve.

Hochschild (2012) discusses various aspects of emotional labour in the workplace, particularly focusing on the management of emotions by employees in service-oriented roles. She highlights how companies often emphasize the importance of service and positive attitudes from employees to attract and retain customers: “Employers often insist that workers project a positive attitude and cheerful demeanor, regardless of their true feelings, to enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty” (Hochschild, 2012, p. 150). This underscores the challenges faced by workers in balancing their true emotions with the required display of emotions for their job roles.

Furthermore, Hochschild (2012) mentions the concept of “collective emotional labour,” where employees interact with each other to manage emotions effectively. She notes, “Collective emotional labour involves the shared efforts of employees to support one another in managing

their emotional states, fostering a more supportive work environment” (Hochschild, 2012, p. 156). This suggests that companies can influence how employees deal with each other’s feelings to ensure proper support for emotional management. Hochschild (2012) also touches on the idea of employees needing to develop criteria to distinguish between personal identity and work role identity to navigate the emotional demands of their jobs.

The concept of collective emotional labour holds significant relevance in disability support work environments. Teamwork and collaboration among support workers are vital for effectively managing emotions and providing consistent emotional support to individuals with disabilities. By fostering a culture of mutual support and open communication among support workers, organizations can create a conducive environment for managing emotional labour collectively. This collaborative approach can help mitigate the emotional challenges that arise in disability support work and enhance the overall quality of care provided to individuals with disabilities.

Costakis et al. (2021) emphasize the significance of emotional regulation strategies in reducing burnout and turnover intention among service workers in not-for-profit human service organizations. They argue, “Effective emotional regulation strategies are crucial in mitigating burnout and reducing turnover intentions among service workers” (Costakis et al., 2021, p. 29). The study suggests that training and development programs tailored to emotional regulation strategies should be explored and tested for their effectiveness in reducing burnout in this population. They recommend engaging trained clinicians or psychosocial providers to provide emotional regulation training and support for employees in the disability support sector. The study also suggests that employers should be explicit about the concept of emotional labour

when attracting talent and developing existing employees, potentially through realistic job previews that explain the emotional labour requirements of the job.

Kiel & Watson (2009) highlight the importance of advancing theory and research on emotional labour by attending to the potential distinctions between social and economic contexts. They note, “Understanding the differences in how emotional labour is experienced and managed across various occupational settings can provide valuable insights into the strategies employed by workers” (Kiel & Watson, 2009, p. 24). By examining what distinguishes different occupational settings, researchers can deepen their understanding of the strategies employed by workers to manage emotional labour effectively. This approach helps to identify the specific challenges and coping mechanisms relevant to different types of work environments, contributing to more targeted and effective interventions.

The management of emotional labour in disability support work involves a combination of individual coping strategies and organizational support mechanisms. By recognizing the unique challenges faced by disability support workers and implementing tailored strategies at both the individual and organizational levels, stakeholders can promote employee well-being and enhance the quality of care provided to individuals with disabilities.

Supports and Resources for Emotional Labour Management

Emotional labour management is a critical aspect of professions involving caregiving and support services, including disability support work. This explores the supports and resources available for managing emotional labour in disability support work, drawing insights from a range of studies. Emotional labour management in disability support work involves managing one’s emotions and responses to challenging situations, maintaining a professional demeanor, and providing empathetic care to individuals with disabilities.

Abresch et al. (2023) conducted a mixed-methods study on public health equity professionals, highlighting the impact of emotional labour on job burnout and the role of workplace support in mitigating this effect. The study identified key components of workplace support, such as “peer-to-peer mentoring connections, workplace accommodations, engaged supervision, and mental health resources, which are crucial for professionals engaged in emotionally demanding work” (Abresch et al., 2023, p.1055).

Aung & Tewogbola (2019) focus on the impact of emotional labour on health in the workplace, emphasizing the importance of understanding and managing emotional labour to promote well-being. Their narrative review highlighted the need for strategies to address emotional labour effectively, especially in high-stress environments like disability support work.

The online learning resource developed by Bigby et al. (2019) specifically for disability support workers focuses on enabling risk and putting positives first. This resource may offer practical strategies and tools for support workers to navigate the emotional challenges inherent in their roles, contributing to effective emotional labour management.

Additionally, the study on relationships among supervisor support, autonomy, job satisfaction, and emotional exhaustion sheds light on the importance of supportive supervision in mitigating emotional exhaustion and enhancing job satisfaction. Supervisors play a crucial role in providing guidance, understanding, and creating a supportive work environment for disability support workers to manage emotional labour effectively (Yee & Weir, 2019).

Based on the Gilbert et al. (2024) findings, it is fundamental for organizations in disability support work to consider implementing various supports and resources to help employees manage emotional labour effectively and prevent burnout. Some key components of

workplace support identified in the study that could be beneficial in disability support work include:

1. **Peer-to-Peer Mentoring Connections:** Establishing opportunities for employees to connect with like-minded colleagues for candid communication, idea exchange, mutual encouragement, and support can be valuable in managing the emotional demands of the job.
2. **Workplace Accommodations:** Providing supportive accommodations within the workplace, such as policies that foster a culture of mutual support, informal connection time during the workday, and flexibility for unplanned time off when job demands become overwhelming, can help employees cope with emotional labour.
3. **Engaged and Empathetic Supervision:** Having supervisors who are engaged, empathetic, and understanding of the challenges faced by employees in managing emotional labour can play a significant role in supporting their well-being and preventing burnout.
4. **Mental Health Resources:** Offering access to mental health resources, such as counseling services and mental wellness activities, can provide employees in disability support work with the necessary support to address their emotional well-being and cope with the demands of their roles.

Although Yee & Weir (2019) do not explicitly address emotional labour management, it can be inferred that by empowering support workers to feel comfortable and confident in enabling risk for the people they support, the resource ultimately aims to enhance the quality of life for both individuals with disabilities and their supporters. In the context of disability support work, emotional labour management is vital for maintaining positive relationships, providing

high-quality care, and preventing burnout among support workers. By promoting a person-centered approach and emphasizing the rewarding nature of risk enablement, the study indirectly highlights the importance of emotional labour management in fostering positive outcomes for both support workers and individuals with disabilities.

Weeks et al. (2024) emphasize the importance of organizational support and resources in mitigating the draining effects of emotional labour. This could include access to training, supervision, peer support, and resources to effectively manage the emotional demands of their roles. Organizations can enhance their understanding of employee needs and develop strategies to support emotional well-being by exploring how emotional labour is encountered and handled in disability support environments.

The need for supports and resources for emotional labour management in disability support work within not-for-profit human service organizations (Costakis et al., 2021). They suggest that employers should provide training specific to emotional regulation strategies, such as deep acting, to help employees navigate the challenges of emotional labour. Additionally, Costakis et al. (2021) recommend that government agencies recognize emotional labour as a critical occupational requirement and provide funding to support human service organizations in adequately training and compensating workers for this aspect of their work. Their study stresses the importance of addressing emotional labour and emotional regulation strategies strategically within human service organizations to minimize adverse outcomes like burnout and turnover intention and enhance job satisfaction among employees in disability support work.

The Impact of Emotional Labour on Quality of Care

In sectors like healthcare and disability support, where worker-client interactions are crucial, the management of emotional labour can significantly impact the quality of care

provided. This theme synthesizes literature examining the relationship between emotional labour strategies and care quality, drawing from seminal and contemporary studies.

The foundational work by Hochschild (2012b) and related analyses by Brotheridge & Grandey (2002) provide an extensive overview of how emotional labour is conceptualized and its implications for employee well-being. In disability support and similar settings, workers often engage in deep acting—modifying their true feelings to display empathy and compassion. This form of emotional labour, while beneficial for client interactions, can lead to emotional exhaustion if not managed properly, thereby impacting care quality negatively (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002)

Roh et al. (2016) conducted a study that expands on the topic by establishing a connection between emotional labour and job satisfaction in the context of a public hospital. The study demonstrates that satisfaction levels can operate as a mediator in the relationship between emotional labour and the quality of treatment provided. According to Roh et al. (2016), workers who are content with their roles are more inclined to interact positively with clients, which in turn improves the overall care experience.

Recent studies have emphasized the significance of emotional intelligence in the management of emotional labour. Subhi et al. (2012) explore the correlation between higher emotional intelligence and improved management of emotional labour. They argue that persons with higher emotional intelligence are better equipped to handle the demands of emotional labour, resulting in enhanced client connections and better care outcomes. Emotional intelligence assists individuals in effectively managing stress and upholding professionalism in emotionally intense encounters, particularly in demanding fields such as healthcare and disability support (Subhi et al., 2012). Individuals with high Emotional Intelligence have the ability to notice,

comprehend, and manage emotions. This enables them to conduct emotional labour with greater proficiency, resulting in enhanced job performance, job happiness, and general well-being.

Emotional Intelligence aids individuals in service-oriented professions to genuinely articulate feelings, handle emotional requirements, and uphold favourable interactions with clients and colleagues.

Organizational support is pivotal in managing emotional labour effectively. Research indicates that environments where emotional labour is acknowledged and supported through appropriate training, supportive supervision, and recognition can mitigate the potential negative effects of emotional labour.

Organizational support is essential for helping employees effectively manage their emotions at work, prevent burnout, and enhance job performance. This support can take various forms, including providing training on emotional intelligence, promoting a positive work culture, offering employee assistance programs, encouraging work-life balance, providing supervision and feedback, and recognizing emotional labor (Grandey et al., 2013, p.201)

The level of assistance organizations provides to their staff in managing emotional labour plays an important role. Diefendorff et al. (2005) suggest that organizational strategies, such as implementing comprehensive emotional regulation training and providing psychological support, can effectively reduce the adverse consequences of emotional labour. Providing assistance not only decreases employee burnout but also improves their capacity to deliver excellent care.

Grandey et al. (2013) argue that organizations can foster a supportive atmosphere for employees to handle the emotional demands of their roles by acknowledging emotional labour as a crucial job need and offering training that focuses on skills for emotional regulation. This assistance might result in heightened job contentment among service personnel, which is

essential for upholding elevated degrees of involvement and dedication to delivering superior care to individuals with disabilities (Costakis et al., 2021).

In addition, organizations can assist staff in preserving a positive emotional state during interactions with service participants by acknowledging emotional labour and encouraging the implementation of adaptive emotional regulation techniques such as deep acting. Deep acting, as discussed by Hochschild (2012), involves “self-induced feelings that serve as the basis for ‘acting’ or impression management” (p. 134). Hochschild (2012) further suggests that, in deep acting, individuals work to manipulate their emotions in order to produce an ‘authentic’ response. This process can involve exhortation, where individuals make direct efforts to induce or prevent a feeling, such as convincing oneself to be appreciative of a gift received at Christmas. Grandey et al. (2013) also argues deep acting allows individuals to manage their emotions internally, influencing their external behavior and interactions with others.

This can facilitate a more genuine and compassionate approach to caregiving, ultimately improving the overall standard of care and assistance offered to individuals with disabilities. In addition, organizations can maintain continuity of care and foster a secure and caring atmosphere for individuals with disabilities by effectively managing emotional labour to minimize burnout and turnover intention (Costakis et al., 2021; Diefendorff et al., 2005).

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Research Design:

To delve into the aspects of disability support work that are both very personal and universally applicable, this study utilizes an autoethnographic research design. Researchers have the ability to apply autoethnography as a means of drawing on first-hand knowledge by undertaking an introspective and reflective investigation of their own culturally-grounded experiences (Ellis et al., 2011). On account of the fact that conventional research approaches have a difficult time capturing the complex interactions and emotional dynamics that define the field of disability studies, this methodology is perfect (Chang, 2016).

Data Collection:

- a. **Personal Reflections:** The core of the data was derived from a reflective journal maintained by the researcher. The researcher maintained a reflective journal or diary, making regular entries to record their thoughts, observations, and critical insights. This journal documented detailed descriptions of daily interactions, emotional responses, and ethical dilemmas encountered in the role of a disability support worker. The journaling process was designed to capture real-time reactions and thoughts, which are essential for the authenticity and depth of the autoethnographic inquiry (Chang, 2016).
- b. **Existing Literature Review:** A review of the literature was also included, in addition to the anecdotes that were provided. This study incorporates both theoretical and practical studies of disability support labour, as well as foundational works on autoethnography, emotional labour, and the various supports and services that are currently available. Scholarly articles, books, research reports, and other relevant sources will be examined to

gather insights, theories, and concepts that inform the research. The purpose of the literature review is to situate the personal experiences of the researcher within the context of the existing research, to identify gaps in the study, and to give a framework for the research investigation. This is done to develop a conversation between the researcher 's experiences and the larger academic discourse (Hart, 1998).

Data Analysis:

When conducting this study, the data that was gathered was analyzed via the lens of reflective analysis. My capacity to critically reflect on my experiences working in the field of disability support and to examine the social, emotional, and ethical aspects of this job was a significant factor in the research that I conducted (McIlveen, 2008; Rinaldi, 2013). Through the process of reflecting on my previous work experiences, I was able to get a deeper understanding of the nuances that went beyond the parameters of my job description (McIlveen, 2008). The use of reflexive analysis, as stated by Rinaldi (2013) and Nicmanis (2024)), makes it possible for individuals to become conscious of the implicit biases, preconceptions, and prejudices that influenced their viewpoint and interactions in the field. This research process, which is referred to as reflexive analysis (McIlveen, 2008), had a significant component that consisted of reviewing and analyzing my personal reflections that were written down in a reflective notebook or journal. A plethora of information was offered by these reflections, which I combed through to identify recurrent ideas, concepts, and patterns (Campbell et al., 2021; McIlveen, 2008). By conducting a thorough analysis of these reflections, I was able to gain a deeper comprehension of the social, emotional, and ethical aspects of working with people who have disabilities.

This self-critical or reflective study required participants to acknowledge and evaluate their own preconceived conceptions and assumptions. This was an essential component of the study. According to (Rinaldi, 2013), it was essential for me to take into consideration the ways in which my own experiences, values, and beliefs influenced my perceptions and relationships with persons who have impairments at the time. The dependability and precision of the research were increased because of recognizing and questioning these biases, which ultimately led to results that were more complicated and were more well-rounded. In addition, the process of reflective analysis included the process of making meaning of my experiences and generating conclusions based on those experiences. Understanding the emotional components of disability support work was improved by delving into the underlying issues, power relations, and societal contexts (Rinaldi, 2013). This allowed for a greater understanding of the work. By participating in this kind of interpretative activity, a great deal of information was gained regarding the complexities of the job, the connections that were created with the customers, as well as the opportunities and dangers that were encountered. Making use of the literature that was already available was yet another imperative component of the reflective analytical process. According to McIlveen (2008) and Rinaldi (2013), one of the most effective ways for me to acquire a more profound comprehension of the subject at hand was to examine the ways in which my personal ideas and experiences either supported or contradicted the concepts, theories, and points of view that were provided in scholarly publications. This study gained more credibility because of the merging of both personal experience and academic discourse. This was accomplished by placing an emphasis on the connections that exist between theory and practice.

At every stage of the data processing procedure, the reflexivity of the researchers was essential. It was essential for me to engage in reflexivity to prevent my personal prejudices and

preconceived beliefs from having an impact on the research (McIlveen, 2008; Campbell et al., 2021). This demonstrated the self-awareness and reflection that supported the analysis by documenting my reflexivity and making it available to readers. Consequently, the analysis was supported. Because of this, the field of workplace support for people with disabilities benefited from the novel ideas and insights that were developed by reflexive analysis. This drew attention to the social, emotional, and ethical aspects of the job that may have been overlooked or undervalued in the job description. This was accomplished by going deeply into my own experiences and reflecting on the broader ramifications of those experiences (McIlveen, 2008; Rinaldi, 2013). The researcher's introspective and self-reflective analysis contributed a genuine voice to the study, which resulted in an improvement in our comprehension of the field of disability support.

Ethical Considerations:

This autoethnographic research relied heavily on reflexivity, which is an essential component of maintaining its ethical integrity. To accomplish this, I continually conducted an introspective analysis of the ways in which my personal history, beliefs, experiences, and relationships may have an impact on the study process, interpretations, and results. It is essential to follow this approach to guarantee that the research will continue to be subjective and will be sensitive to the topics that it discusses (Finlay, 2002). Additional benefits of reflexivity include the identification and correction of any potential biases that may have an impact on the study. Throughout the entirety of the study, the researcher kept a reflexive position, which meant that they acknowledged their own preconceptions, biases, and the possible impact they could have on the research process. The reflective diary contains documentation of the reflective process, which guarantees both transparency and rigour. With the purpose of documenting these introspections, I

kept a reflective notebook during the entire process of conducting the research. This journal was then examined on a regular basis to keep a critical position on my results (Etherington, 2004). By being reflective, I hoped to improve the credibility and ethical rigour of the study. I wanted to make sure that the analysis was not influenced by my own personal biases, and that all interpretations were founded on the data that was collected (Etherington, 2004)

Expected Contributions:

This research aims to contribute to the field of disability support work by offering a nuanced and authentic exploration of the social, emotional, and ethical dimensions beyond the job description. By combining personal reflections with a review of existing literature, the study will provide a unique perspective and bridge the gap between theory and practice. The findings will enhance understanding, inform practice, and contribute to the existing body of knowledge on disability support work.

Rationale for Using Autoethnography:

Autoethnography is a qualitative research method that combines elements of autobiography and ethnography to systematically analyze (graphy) personal experience (auto) to understand cultural experience (ethno) (Ellis et al., 2011). This approach challenges conventional research methodologies and emphasizes the researcher's personal involvement and reflexivity, making it a powerful tool for exploring complex social phenomena.

Autoethnography is particularly suitable for this study because it allows for an in-depth exploration of the emotional dimensions of disability support work, which are often overlooked in traditional research methods. Disability support work involves significant emotional labour, including managing personal emotions, providing emotional support to clients, and navigating complex interpersonal dynamics. These experiences are deeply personal and subjective, making

autoethnography an ideal method for capturing the nuanced and intricate nature of this work. Engaging in autoethnography can lead to a deeper understanding of the emotional and social dimensions of support work, emphasizing the ethical engagement with personal and cultural narratives (Dauphinee, 2010).

By employing autoethnography, the researcher can draw on personal experiences to highlight the emotional challenges and rewards of disability support work. This method provides a platform for the researcher to reflect on their emotional responses, coping strategies, and ethical dilemmas encountered in the course of their work. According to Mcilveen (2008), autoethnography allows researchers to embed themselves in theory and practice, using intimate autobiographical accounts to elucidate the phenomena under investigation. This reflexive approach helps establish trustworthiness and authenticity in research, bridging the gap between theory and practice.

Autoethnography also enables the integration of personal narratives with existing literature, providing a comprehensive perspective that combines subjective experiences with theoretical insights. This approach enhances the credibility and authenticity of the research and bridges the gap between theory and practice, offering practical implications for improving support services and policies in the field of disability support.

In the context of this research, using autoethnography allows for a detailed examination of the emotional labour involved in disability support work. The method's emphasis on personal narrative and reflexivity makes it possible to explore the complex emotional landscapes that support workers navigate daily, thus providing valuable insights into the realities of this profession. By challenging traditional academic voices and narratives, autoethnography can prompt scholars to reconsider the ways in which they write about others and the ethical

implications of their representations (Dauphinee, 2010). Dauphinee (2010) also notes autoethnography can open scholars to a different kind of scholarly exchange that propels exploration of the self in writing, our relationships with those we research, and the responsibilities we have in our representations. Ellis et al. (2011) argue that autoethnography not only captures personal experiences, but also frames them within broader cultural and social contexts, making it a powerful tool for social research.

Theoretical Framework

Based on the nature of the research on the emotional dimensions of disability support work, two frameworks which was particularly relevant and beneficial are:

Ethics of Care

Based on scholarly work including Awuviry-Newton et al. (2022), Kittay (2009), Mahowald (2009), and Jarman (2008), the care ethics framework places an emphasis on the moral importance of relationships and the need of responsiveness, empathy, and relational ethics in caregiving settings. Because it deals with the moral aspects of disability support work, this paradigm was ideal for our study. I had the opportunity to delve into the ethical considerations surrounding the provision of care for those with disabilities and to investigate the ideals of compassion, dignity, and reciprocity. I applied the ethics of care framework to examine the dynamics of the relationships between support workers and people with disabilities, with a focus on the decision-making and practice implications for ethics. Caregiver experiences of older individuals with disabilities can be better understood via the theoretical lens of the Ethics of Care, as shown Awuviry-Newton et al. (2022), who also highlighted the ethical considerations inherent in caregiving interactions. Ethical considerations in disability support work can be informed by this study's emphasis on the significance of care recipients needs recognition and

addressing. Support workers' emotional tolls and the tactics they use to overcome barriers to relationship development and client-centered care were also considered in the Ethics of Care framework (Jarman, 2008). The importance of treating individuals with disabilities with kindness, respect, and appreciation was highlighted, in line with the principles of compassion and dignity (Mahowald, 2009). As a bonus, (Kittay, 2009; Kittay, 2011) investigate the Ethics of Care as it pertains to persons with severe cognitive disabilities, questioning the absence of this group from conventional philosophical theories and arguing that they should be part of ethical debates.

This framework addresses concerns for the welfare of both support staff and people with disabilities, as well as issues with authority and decision-making structures, and the ethical ramifications of institutional policies and practices. By utilizing the Ethics of Care framework, one can conduct an in-depth analysis of the moral dilemmas that arise in disability support work, with an eye toward improving service delivery, boosting people with disabilities' sense of control over their own lives, and fostering a more inclusive society.

Social Model of Disability

In this case, the social model of disability can serve as a useful framework for the study. It underscores the significance of addressing societal barriers and exclusionary practices as causes of disability and as prerequisites for social inclusion (Byrne & Mclaughine, 2007; Joseph, 2007). Support workers and people with disabilities experiences are shaped by a variety of social attitudes, cultural beliefs, and structural elements that can be investigated using the social model of disability.

This approach is useful for better understanding the power dynamics, societal attitudes, and systemic disparities that exist beyond the scope of a single employment. The social model of

disability challenges the traditional medical model that solely focuses on individual impairments and instead emphasizes the role that social barriers, attitudes, and structures have in producing the phenomenon of disability (Reindal, 2008). According to this model, it is the collective duty of society to remove all obstacles on the path to full participation in all aspects of life. The social model of disability provides a useful framework for analyzing the influence of societal norms, cultural values, and institutional settings on disability services. It is useful for examining the prejudices, assumptions, and biases that service providers and those they assist may face in the course of their work (Skidmore, 1996). By utilizing this lens, one can examine power dynamics, stigma, discrimination, and social exclusion, as well as other topics that affect workplace relations within disability support work.

Using the social model of disability, one can delve into the question of how service providers might combat these obstacles, promote inclusion, and alter public attitudes towards disability. The focus shifts from viewing disability as an individual deficit to understanding disability as a social construct that can be transformed through systemic change and the dismantling of barriers (Byrne & McLaughlin, 2007; Joseph, 2007).

CHAPTER IV: REFLECTIVE NARRATIVE

Personal Experiences

Experience 1: Initial Fears and Frustrations as a New Support Worker

Starting my career as a support worker was both exciting and daunting. One of the most challenging personal experiences was when I was new to the role, and the idea of going to work began to scare me. The building itself, a place where I was supposed to help others, became a symbol of fear and anxiety because I anticipated facing various frustrations and challenges every day.

Initially, I was enthusiastic and eager to make a positive impact. However, the reality of the job quickly set in. Each day brought new, unforeseen challenges from managing difficult behaviors to handling unexpected medical situations. My inexperience made these challenges feel overwhelming. The constant pressure to perform well and meet the needs of my clients while navigating the complexities of their care began to take a toll on me.

One particularly difficult client was Aaron, a young man with severe autism who expressed his frustrations by throwing things at staff. My inexperience made it hard to de-escalate situations effectively, and I often felt unprepared to handle his outbursts. This led to a growing sense of dread each morning as I approached the building, knowing I would likely face another difficult day.

The emotional labour involved in this experience was intense. I had to manage my fears and frustrations internally while presenting a calm and confident exterior to my clients and colleagues. Suppressing my anxiety and maintaining a professional demeanor required significant effort, especially when I felt overwhelmed and unsure of myself.

To address these feelings, I sought support and guidance from more experienced colleagues. I openly shared my struggles and asked for advice on how to handle challenging situations better. Their insights and reassurance were invaluable, providing me with practical strategies and boosting my confidence. Additionally, I engaged in regular self-reflection, identifying specific triggers for my anxiety and developing coping mechanisms to manage them.

I also began to focus on small victories and positive interactions, no matter how minor they seemed. Celebrating these moments helped shift my perspective and reminded me of the meaningful impact I was making, despite the difficulties. Over time, these small successes accumulated, gradually building my confidence and reducing my fear.

Reflecting on the Experience:

This experience taught me the importance of resilience and seeking support when needed. The emotional labour involved in overcoming my initial fears and frustrations was substantial, but it ultimately made me a more effective and empathetic support worker. I learned that it is okay to feel overwhelmed and that asking for help is a crucial part of personal and professional growth.

The journey of overcoming my initial fears also highlighted the importance of creating a supportive work environment where new support workers feel comfortable seeking guidance and expressing their challenges. It reinforced the value of mentorship and peer support in navigating the complexities of disability support work.

Through this experience, I developed a deeper understanding of the emotional demands of the job and the importance of self-care and support systems. It shaped my approach to my work, making me more attuned to the emotional needs of my clients and more resilient in the face of challenges. This growth journey has been instrumental in my development as a support

worker, equipping me with the skills and confidence to provide high-quality care while maintaining my well-being.

Experience 2: Balancing Empathy and Professionalism in Intellectual Disability Support

One of the most memorable experiences I had while working in my job as a support worker for people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities was with Sarah, a young adult with Down syndrome who was working toward greater independence in her day-to-day activities. It was not uncommon for Sarah to have feelings of frustration and despair, particularly when she was learning new skills that other people may consider to be easy. When Sarah attempted to perform a task on her own during a session that was centred on the development of life skills, she was unsuccessful on multiple occasions, which resulted in her displaying apparent anguish and tears.

A significant amount of emotional labour was required at this moment. As I felt a profound sense of empathy for Sarah, I wanted to intervene and finish the chore for her in order to alleviate the immediate suffering that she was experiencing. On the other hand, I was aware that it was essential for her long-term development and feeling of self-confidence that she be given the ability to overcome obstacles on her own. One of the more delicate aspects of emotional labour is the process of leading someone through their suffering in order to stimulate learning and development. The goal was to provide support that balanced emotional comfort with the promotion of resilience.

Reflecting on the Experience

Upon reflection of this event, I came to the realization that it is essential for me to establish skills that will allow me to effectively support Sarah's development while simultaneously managing my emotional responses. The technique of delivering vocal support for

effort, regardless of the outcome, and breaking down work into smaller, more manageable phases is something that I have adopted as some sort of routine. I was able to more successfully handle the emotional labour that was involved because of this strategy, which not only assisted Sarah in progressively building her abilities and confidence, but also helped others. The act of acknowledging and appreciating each minor achievement became a source of happiness for both of us. This served to reinforce the importance of patience and the beneficial influence that emotional labour can have when it is appropriately balanced with professional objectives.

This revised experience highlights the complexity of providing support to those who have intellectual and/or developmental impairments. Emotional labour involves more than just managing one's own feelings; it also involves strategically employing those feelings in order to encourage independence, resilience, and growth in the individuals who we provide assistance to.

Experience 3: Bridging Cultural Gaps in Supporting Individuals with Developmental Disabilities

When I moved from Ghana to Canada to work as a support worker for people with developmental disabilities, it was a significant emotional and professional challenge. It was also defined by a high learning curve in terms of bridging cultural differences. One of my first encounters entailed providing support to a young adult named Alex, who was diagnosed with autism and communicated his requirements and feelings in a manner that was distinct from what I had been accustomed to in Ghana. Because of this circumstance, the emotional labour that is required to adjust to a new cultural environment while simultaneously ensuring that support is both effective and sympathetic was pushed to the forefront.

My approach to emotional labour was significantly impacted by the cultural norms that are prevalent in Ghana, which allows for communal and direct forms of communication and

support to be commonplace. On the other hand, when I was in Canada, I came with a society that was more individualistic and placed a greater emphasis on personal autonomy. Additionally, the social cues and communication techniques were different. Initially, this disparity resulted in moments of misunderstanding and irritation between Alex and myself. This was because my efforts to provide him with support in ways that were successful in my own country did not always translate properly in the context of Canada.

To successfully navigate this change, I had to manage my own feelings of inadequacy and dissatisfaction while simultaneously learning and changing my support tactics to be culturally sensitive to Alex's requirements. This move required a significant amount of emotional labour on my part. After becoming aware of the necessity of adjustment, I set out on a journey of self-education, during which I sought out information on the cultural norms of Canada, autism support practices in a North American context, and aggressively solicited feedback from Alex's family and colleagues.

The adoption of a more sophisticated approach to communication, and the acquisition of the ability to read and respond to non-verbal cues, which were more common in Alex's relationships, was one of the most important strategies. I was able to increase my ability to provide effective support to Alex because of this modification, which also helped me get a deeper knowledge and appreciation of the diversity that exists within communication styles and support requirements between cultures.

Reflecting the Experience:

Due to the emotional nature of the work that is done to support people with disabilities, this experience highlighted the significance of cultural flexibility. It brought to light the importance of continuous education and adaptability in caregiving, illustrating that successful

support is not limited by cultural boundaries, but rather necessitates a profound dedication to comprehending and honouring the distinctions that exist between individuals and cultures. Not only did I become a more effective support worker because of this process, but I also developed a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the universality and diversity of human experiences, as well as the intricate role that emotional labour plays in bridging cultural differences.

Another incident was on the issue of language and accent barrier. Alex and I both spoke English, but our accents and cultural backgrounds led to frequent misunderstandings. Simple instructions and conversations sometimes turned into frustrating exchanges because of our different pronunciations and usage of certain words.

One instance that stands out occurred during a routine health check. I needed to explain to Alex that we were going to take his blood pressure. In Ghana, the phrase ‘check your pressure’ is commonly understood, but Alex was unfamiliar with this terminology and looked confused. He interpreted ‘pressure’ differently, thinking I meant emotional stress rather than a physical health check.

Realizing that our accents and the meanings of some terminologies were causing confusion, I knew I had to adapt my communication strategies. I began to slow down my speech, enunciate more clearly, and avoid idiomatic expressions that might not be understood. I also made an effort to learn and use terms that were more familiar to Alex and aligned with Canadian English.

To bridge the language gap, I incorporated visual aids into our interactions. For instance, I used pictures and diagrams to explain medical procedures or daily activities. When it came to

administering medication, I showed Alex images of the medication and demonstrated how to take it. This visual support helped clarify my instructions and reduced misunderstandings.

The difference in our accents was another hurdle. Even though Alex spoke English, my Ghanaian accent sometimes made it difficult for him to understand me, especially with specific medical terms. Conversely, his Canadian accent and local slang were initially challenging for me to grasp.

To overcome this, I engaged in active listening and encouraged Alex to do the same. If either of us did not understand something, we would repeat it or rephrase it until it was clear. I also used written communication when necessary. Writing down instructions or important information helped ensure that nothing was lost in verbal translation.

Reflecting on the Experience

Managing these language barriers required significant emotional labor. It was frustrating at times to feel misunderstood, and I could see that Alex was equally frustrated. However, I remained patient and empathetic, understanding that these challenges were part of the adjustment process.

There were moments when I felt disheartened, especially when repeated misunderstandings occurred. For example, during an emergency drill, I needed to explain the procedure quickly and clearly. My accent and rushed speech led to confusion, and Alex became anxious because he did not understand what was happening. This incident highlighted the need for clear and effective communication, especially in urgent situations.

Experience 4: Fostering Independence Amidst Cultural Expectations

Naomi, a young woman with an intellectual impairment who was working toward greater independence in her day-to-day life, was another person who played a significant role in my path

as a support worker. This experience brought into sharp light the interplay between cultural expectations regarding independence and caregiving. This was a dynamic that I had to negotiate carefully, taking into consideration my own cultural background.

Having come from Ghana, a country in which the family and community frequently play a big part in the care of individuals with disabilities, the emphasis on independence in the setting of Canada posed both a problem and an opportunity. A step toward autonomy that was both exciting and terrifying for Naomi and her family was to accomplish more of her daily rituals by herself. Naomi's goal was to go through more of her routines on her own.

The emotional labour that I had to perform in this situation consisted of supporting Naomi's goals of being independent but also keeping in mind the communal support method that I was more accustomed to understanding. It required a careful balance, supporting Naomi's autonomy and decision-making while also ensuring that she felt supported and not alienated. This was a worry that connected with my idea of the support that was provided by the community in Ghana.

To address this issue, I devised a specialized support plan for Naomi that included a gradual rise in her participation in day-to-day activities. Additionally, I incorporated regular check-ins with her family to ensure that they were comfortable with the rate at which she was becoming independent. Taking this method allowed Naomi to develop her self-assurance in her capabilities at her own speed, which reflected a combination of the ideals of individualism and providing support to the community.

During these check-ins, I presented experiences from Ghana, underscoring the significance of community support while also putting an emphasis on the powerful component of personal independence. Through hearing these stories, Naomi and her family were able to

identify the need of maintaining a healthy balance between self-sufficiency and community support, which resulted in a mutual comprehension and admiration of both methods.

Reflecting on the Experience

Especially when it overlaps with cultural assumptions about independence and caregiving, this experience brought to light the complicated nature of emotional labour in the field of disability support work. This served to emphasize the significance of employing support systems that are culturally sensitive and that respect the aims of the individual as well as the viewpoints of the family. I was able to provide Naomi with more effective and meaningful support by adapting my approach to embrace the strengths of both the Ghanaian emphasis on community and the Canadian focus on independence. This allowed me to facilitate Naomi's journey towards autonomy in a manner that honoured both her cultural background and her personal aspirations.

Experience 5: Navigating Racial Bias as a Black Support Worker

In my role as a support worker in Canada, I encountered a particularly challenging situation that brought the issues of race and emotional labour to the forefront of my professional experience. I was assigned to support Peter, an older individual with an intellectual disability, who had openly expressed discomfort and prejudice towards Black people. This bias was rooted in long-held stereotypes and misinformation, and it presented an immediate and profound challenge to our working relationship.

Our initial meetings were marked by tension and resistance from Peter. He was hesitant to engage in conversations and often made dismissive or prejudiced remarks. As a black support worker, this situation required an immense amount of emotional labour. I had to navigate my

personal feelings of hurt and frustration while maintaining a professional demeanor, focusing on the importance of providing quality care and support to Peter despite his biases.

A particularly poignant instance in my journey of supporting Peter, who initially harbored strong biases against Black people, was when he outright rejected the food I had prepared for him. This rejection was not based on the meal's quality or his dietary preferences, but stemmed from his prejudices against my racial background. This moment crystallized the deeply personal nature of the biases we were navigating and introduced a new dimension of emotional labour in my role as his support worker.

Peter's refusal of the food I cooked, solely based on my race, was a stark, painful reminder of the personal challenges embedded within professional caregiving contexts, especially for support workers from racialized backgrounds. It required me to manage a mix of personal hurt and professional obligation, striving to maintain a compassionate approach to his care despite the overt expression of racial bias.

On addressing the situation:

- I had to take a moment to compose myself, acknowledging my feelings but also recognizing the importance of responding in a manner that upheld my professional integrity and commitment to providing care.
- I addressed the situation directly with Peter, expressing that I understood he might have preferences but emphasizing the need for respect and openness in our interactions. This conversation was delicate, aiming to open a dialogue about biases without escalating tensions.

- I used this incident as an opportunity for reflection in subsequent discussions with Peter, gently exploring the underlying reasons for his biases and challenging them through positive, non-confrontational engagement.

This experience also prompted me to engage in deep reflective practice and to seek support and advice from colleagues and supervisors. Discussing these challenges in team meetings and supervision sessions provided me with additional strategies for navigating racial bias and reinforced the importance of self-care to manage the emotional toll of such situations.

Over time, and with considerable effort, Peter began to show signs of changing attitudes. He became more open in our interactions and started to express curiosity about my background and experiences. These breakthrough moments were significant, not only in terms of Peter's personal growth, but also in affirming the impact of sustained, empathetic engagement in challenging and transforming prejudiced attitudes.

Reflecting on the Experience:

This experience was a lesson in the complexities of emotional labour when it intersects with racial dynamics, especially within the context of support work. It highlighted the necessity for support workers to be equipped with the skills to navigate prejudice, the importance of organizational support systems in addressing these challenges, and the potential for personal and professional growth through these difficult encounters.

Supporting Peter reinforced my belief in the transformative power of empathy, patience, and education in overcoming barriers to effective care. It also underscored the critical need for ongoing discussions about race, diversity, and inclusion within the field of disability support, ensuring that workers are supported in addressing these issues and that individuals receiving support are offered care that is respectful, inclusive, and devoid of prejudice.

Experience 6: Addressing Emotional Attachment and Separation Anxiety

One of the most emotionally charged experiences in my role as a support worker occurred with Ben, a young adult with a developmental disability who had grown particularly attached to me over the course of our time together. The bond we had developed was strong, marked by trust, mutual respect, and genuine care. However, the depth of this attachment became profoundly evident when I announced I would be taking a short vacation from work.

The moment I shared the news of my upcoming absence with Ben, his immediate reaction was one of distress. Tears welled up in his eyes, and he became visibly upset, expressing a fear of being left alone and concern over who would support him in my absence. This reaction was a stark reminder of the emotional dependencies that can form in support relationships, highlighting the delicate balance between fostering strong, supportive bonds and ensuring independence and resilience among those we support.

Ben's reaction necessitated a significant amount of emotional labour, as I needed to manage my feelings of guilt and sadness about causing him distress while also preparing him for my absence.

I spent time reassuring Ben that his feelings were understood and valid, emphasizing that my absence would be temporary and that I would return. This reassurance was crucial in helping to mitigate his immediate fears.

Prior to my vacation, I introduced Ben to the colleague who would be supporting him in my absence, ensuring several overlap sessions where all three of us could interact together. This strategy aimed to build trust and familiarity, reducing Ben's anxiety about being supported by someone else. Recognizing the importance of Ben's independence, I worked with him on identifying activities and tasks he felt confident managing on his own. We also discussed how he

could communicate his needs and preferences to the temporary support worker, empowering him to take an active role in his care. To ease the transition, we established a communication plan that included scheduled check-ins, allowing Ben to feel connected and supported even in my absence. This plan was designed to provide reassurance while also fostering a sense of security.

Reflecting on the Experience:

Upon my return, Ben and I reflected on the experience of my absence. He shared that, while it was challenging at first, the strategies we had put in place helped him feel more secure and capable. This reflection was an opportunity for growth, highlighting the importance of preparing individuals for temporary changes in their support network and reinforcing the value of independence and adaptability.

This experience with Ben underscored the complexities of emotional labour in disability support work, especially when navigating strong emotional attachments and separation anxiety. It highlighted the need for support workers to proactively address and manage the emotional impacts of their necessary absences, ensuring that individuals like Ben are prepared, supported, and empowered to handle changes in their support structure. Moving forward, this experience has informed my approach to fostering independence and resilience in those I support, emphasizing the importance of balance in professional caregiving relationships.

Experience 7: Navigating Affection and Professional Boundaries with Rowan

In my tenure as a support worker, I encountered a heartwarming yet complex situation with Rowan, an individual with a developmental disability known for expressing affection through physical gestures, such as hugs and giving small tokens or ‘pegs.’ Rowan’s way of showing gratitude and connection resonated deeply with me, underscoring the human need for

warmth and acknowledgment. However, this behavior also brought to the forefront the importance of navigating personal boundaries and professional ethics in support relationships.

Rowan's inclination to express affection was initially surprising. Coming from a cultural background where such expressions vary widely, I had to quickly adapt and understand the intent behind these gestures. Recognizing them as Rowan's way of communicating trust, appreciation, and connection, I appreciated the sentiment while also being mindful of the professional boundaries that are essential in maintaining a supportive, ethical, and effective caregiving environment. The emotional labour involved in this scenario was multifaceted. On one hand, I felt a genuine sense of happiness and fulfillment knowing Rowan felt supported and comfortable expressing affection. I was acutely aware of the need to gently guide Rowan towards understanding appropriate ways of expressing these feelings that respected both our boundaries.

I initiated open, positive conversations with Rowan about different ways people can express their feelings of friendship and gratitude, emphasizing the importance of respecting personal space while acknowledging his need for expression.

Together, we explored alternative expressions of affection that were comfortable for both of us, such as high-fives or verbal expressions of thanks. This approach allowed Rowan to continue expressing his emotions in a manner that was respectful of professional boundaries.

Reinforcing these alternatives consistently helped Rowan understand and respect boundaries, ensuring our interactions remained positive and appropriate. This reinforcement was done with care to avoid making Rowan feel rejected or misunderstood.

Reflecting on the Experience:

This experience prompted deeper reflection on my practice and the dynamics of support work. It reinforced the significance of continuous professional development in areas such as

communication strategies, boundary setting, and ethical considerations in disability support. Engaging in discussions with colleagues and supervisors about these themes enriched my understanding and approach to similar situations in the future.

Navigating this delicate balance with Rowan was a reflective learning experience, highlighting the complexity of emotional labour in disability support work. It underscored the necessity of maintaining professional boundaries while being responsive and respectful to the emotional needs and expressions of those we support. Through this experience, both Rowan and I grew in our understanding of each other and the dynamics of our support relationship, strengthening our connection in a manner that was both appropriate and meaningful. This journey with Rowan illuminated the importance of empathy, clear communication, and mutual respect in fostering healthy, supportive relationships that honor the dignity and individuality of each person.

Experience 8: Advocating for Personal Choice Amidst Conflict with a Parent

A pivotal experience in my role as a support worker involved advocating for the rights of Jamie, a young adult with intellectual disabilities, particularly their right to make personal choices about what to eat and what to wear. This advocacy led to a conflict with Jamie's parent, who held different views on how much independence Jamie should have. The situation highlighted the intense emotional labour involved in navigating family dynamics, advocating for the rights of those we support, and managing conflicts that arise from these advocacy efforts.

The conflict arose when I suggested that Jamie should have more autonomy in choosing their meals and outfits, a proposition that Jamie's parent initially resisted. The parent believed that due to Jamie's intellectual disability, they were not capable of making appropriate choices in these areas. This disagreement was not just a professional challenge; it was emotionally taxing,

as it placed me in a position where I had to balance respecting the parent's concerns with advocating for Jamie's rights and independence.

I approached the situation with an intent to listen empathetically to the parent's concerns, understanding that their perspectives were rooted in a desire to protect Jamie. This open dialogue was crucial in establishing a foundation for mutual understanding and respect.

Part of my approach involved gently providing information and evidence on the importance of autonomy and choice in promoting self-esteem and independence among individuals with intellectual disabilities. Sharing success stories and research findings helped in illustrating how personal choice could positively impact Jamie's well-being.

I proposed a compromise where Jamie could make choices from a curated selection of options that both the parent and I felt were appropriate. This strategy aimed to gradually increase Jamie's decision-making autonomy while addressing the parent's concerns for safety and appropriateness. Offering continuous support and guidance to Jamie in making these choices ensured that they felt confident and supported, reinforcing the importance of their right to autonomy.

Navigating this conflict required a significant amount of emotional labour, involving managing my feelings of frustration and concern for Jamie's autonomy while engaging constructively with the parent. It also entailed supporting Jamie through the process, ensuring they did not feel caught in the middle of a dispute.

The resolution of this conflict, through empathetic dialogue and compromise, not only strengthened the relationship between Jamie, their parent, and myself, but also fostered a greater understanding of the importance of autonomy and personal choice. It underscored the necessity

of emotional labour in advocacy work within disability support, highlighting the delicate balance between respecting family dynamics and upholding the rights of individuals with disabilities.

Reflecting on the Experience:

This experience was a reminder of the complexities inherent in support work, where advocating for the rights and independence of those we support can sometimes lead to conflicts with their loved ones. It reinforced the value of emotional labour in navigating these situations with sensitivity, respect, and a steadfast commitment to the principles of autonomy and self-determination. Through careful negotiation and emotional resilience, it is possible to advocate effectively for the rights of individuals with disabilities while maintaining positive and constructive relationships with their families.

Experience 9: Facilitating Self-Expression in a Non-Verbal Individual

One of the most impactful experiences in my career as a support worker involved Eli, an individual with autism who was non-verbal. Eli's inability to communicate through traditional verbal means presented a unique challenge, requiring me to delve deep into the realm of emotional labour, not just to understand his needs and wants but to also advocate for his right to self-expression.

The initial challenge was establishing a mode of communication that allowed Eli to express himself meaningfully. Observing Eli's frustration at not being understood and the resultant behavioral expressions of distress was emotionally taxing. It highlighted the intense emotional labour involved in supporting someone who communicates differently, necessitating patience, creativity, and an unwavering commitment to understanding the individual's perspective.

Recognizing the need for Eli to communicate and express his autonomy, I explored various alternative and augmentative communication (AAC) strategies. This journey involved working closely with speech and language therapists to find suitable tools that resonated with Eli, such as picture exchange communication systems (PECS) and assistive technology devices tailored to his abilities and preferences.

Advocating for Eli's right to self-expression was an exercise in emotional labour, requiring me to challenge and educate others, including family members and other professionals, about the importance of his autonomy and the validity of his non-verbal communication methods. This advocacy was not without its emotional toll, as it involved navigating skepticism, resistance, and at times, outright dismissal of the potential for someone like Eli to engage in meaningful self-expression.

A breakthrough moment came when Eli, using his newly acquired AAC device, expressed his preference for a particular activity during our planning session. The joy and sense of accomplishment he displayed were profound. It was a stark reminder of the intrinsic value of advocating for and investing in the means for all individuals, regardless of their method of communication, to express their desires and participate in decision-making about their lives.

This success was not just a victory for Eli, but a deeply rewarding validation of the emotional labour invested in supporting him. It underscored the transformative impact of perseverance, empathy, and innovation in overcoming communication barriers.

Reflecting on the Experience:

The experience with Eli profoundly influenced my approach to support work, reinforcing the importance of viewing everyone as a whole person with unique needs, preferences, and ways of communicating. It highlighted the necessity of emotional labour in not just understanding and

interpreting non-verbal cues but also in advocating for the individual's right to self-expression and autonomy.

Moreover, this journey underscored the need for support workers to be equipped with the skills, patience, and emotional resilience to navigate the complexities of supporting non-verbal individuals. It was a powerful lesson in the value of alternative communication methods and the profound difference they can make in someone's life, enriching my professional practice and personal understanding of the diverse spectrum of human expression.

Experience 10: Navigating Unresolved Challenges with a Family's Resistance to Change

In my journey as a support worker, not all experiences culminate in a breakthrough or positive resolution. A particularly challenging situation involved supporting Lucas, a young adult with a developmental disability whose family was resistant to implementing strategies that would promote his independence. Despite extensive efforts to engage, educate, and collaborate with Lucas's family, the hoped-for progress and acceptance of new approaches remained elusive.

Lucas had shown potential for increased self-reliance in daily tasks and decision-making. However, his family's protective instincts, coupled with their fixed beliefs about Lucas's capabilities, formed a significant barrier to implementing the strategies we developed. Their resistance was not rooted in a lack of love or care, but in deep-seated fears and misconceptions about disability and independence.

The situation demanded an immense amount of emotional labour—balancing my professional responsibility to advocate for Lucas's autonomy with sensitivity to his family's concerns. Each meeting and discussion with the family involved navigating a complex emotional landscape, filled with hope for Lucas's growth and the frustration of encountering continuous resistance. Despite the lack of progress, I remained committed to advocating for Lucas's right to

independence, continuously presenting evidence-based practices and success stories that highlighted the benefits of fostering autonomy.

Recognizing the need for additional perspectives, I sought support from psychologists and other professionals who could provide insights and strategies for engaging resistant family members.

The ongoing challenge prompted deep reflection on my strategies and communication methods, questioning how I could better reach Lucas's family and bridge the gap between their fears and Lucas's potential.

The lack of a breakthrough with Lucas's family was a poignant reminder of the limitations support workers sometimes face, regardless of their commitment or the quality of their interventions. It underscored the reality that change is often a slow process, requiring patience and persistence beyond immediate outcomes.

This experience, though unresolved, contributed significantly to my professional growth. It sharpened my skills in advocacy, communication, and emotional resilience. Moreover, it deepened my understanding of the dynamics between support workers, individuals with disabilities, and their families, highlighting the importance of empathy, flexibility, and the continuous search for creative solutions.

Reflecting on the Experience:

While the situation with Lucas and his family remained a challenge, it reinforced the value of emotional labour in disability support work—not just in achieving breakthroughs but in persevering through setbacks and maintaining a steadfast commitment to the well-being and rights of those we support. It was a profound lesson in the complexities of support work, the

multifaceted nature of family dynamics, and the enduring importance of hope and advocacy in the face of resistance.

Experience 11: The Challenge of Supporting Autonomy in a Risk-Averse Environment

One of the more complex challenges I faced as a support worker involved Maya, an individual with mild intellectual disabilities who was eager to explore greater levels of autonomy, specifically in the realm of social interactions and community engagement. However, the environment in which Maya lived was highly risk-averse, governed by policies and attitudes that prioritized safety to the extent that it significantly limited her opportunities for independence and social participation.

Maya expressed a desire to attend community events and participate in social groups independently, without constant supervision. She believed these experiences were critical to her personal growth and social skills development. However, the organization overseeing her care was deeply cautious, prioritizing a strict safety protocol that often precluded such independent activities for individuals deemed to have significant vulnerabilities.

Advocating for Maya's autonomy within this risk-averse framework required a nuanced approach to emotional labour. It involved managing my frustrations and concerns about overprotectiveness while diplomatically engaging with the organization's leadership to negotiate more flexible arrangements for Maya. I compiled evidence on the benefits of balanced risk-taking in promoting independence and well-being for individuals with intellectual disabilities. This included gathering data on successful models of supervised independence and testimonials from other support workers and individuals who had benefited from such approaches.

Engaging in discussions with the organization's leadership and Maya's family involved carefully balancing assertiveness with sensitivity to their concerns. Each conversation required

me to navigate anxieties about potential risks, counteracting them with structured plans that outlined safety measures and gradual steps toward independence. Parallel to these advocacy efforts, I supported Maya in coping with the disappointment and frustration stemming from the restrictions she faced. This involved exploring alternative avenues for social engagement that fit within the current constraints while continuing to advocate for change.

Despite persistent efforts, the progress was slower than hoped, with only marginal adjustments made to the restrictive policies. The deep-seated fear of liability and adverse outcomes among decision-makers proved to be a significant barrier to embracing a more balanced approach to risk and autonomy.

Reflecting on the Experience:

This experience highlighted the profound emotional labour involved in advocating for the rights and autonomy of individuals with disabilities within systems that are inherently cautious. It underscored the importance of persistence in advocacy, the value of patience, and the necessity of finding creative solutions within constrained environments.

Though the situation did not resolve as favorably as I had hoped, it reinforced my commitment to supporting individuals like Maya in striving for independence and underscored the need for ongoing dialogue about risk, safety, and autonomy in care environments. This challenge has deepened my understanding of the systemic barriers to autonomy faced by individuals with disabilities and has motivated me to continue seeking and advocating for balanced approaches that prioritize both safety and the right to independence.

Experience 12: Supporting Jordan, Navigating Tourette Syndrome and Social Perceptions

In my capacity as a support worker, I encountered a profoundly enlightening yet challenging situation with Jordan, an individual with Tourette Syndrome characterized by

coprolalia—the involuntary utterance of socially inappropriate or taboo words and phrases. This aspect of Jordan’s condition introduced a complex layer of emotional labour, centered around advocating for understanding and inclusion while navigating the public and personal impacts of his tics.

Jordan’s Tourette Syndrome manifested in sudden vocal outbursts, some of which involved cursing. These tics were not reflective of his intentions or feelings but were neurological impulses he could not control. Observing the distress and embarrassment these outbursts caused him, especially in social settings, underscored the initial challenge: facilitating a supportive environment that acknowledged Jordan’s experiences while helping him navigate the external judgments and misconceptions.

The emotional labour involved in supporting Jordan was multifaceted. It required managing my reactions to his tics, ensuring they did not reinforce any feelings of shame or discomfort he might experience. Simultaneously, it involved external emotional labour in public settings, where I found myself acting as an intermediary between Jordan and the public, explaining his condition to strangers and advocating for their understanding and empathy.

One of the primary strategies I employed was proactive educational advocacy. This involved preparing short, accessible explanations about Tourette Syndrome and coprolalia that Jordan could use when interacting with others, as well as materials I could distribute in environments we anticipated might be challenging.

Recognizing the importance of community understanding and support, I worked with Jordan to identify safe spaces and supportive social groups. This effort included liaising with local Tourette Syndrome associations to connect Jordan with others who shared similar experiences, fostering a sense of belonging and mutual support. Empowering Jordan to advocate

for himself was a critical goal. This involved role-playing exercises to practice responding to various scenarios and building his confidence in explaining his condition to others in a way that asserted his right to inclusion and respect.

Despite these efforts, we encountered situations where the public's reaction to Jordan's tics was less than understanding, ranging from discomfort to outright hostility. These instances took a significant emotional toll on both Jordan and me, highlighting the pervasive stigma associated with conditions like Tourette Syndrome and the societal challenges in accommodating neurological diversity.

Reflecting on the Experience:

Through these experiences, Jordan and I developed a deeper understanding of the power of resilience, the importance of community, and the profound impact of advocacy and education in changing perceptions. Jordan's journey was a testament to the strength found in facing adversity with dignity and the transformative potential of empathy and understanding in overcoming societal barriers.

Supporting Jordan taught me invaluable lessons about the complexity of emotional labour in disability support, particularly when navigating conditions with misunderstood social implications like Tourette Syndrome. It reinforced the critical need for societal education, the empowerment of individuals with disabilities, and the creation of inclusive environments that respect and embrace neurological diversity. Our experiences together underscored the ongoing challenge and necessity of advocating for a world where every individual, regardless of their condition, is met with empathy and understanding.

Experience 13: Navigating Physical Responses in Caregiving

As a disability support worker, I came across a difficult circumstance with John, a person that had restricted mobility. John accidentally slapped me in the face when I was helping him with his sponge bath, which is a regular part of our care routine. This experience emphasized the many emotional and practical factors involved in such circumstances and offered a poignant example of the unexpected physical reactions that might happen in caring settings.

The immediate jolt that resulted from the physical contact was not only unexpected but also excruciating. John's response was reflexive or involuntary, as is often the case with people who have specific mobility disabilities; it was not violent. Since these reactions can frequently be just as upsetting for the person receiving care as they are for the person who provides care, my first duty was to make sure John was safe and to reassure him.

It took a lot of emotional work to control my astonishment and pain during this encounter and keep a composed expression. It was of the utmost importance to refrain from expressing any feelings of distress or anger to John. I calmed any worry he might have had about the situation by reassuring him that everything was okay while displaying patience and understanding.

Post-incident, it became vital to examine the care protocols with my supervisor to guarantee such incidents might be minimized in the future. We talked about maybe changing the way we handled delicate tasks like taking a bath, making sure to give John more verbal cues, and checking in with him to make sure he was comfortable and ready for each step of the process.

Reflecting on the Experience:

This provided insights into how sudden movements could be better anticipated and managed, emphasizing the importance of ongoing training in handling reflexive actions gracefully and safely. The incident underscored the need for specific training that addresses how to handle involuntary physical responses from clients, particularly those with significant physical

impairments. Enhancing caregiver training to include strategies for managing these responses effectively and safely could improve the caregiving experience for both clients and workers.

This experience with John was a significant learning opportunity that highlighted the unpredictability of disability support work. It reinforced the importance of emotional regulation, the need for continual professional development, and the implementation of refined care strategies to handle similar situations better in the future. Such incidents, while challenging, are invaluable in evolving our practices to ensure safer and more effective care for all individuals.

Experience. 14: The Emotional Toll of Loss in Disability Support Work

One of the most life-changing events I have had in my career as a disability support worker was providing support to Caitlin, a young woman with an intellectual disability who was a wheelchair user. Caitlin was a courageous young woman. Despite her disability, she managed to leave an indelible mark on everyone she encountered, thanks to her contagious smile and unyielding perseverance. The relationship between us developed beyond the conventional caregiver-client dynamic, becoming a meaningful and emotionally resonant connection that had a significant impact on my understanding of the emotional labour that is involved in providing support for people with disabilities.

To provide assistance to Caitlin from the very beginning, it was necessary to strike a careful balance between your professional responsibilities and your emotional engagement. Her treatment included providing her with extensive daily assistance, which included assistance with personal hygiene, the administration of medication, and assistance with mobility. Beyond these physical tasks, I was a source of emotional support, helping her navigate the frustrations and anxieties associated with her disability. Daily, she faced new challenges, such as coping with her discomfort during physical therapy sessions and providing her with comfort while she was

experiencing moments of anxiety and fear. A high level of empathy, patience, and emotional regulation was required to successfully navigate this ongoing emotional engagement.

Given that Caitlin's health was beginning to deteriorate, the emotional labour that was necessary in providing support for her became even more difficult. It was a heartbreaking experience to watch her condition gradually deteriorate. When I was trying to maintain a strong and optimistic presence for her, I frequently found myself concealing my own worries and feelings of despair. As I worked toward the goal of bringing my interior feelings into alignment with the reassuring demeanour that Caitlin required, I made deep acting, a concept that was defined by Hochschild, a daily exercise. There were times when I felt my heart breaking as I saw her struggle, but I had to maintain a calm and reassuring demeanour in order to assist her in coping with the agony and terror she was experiencing.

It was soon determined that Caitlin's health had reached a critical stage, and it became obvious that she was getting closer and closer to the end of her life. It was a tremendous amount of emotional labour at this period. While I was off shift one evening, a co-worker texted me to inform me that Caitlin had passed away. The news was really upsetting. It was difficult for me to keep my composure and remain helpful even though the burden of loss was overpowering. The tremendous sensation of loss and helplessness that I had on the inside was a battle for me. In those moments, the emotional labour consisted of balancing my personal pain with the need to be there for people who were mourning the loss of Caitlin. It was a delicate act of surface acting, portraying a calm appearance while my heart lamented the loss of someone who had become more than just a client. That was the delicate act of surface acting.

Reflecting on the Experience

As I reflected on my time spent with Caitlin, I became aware of the degree of emotional labour that is involved in providing care for people with disabilities. An unusual capacity for emotional resilience is required in addition to physical endurance and technical competence in order to fulfill the requirements of the profession. As a result of providing support to Caitlin, I gained an understanding of the strong human relationships that are formed in this line of work as well as the tremendous emotional toll that is associated with it. When she passed away, it brought to light the significance of providing support workers with support systems, such as counselling and peer support groups, in order to assist them in coping with the emotional fallout that follows the loss of a significant client.

Caitlin's journey also underscored the significance of recognizing and honoring the emotional labor inherent in disability support work. Her life and the care she required pushed me to grow both professionally and personally. It reaffirmed the importance of emotional intelligence and self-care practices for support workers to maintain their mental and emotional well-being while working with clients. I was able to find some measure of comfort in the aftermath of her passing by contemplating the positive influence I had on her life and the honour of being a part of her journey.

Providing emotional support to Caitlin during her sickness and, ultimately, her passing was a very emotional experience that demonstrated the complex emotional labour that is required in giving assistance to people with disabilities. My approach to providing treatment has been profoundly altered because of this experience, which has brought to light the importance of compassion, resiliency, and comprehensive support systems for healthcare providers. I will always remember the lessons that Caitlin showed me about the resilience of the human spirit and the long-lasting effects of loving care. Her legacy will carry on this way.

Experience 15: Emotional Labour of Managing Power Dynamics

During my time as a disability support worker, I encountered various situations where power dynamics played a significant role in the caregiver-client relationship. One experience that stands out involved a client named Alex, a middle-aged man with cerebral palsy and a sharp intellect, who often felt frustrated by his dependency on others for daily tasks. This frustration sometimes manifested in ways that highlighted the inherent power imbalance in our relationship. Alex was highly aware of his reliance on support workers, which occasionally led to tensions. On one occasion, he became visibly upset when I suggested a different method for transferring him from his wheelchair to the bed. He felt that my suggestion undermined his autonomy and control over his own care. Although my intention was to ensure his safety and comfort, Alex perceived it as an encroachment on his independence.

The emotional labour in this scenario involved managing my own emotional response to Alex's frustration while maintaining a professional and empathetic demeanor. I had to suppress my initial feelings of defensiveness and frustration to understand his perspective fully. Engaging in deep acting, I aligned my internal emotions to reflect genuine empathy and patience, aiming to reassure Alex that his preferences and autonomy were respected.

To navigate this power dynamic effectively, I focused on collaborative communication. I asked Alex to explain his preferred method and why it was important to him. By validating his expertise in his own care, I aimed to shift the dynamic from one of authority to one of partnership. This approach required careful emotional regulation, as I needed to balance my role as a caregiver ensuring safety with the need to empower Alex and honor his autonomy.

Reflecting on this experience

I realized the emotional complexity involved in managing power dynamics. It highlighted the delicate balance between providing necessary care and empowering clients to maintain control over their lives. The emotional labour extended beyond managing my immediate reactions; it involved ongoing self-reflection to understand the impact of my actions on Alex's sense of autonomy and dignity.

The emotional labour required in situations involving power dynamics can be particularly draining. Constantly navigating these delicate interactions demands a high level of emotional intelligence and resilience. However, these experiences also offer significant opportunities for growth. They teach valuable lessons about the importance of empathy, active listening, and the need to foster a collaborative environment where clients feel empowered.

In the aftermath of this encounter with Alex, I made a conscious effort to incorporate more client-centered approaches in my practice. I sought regular feedback from clients about their care preferences and involved them in decision-making processes. This not only improved the quality of care but also helped in mitigating the power imbalances inherent in the caregiver-client relationship.

Navigating power dynamics in disability support work involves substantial emotional labour, requiring support workers to balance authority with empowerment and empathy. Reflecting on these experiences, it becomes clear that managing power dynamics is not just about maintaining professional boundaries, but also about fostering an environment where clients feel respected and autonomous. This approach enhances the quality of care and supports the emotional well-being of both clients and caregivers. Through experiences like the one with Alex, I have learned the importance of emotional intelligence and the value of a collaborative, client-centered approach in disability support work.

Long-Term Effects and Educational Impact

A. The Long-Term Effects of Emotional Labour on My Journey

Emotional labour in disability support work is not just a daily challenge but also a long-term journey that has profoundly affected my well-being and professional growth. Reflecting on my experiences, I have observed significant long-term effects of emotional labour, both positive and negative. These experiences have shaped my understanding of the enduring impact of emotional labour and the importance of sustainable practices to manage its effects.

Positive Long-Term Effects

Enhanced Emotional Intelligence and Empathy: Over time, the constant engagement in emotional labour has significantly enhanced my emotional intelligence and empathy. Working with clients like Sarah, who struggled with frustration and despair, required me to deeply understand and manage my emotions while supporting hers. This ongoing process has refined my ability to empathize, recognize emotional cues, and respond with sensitivity and care. This heightened emotional intelligence has not only improved my professional interactions but also enriched my personal relationships. The experience with Sarah taught me the importance of patience and the positive influence of breaking tasks into manageable steps, which I have applied in various aspects of my life.

Professional Growth and Resilience: Navigating complex emotional dynamics, such as advocating for clients' rights and managing cultural sensitivities, has fostered my resilience and adaptability. The challenges of dealing with clients like Alex, who required delicate handling of power dynamics, and Peter, who exhibited racial bias, have strengthened my capacity to remain calm and composed under pressure. This resilience has been crucial in sustaining my commitment to providing high-quality care despite the emotional toll. For instance, my ability to

address Peter's biases with empathy and patience without compromising on professional boundaries has made me more resilient in facing similar challenges.

Deepened Commitment to Advocacy and Inclusion: The emotional labour involved in advocating for clients' rights and autonomy has deepened my commitment to advocacy and inclusion. Experiences with clients like Lucas, whose family resisted promoting his independence, and Naomi, who worked toward greater self-sufficiency, have reinforced the importance of promoting independence and respecting individual preferences. This long-term commitment has driven me to continuously advocate for policy changes and inclusive practices within my organization, contributing to a more supportive and empowering environment for clients.

Negative Long-Term Effects

Emotional Exhaustion and Burnout: The cumulative effect of emotional labour has led to emotional exhaustion and burnout. Constantly managing intense emotions, such as the distress of clients like John, who had unanticipated physical responses, and the sadness of losing clients like Caitlin, has been overwhelming. Over time, this emotional burden has depleted my emotional reserves, leading to feelings of fatigue, detachment, and reduced job satisfaction. The grief from Caitlin's passing was particularly hard, emphasizing the emotional toll of forming deep connections with clients who are critically ill.

Impact on Mental Health: Prolonged exposure to emotional labour has had detrimental effects on my mental health. The ongoing stress of balancing professional responsibilities with emotional engagement, especially in challenging situations like dealing with racial bias from Peter and cultural transitions in supporting Alex, has led to anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues. Without adequate support and self-care strategies, my mental health has been

significantly compromised. The anxiety I felt when just the idea of going to work made me uneasy, as in the early days with Aaron, illustrates the profound impact on my mental health.

Strained Personal Relationships: The emotional demands of disability support work have spilled over into my personal life, affecting my relationships and social interactions. The need to constantly regulate emotions and maintain a professional demeanor has led to emotional withdrawal or irritability in personal settings. This strain has impacted my relationships with family and friends, reducing the overall quality of my personal life. The emotional labour required to support Ben and manage his separation anxiety while preparing for my vacation took a toll on my personal life, as the guilt and worry extended beyond work hours.

The long-term effects of emotional labour in disability support work have been profound and multifaceted for me. While the journey has involved significant challenges, it has also offered opportunities for personal and professional growth. By recognizing the impact of emotional labour and implementing sustainable practices to manage its effects, I have navigated the complexities of my role with resilience, empathy, and a deepened commitment to advocacy and inclusion. Reflecting on my experiences, I am reminded of the importance of continuous learning, organizational support, and self-care in sustaining the well-being and effectiveness of disability support workers.

B. Studying MSc Disability Studies: Impact on Support Provision and Managing

Emotional Labour

Pursuing an MSc in Disability Studies has influenced the way I provide support to clients and manage the emotional labour inherent in disability support work. The advanced education and insights gained from this program have equipped me with a deeper understanding of

disability, enriched my approach to caregiving, and enhanced my ability to navigate the emotional complexities of the profession.

- **Enhanced Understanding of Disability**

One of the most significant impacts of my MSc studies has been the broadened perspective on disability. The program emphasized the social model of disability, which shifts the focus from the individual's impairments to the societal barriers that hinder their full participation. This theoretical framework has reshaped my approach to support work, encouraging me to advocate for changes that promote inclusion and accessibility.

For example, instead of merely focusing on an individual's limitations, I now actively work to identify and address environmental and attitudinal barriers that affect their daily lives. This approach has empowered my clients, fostering a sense of autonomy and self-worth by highlighting their capabilities and the importance of inclusive practices.

- **Evidence-Based Practices**

The MSc program emphasized the importance of evidence-based practices, providing me with the tools to critically evaluate research and apply it to my work. This has significantly improved the quality of care I provide. By integrating the latest research findings into my support strategies, I can offer interventions that are both effective and tailored to the unique needs of each client.

For instance, understanding the benefits of person-centered planning has led me to collaborate more closely with clients and their families in developing individualized support plans. This collaborative approach ensures that the support provided aligns with the client's goals and preferences, enhancing their overall well-being and satisfaction.

- **Managing Emotional Labour**

The MSc program also addressed the psychological and emotional aspects of disability support work, offering strategies to manage the emotional labour involved. Understanding concepts like emotional resilience, self-care, and reflective practice has been invaluable in maintaining my mental and emotional well-being.

One of the key lessons was the importance of reflective practice. By regularly reflecting on my experiences, I can process my emotions, identify areas for improvement, and celebrate successes. This practice has helped me maintain a balanced perspective, preventing burnout and fostering a more sustainable approach to caregiving.

Additionally, the program emphasized the significance of peer support and supervision. Engaging in regular discussions with colleagues and supervisors has provided a supportive network where I can share challenges, gain insights, and receive emotional support. This network has been vital in managing the emotional demands of the job, ensuring that I am not navigating these challenges alone.

- **Advocacy and Empowerment**

Studying Disability Studies has reinforced the importance of advocacy in my role as a support worker. The program emphasized the need to advocate for the rights and inclusion of individuals with disabilities, both within the organization and in the broader community. This advocacy role has become an integral part of my work, guiding my interactions with clients, their families, and other professionals.

For example, I have become more proactive in advocating for policy changes within my organization that promote greater autonomy and inclusion for clients. By presenting evidence-based arguments and collaborating with stakeholders, I have contributed to creating a more supportive and empowering environment for individuals with disabilities.

- Cultural Competence

Another critical area of impact has been the development of cultural competence. The MSc program highlighted the diverse experiences and perspectives of individuals with disabilities from different cultural backgrounds. This understanding has enhanced my ability to provide culturally sensitive support, recognizing and respecting the unique needs and preferences of each client.

For instance, I now make a concerted effort to understand the cultural context of my clients, incorporating their values and traditions into their support plans. This culturally responsive approach has strengthened my relationships with clients and their families, promoting trust and cooperation.

- Reflecting on the Integration of Theory and Practice

Reflecting on how the MSc Disability Studies program has impacted my work, I realize that it has not only enhanced my professional skills but also deepened my commitment to the principles of inclusion, empowerment, and respect for diversity. The knowledge and insights gained from this program have equipped me to provide more effective and compassionate support, while also maintaining my emotional well-being.

The journey of studying Disability Studies has been transformative, shaping me into a more knowledgeable, empathetic, and resilient support worker. By integrating these academic insights into my daily practice, I continue to strive for excellence in supporting individuals with disabilities, advocating for their rights, and managing the emotional complexities of this rewarding profession.

CHAPTER V: DATA ANALYSIS

From the personal narratives, six themes were derived:

The Complexity of Emotional Labour in Disability Support Work

From the observations and experiences, it tells the complexity of emotional labour in disability support work, revealing its varied nature and the profound impact it has on support workers. This is derived from multiple personal experiences where emotional labour played a central role in managing relationships and outcomes in support scenarios. Below are some instances that demonstrate that emotional labour is not just about coping with stress, but involves a dynamic interplay of emotions that support workers must navigate to effectively care for their clients.

First, the diverse expressions of emotions. The experiences highlighted in this research show that emotional labour in disability support work covers a range of activities, from managing personal emotions in response to challenging behaviors to expressing empathy and maintaining professionalism under stress. The emotional labour in disability support work varies greatly, reflecting the dynamic and often unpredictable nature of the role. Support workers engage in emotional labour when responding to challenging behaviors, navigating complex interpersonal dynamics, or managing their own emotional responses during intense situations.

For example, supporting Jordan, who exhibited vocal outbursts due to Tourette Syndrome, required significant emotional regulation to ensure that his needs were met without reinforcing any social stigma or personal discomfort. Similarly, navigating cultural and racial dynamics with clients like Peter, who initially held biases against Black people, involved delicate emotional maneuvering to advocate for understanding and change.

Also, one vivid example of the varied expressions of emotional labour occurred with Maya, whose environment was overly risk averse. Advocating for her right to participate more fully in community activities required balancing assertive negotiation skills with empathetic support for her and her family's concerns. This instance required emotional labour that was not only reactive (responding to Maya's frustrations and desires) but also proactive (strategically planning how to engage her family and caregivers in discussions about risk and independence).

Secondly, the emotional toll that is placed on those who provide support can be extremely profound. Eli, on the other hand, was able to communicate effectively with the assistive technology tools. But the burden of initially gaining an understanding of what he desired, how he feels, what he required, and how to derive meanings from his gestures is extremely stressful and taxing. In addition to their own personal responses to difficult circumstances, the events that were recounted reveal that support workers frequently carry the emotional weight of the problems that their clients are going through along with them.

Another illustrative example is the maintenance of professional boundaries. When dealing with clients like Rowan, who communicated affection through physical touch, support workers are required to handle personal boundaries. This is an experience that highlights the impact that emotional labour has on support workers. A cautious emotional labour was required in order to strike a balance between professional boundaries and empathic responses. If this emotional labour was not well handled, it could result in personal discomfort or mistaken actions in the workplace. As demonstrated by this example, there is a requirement for firms to provide workers with clear rules and support in order to assist them in navigating these complicated emotional landscapes.

Integrating Literature into Emotional Complexities in Support Work

The research findings reinforce and expand upon existing literature that underscores the complexities of emotional labour in care professions. Similar to Hochschild (2012a)'s foundational work, this research illustrates how emotional labour extends beyond mere emotional management to encompass strategic emotional expressions that facilitate better care outcomes.

Recent literature on emotional labour in care professions emphasizes the psychological impacts of managing personal feelings and expressions to meet job requirements. Studies such as those by Grandey et al. (2013) and Brotheridge & Grandey (2002) have highlighted how emotional labour can lead to job satisfaction when managed effectively but may also result in burnout and emotional exhaustion if not supported properly. These findings align with our observations that support workers experience a spectrum of emotional labour outcomes influenced by organizational support structures and personal coping strategies.

The research conducted by Chen et al. (2022) indicates that health professionals commonly engage in emotional labour, which entails the management of their natural emotions and, at times, the suppression of those feelings in order to fulfill the emotional requirements of their job assignments. It is possible that this is owing to the necessity of preserving a professional demeanour, providing comfort to patients, or efficiently managing situations that are emotionally charged and potentially unpleasant (Chen et al., 2022).

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patients, or efficiently managing situations that are emotionally charged and potentially unpleasant. This complements our findings where support workers, like those assisting clients with Tourette Syndrome or cultural adaptation challenges, require a deep level of empathy and emotional regulation to navigate their responsibilities effectively.

Chen et al. (2022)'s study contributes to the body of knowledge by detailing specific instances where emotional labour directly impacts worker well-being and client relationships, thereby emphasizing the need for organizational support systems that recognize and address these challenges.

Funk et al. (2021) suggest that emotional labour involves managing emotions in response to challenging situations, such as aggression from patients or clients. Workers in both health care and disability support settings may engage in deep acting to control their emotional responses and align with organizational expectations.

Funk et al. (2021) highlight how emotional labour can lead to the normalization and minimization of violence, potentially perpetuating harmful stigmatizing discourses. This aspect is relevant to disability support work, where workers may also face situations of aggression or challenging behaviors from individuals with disabilities. The study's insights on emotional labour, organizational norms, and self-presentation processes can be applied to understand how workers in disability support settings navigate their emotions and interactions with clients.

Emotional Labour in Advocacy

Advocacy within disability support work often requires a deep emotional investment. Support workers must navigate complex relationships and systems that may not always align with the best interests of their clients. For example, when families are overly protective or when

organizational policies restrict a client's ability to exercise independence, the support worker must engage in delicate negotiations, which can be emotionally taxing.

For instance, Lucas's story highlights the challenges of advocating for a client's independence when his family is resistant to change. The emotional labour here extends beyond daily support tasks to include negotiating and mediating between the client's desires and family concerns, illustrating the delicate balance required to advocate effectively within entrenched systems.

Lucas's case is particularly illustrative of how support workers must often act as mediators and educators. Despite seeing potential for Lucas to manage more personal decisions and tasks, his family's protectiveness limited his opportunities to develop independence. Persistent advocacy was necessary to gradually introduce the concept of balanced risk-taking to his family, showing them that fostering independence could lead to positive growth and resilience in Lucas. The support worker must empathetically engage with the family, understanding their fears and reservations, while steadfastly championing the client's right to self-determination.

These negotiations require support workers to manage their own emotional responses, balancing empathy with assertiveness and often mediate between conflicting interests. The emotional toll includes frustration, anxiety, and at times, emotional exhaustion. However, seeing a client like Lucas gradually gain independence can also bring immense satisfaction and fulfillment, reinforcing the emotional investment in advocacy work.

Empowerment is another critical aspect of advocacy that involves enabling clients to advocate for themselves. This process is emotionally charged as it involves encouraging clients to take risks and step outside their comfort zones. For instance, Eli's use of Augmentative and

Alternative Communication (AAC) devices not only provided him with a means to communicate, but also empowered him to express his needs and make decisions. Supporting a client in becoming an effective self-advocate requires patience and resilience from support workers, as they guide and witness the client's journey towards autonomy.

The emotional dimensions of empowering clients include joy and pride when clients succeed, mixed with worry and protectiveness when they face setbacks. The support worker's role in facilitating empowerment often involves a personal connection with the client's successes and failures, making their emotional involvement integral to their professional practice. This deep emotional connection can enhance the support worker's job satisfaction, as they see tangible results from their advocacy in the improved quality of life and increased independence of their clients.

Navigating Emotional Challenges

The emotional labour in advocacy also involves navigating the emotional responses of clients' families and other stakeholders. Resistance from these parties can lead to challenging interactions that evoke strong emotions in support workers. The ability to maintain professionalism and compassion in the face of adversity is crucial and requires emotional resilience. Support workers often need to employ conflict resolution skills and emotional intelligence to manage these situations effectively, ensuring that the advocacy efforts remain focused on the best interests of the client.

Integrating Literature Into Advocacy and Empowerment

Thi Lam & Kirby (2002) investigate the substantial impact that emotional intelligence plays in improving individual performance, particularly in professions that require a high level of emotional investment. Understanding how disability support professionals make use of

emotional intelligence to engage in effective advocacy is essential, and their findings are critical for this understanding. Empathy and assertiveness are two characteristics that are highlighted by high emotional intelligence. The emotional labour that is involved in arguing for the independence of clients, as witnessed in the example of Lucas, demands an excellent balancing of both of these characteristics.

The conceptualization of emotional labour that Grandey (2000) offers, particularly her emphasis on deep acting as opposed to surface acting, offers a framework that may be utilized to investigate the manner in which support workers connect with clients and their families in an authentic manner throughout advocacy time. This approach necessitates the expression of authentic emotions, which is in close alignment with the ethics of care, which places an emphasis on the significance of relational and emotional interactions as the core of ethical behaviour.

The authors Lu & Guy (2019) investigate how emotional labour might result in burnout if it is not managed properly and there is insufficient support from the organization. The findings of this study highlight the importance of enacting rules that acknowledge and address the dangers that relate to emotional labour in the context of advocacy and empowerment. These kinds of policies would be beneficial to workers with disabilities because they would equip them with the instruments and resources, they need to effectively manage their emotional anxieties.

In the context of healthcare, Funk et al. (2021) offer insights into the management of emotional labour in situations where there is a possibility of violence and victimization. These insights offer similarities to the management of disputes and resistance in the promotion of disability advocacy. Their findings underscore the significance of not taking negative reactions personally and maintaining professional composure, both of which are qualities that are essential for disability support workers who are involved in emotional labour.

As demonstrated by Eli's utilization of augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) technologies, the process of empowering individuals to advocate for themselves is an emotionally charged one. Not only does this component of support work require teaching and guiding, but it also allows for the provision of emotional support to clients as they navigate new levels of independence. Grandey et al. (2013) examine the ways in which emotional labour tactics can be utilized to cultivate an atmosphere in which empowerment is both a goal and a process. They place an emphasis on the emotional ties that make this journey possible.

The Emotional Dimensions of Cultural Sensitivity and Intersectionality in Disability Support Work

In the field of disability support, cultural sensitivity and intersectionality are not just professional requirements, but emotional imperatives that deeply influence the interactions between support workers and their clients. The emotional dimensions of these aspects are complex, encompassing the nuances of cross-cultural communication, the challenges of confronting and dismantling prejudices, and the deep-seated need to provide care that respects and celebrates the diverse identities of each client.

Cultural Sensitivity in Practice

Cultural sensitivity within disability support work involves understanding and respecting the cultural backgrounds of clients, which can significantly affect their communication styles, expressions of emotion, and expectations of care. For support workers, this often means stepping into a world that may be markedly different from their own and navigating these differences with empathy and respect. The emotional labour involved in such cross-cultural interactions is substantial. Support workers must constantly adapt their communication and caregiving

strategies to align with the cultural norms and values of their clients, which can be both emotionally draining and enriching.

Cultural sensitivity in Peter's this context extends beyond understanding and respecting diverse cultural backgrounds. It involves confronting and addressing the biases and stereotypes that may exist within those cultural frameworks. For the support worker, this meant finding ways to professionally address and navigate Peter's prejudices. This required a strategy that balanced direct confrontation of biases with a compassionate approach that sought to educate and transform Peter's views. The goal was not just to manage the situation temporarily but to foster a deeper understanding and change in Peter's perceptions over time.

Difference in Approach to Support and Caring Strategies: Ghana vs. Canada

The transition from Ghana to Canada highlighted in the experiences of a support worker exemplifies the emotional complexities of adjusting to new cultural norms. Adapting to different social cues and communication styles not only tests the worker's professional capabilities, but also their emotional resilience. Misunderstandings or misinterpretations in such contexts can lead to feelings of frustration and inadequacy, but successful adaptation can enhance emotional satisfaction and a sense of accomplishment.

In Ghana, the cultural approach to supporting individuals with disabilities is deeply rooted in communal values and collective responsibility. People with disabilities are often viewed with a sense of pity, and there is an automatic impulse to offer help without being asked. This stems from a cultural belief that individuals with disabilities are inherently in need of assistance, and it is the community's duty to provide support. This approach can be seen as both empathetic and paternalistic, as it often assumes that the person with a disability cannot manage on their own.

Conversely, in Canada, the approach to support and caring strategies is significantly different. The emphasis is on autonomy and personal independence. Support workers are trained to respect the individual's right to self-determination, helping only when explicitly requested. This approach is grounded in the belief that individuals with disabilities should have the same opportunities as everyone else to make their own choices and live independently. It can be challenging for support workers from cultures with a more communal and proactive approach to adapt to this hands-off approach, requiring a shift in mindset and practice.

The emotional labor involved in navigating these differences is substantial. In Ghana, support workers may struggle with feelings of frustration or inadequacy when their proactive efforts are not well-received in a Canadian context. Conversely, in Canada, support workers may need to manage their instincts to help immediately, learning instead to wait for cues from the client. Both approaches require a deep understanding of cultural contexts and a commitment to respecting the client's preferences and autonomy.

Language barrier

Transitioning from Ghana to Canada as a disability support worker presented significant emotional labor, particularly in managing language barriers and accent differences. For example, Referring to Alex's case, our Initial challenges included frequent misunderstandings and miscommunications, which were emotionally taxing and led to feelings of frustration and self-doubt. The need to adapt communication strategies, such as slowing down speech, enunciating clearly, and avoiding idiomatic expressions, required continuous emotional effort and resilience.

Adapting to these challenges involved substantial emotional labor. Using visual aids and written instructions to bridge the communication gap demanded constant vigilance and patience. Managing frustration while maintaining empathy was crucial, especially in high-stress situations

where clear communication was vital. This balance was delicate and required ongoing emotional regulation to ensure effective caregiving.

Navigating Intersectionality

Intersectionality in disability support work refers to the understanding that clients may face overlapping sources of discrimination and disadvantage, such as disability combined with racial, gender, or socioeconomic status, which can affect their experiences and needs in multifaceted ways. The emotional dimensions of addressing intersectionality are particularly intense, as support workers must recognize and reconcile multiple layers of identity that influence the client's life and interactions with the world.

The case of Jordan, who navigated both disability and racial discrimination, illustrates the emotional challenges of supporting clients dealing with multiple stigmas. Support workers in such situations must undertake the emotional labour of advocating for these clients in a manner that respects and acknowledges all aspects of their identity. This involves not only fighting against external biases, but also supporting the client emotionally through experiences of discrimination. The emotional toll on support workers includes feelings of anger, helplessness, and sorrow when witnessing the injustices clients face, but also pride and joy when they see their clients overcoming these barriers.

Emotional Resilience and Empathy

Effective cultural sensitivity and intersectional understanding require a high degree of emotional resilience and empathy. Support workers must be able to manage their own emotional responses such as discomfort, confusion, or frustration when faced with cultural practices or discrimination issues that are unfamiliar or challenging. At the same time, they must maintain a strong empathetic connection with their clients to provide support that feels genuinely respectful

and empowering. In this particular situation, empathy extends beyond simple understanding; it entails a deep emotional alignment with the client's feelings and experiences. This deep empathetic engagement can lead to strong emotional bonds between the worker and the client, which, while potentially rewarding, also increases the risk of emotional burnout.

Integrating Literature Into Cultural Sensitivity, Racial Bias, and Intersectionality

Within the field of disability support work, emotional components of cultural sensitivity, racial bias, and intersectionality create a number of difficult challenges that necessitate a large amount of emotional labour from support workers. In order to investigate the ways in which emotional labour intersects with cultural and racial dynamics in disability support settings, this study incorporates these practical insights with important studies by Lu & Guy (2019), Funk et al. (2021), and basic theories by Kimberlé Crenshaw.

Providing a crucial foundation for understanding how support workers in disability services manage emotional stress, the research that Lu and Guy (2019) conducted on emotional labour across different cultures presents a number of interesting findings. They use the notion of the conservation of resources to explain how emotional labour can result in burnout when there are not enough resources available. When applied to the field of disability support work, this theory provides an explanation for the exhaustion that is experienced by workers who are required to constantly adapt to a variety of cultural norms and handle racial biases without receiving enough assistance from their organizations. The incorporation of this theory highlights the importance of providing support workers with sufficient resources, such as training and emotional support, in order to prevent burnout while they are traversing complicated emotional terrains.

When it comes to disability support, Funk et al.'s (2021) research into emotional labour in healthcare settings, namely how workers manage the personal repercussions of violence and victimization, is comparable to the emotional obstacles that are encountered when confronting racial biases. Their idea of "not taking it personally" is extremely important for employees who are dealing with racial discrimination, whether it comes from customers or from within the culture of the firm and its own members. The findings of this study show the significance of providing support workers with training in techniques for emotional detachment and strategies for resilience to properly manage intense emotional exchanges.

The theory of intersectionality developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991) offers a crucial lens through which to investigate the myriad of facets of identity that are experienced by people who have disabilities. Using Crenshaw's theory, support workers are required to acknowledge the ways in which intersecting identities (such as race, gender, and disability) significantly impact the experience of each individual client. Workers are needed to have a high level of emotional intelligence and empathy to facilitate this recognition. They are also required to modify their support to accommodate these complex identity intersections, which increases the amount of emotional labour that is involved (Crenshaw, 1991).

Rosette et al. (2018) expand on the concept of intersectionality by investigating the ways in which gender and racial experiences overlap in the workplace. It is possible to apply this research to the field of disability support work by recognizing that both support workers and their clients may be confronted with distinct obstacles that are a result of their intersecting identities. These challenges can have an impact on the interactions between the two parties as well as the emotional labour that is involved. Taking into consideration the literatures, the policies of organizations that provide assistance to people with disabilities ought to explicitly

address intersectionality. This would guarantee that the specific issues that are brought about by overlapping identities are acknowledged and handled. Among these are the formulation of policies that aggressively combat discrimination within the organization, as well as those that encourage inclusiveness and equity (Crenshaw, 1991; Rosette et al., 2018).

An intricate emotional negotiation is required to successfully navigate the intersectionality of race, gender, and disability within the context of support assistance. As an illustration, support workers such as those who are aiding Jordan, who is subjected to prejudice because of both his disability and his race, are required to engage in deep acting to provide genuine assistance to their clients while also managing their emotional reactions to discriminatory behaviours. When faced with this circumstance, workers are frequently needed to engage in significant emotional labour in order to effectively advocate for the needs of their customers while also properly managing their mental health.

A thorough understanding of the emotional labour required in managing cultural sensitivity, racial bias, and intersectionality can be obtained by the integration of findings from disability support work with the literature that was previously discussed. In addition to Crenshaw's intersectionality paradigm, the insights provided by this literature highlight the importance of strategic organizational support to provide workers with the resources they require to effectively manage emotional labour without succumbing to burnout. Furthermore, these theories advocate for approaches that acknowledge and respect the multifaceted identities of clients. This ensures that support is not only effective, but also empathic and mindful of the client's cultural background.

Therefore, support organizations have a responsibility to make the development of policies and training programs that enhance the emotional and professional capabilities of their

employees a top priority. This will enable their employees to navigate the emotional complexities of cultural sensitivity, racial bias, and intersectionality with resilience and competence. It is possible for them to enhance the quality of care that is delivered and to support the well-being of both clients and workers in the demanding yet essential field of disability support work if they take this course of action.

Managing Unanticipated Physical Responses in Disability Support Work

In the field of disability support work, it is of the utmost importance to dig into the intricacies and necessary techniques related with the management of unanticipated physical reaction from clients. Such behaviours, which may include involuntary movements or reflexive actions during regular care roles, create a unique set of challenges that require support workers to possess a nuanced blend of emotional intelligence, physical preparation, and the ability to communicate in a manner that is adaptable.

Unanticipated physical responses can occur in the context of disability assistance for a variety of reasons, including medical illnesses such as muscle spasms and neurological abnormalities, as well as reactions to physical discomfort or emotional stress. It is not only difficult to deal with these responses because they are unpredictable, but they are also difficult to deal with since they might result in possible safety issues for both the client and the caregiver. To effectively address these reactions, it is necessary to have a comprehensive grasp of the individual's medical and psychological history, to maintain a state of constant alertness, and to take a comprehensive approach to the planning of care.

A vivid instance of the difficulties that might arise when attempting to control unplanned bodily responses is the incident that occurred with John, in which he accidentally hit me while I was supporting him to take a sponge bath. John's reaction was not the product of purposeful

activity but rather an involuntary reflex that could have been prompted by discomfort, surprise, or a nerve reaction. John's reaction was not the result of conscious action.

At that precise moment, it was necessary for me to restrain my instant reaction in order to keep the setting calm and under control. My major concerns encompassed ensuring John's safety, providing reassurance, and maintaining my professional composure throughout the situation. A critical component that ensures situations do not escalate and that the dignity of the client is kept is emotional management, which was brought to light by this incident, which highlighted the significance of emotional regulation in the field of disability support work.

As a result of the incident, it became necessary to examine and modify our care practices to improve our ability to foresee and handle responses of this nature. This entailed having conversations about the occurrence with medical specialists and my supervisor to acquire new perspectives and recommendations for how to improve our approach to John's care. To better prepare John for what he was going to experience, we took into consideration several elements, including pre-bath communication tactics, altering the environmental circumstances to provide the highest possible level of comfort, and honing our physical approach to sensitive duties.

Integrating Literature into Managing Unanticipated Physical Responses

The management of unexpected bodily responses is an essential component of caregiving that needs a combination of emotional intelligence, physical readiness, and adaptive communication. This is because the management of these responses is a vital feature of disability support work. The purpose of this thesis is to provide a more in-depth understanding of the implications and best practices for managing such responses, particularly in the context of sudden caregiver roles, risk management in disability support, and the emotional dynamics

involved in caregiving. This thesis integrates these findings with the existing scholarly literature to provide this understanding.

Pereira & Rebelo Botelho (2011) investigated the experiences of sudden informal caregivers who are required to quickly adapt to unforeseen care demands following an unexpected event. Their findings shed light on the emotional and practical issues that these caregivers confront, which are like the experiences of professional caregivers who are dealing with unanticipated physical reactions in the context of disability support. This body of research emphasizes the significance of being well-prepared and flexible, and it suggests that professional caregivers might benefit from receiving structured training and support networks to effectively manage unexpected obstacles.

Yee & Weir (2019) examine a resource that was designed for disability support workers and has an emphasis on ‘enabling risk.’ This resource advocates for a positive approach to risk management, which allows clients to experience growth through the safe taking of risks. This viewpoint is essential for the management of unanticipated physical responses because it lends credence to the concept that caregivers have to be prepared to deal with unforeseen circumstances in a manner that affirms the dignity of the client and encourages them to be independent. The incorporation of this strategy can assist caregivers in making educated decisions that strike a balance between empowering clients and ensuring their safety.

Banks (2016) discusses the function of disability support workers as emotional mediators, particularly in situations that require complicated emotional exchanges between clients and their settings. This is especially true in situations when the clients are interacting with their environments. Banks (2016) highlights the emotional labor involved in managing unanticipated bodily responses by providing insights into the necessary emotional mediation. Caregivers are

required to navigate not just their own emotions, but also the emotions of their clients and other different stakeholders.

Emotional labour in healthcare investigate the emotional labour that is performed by healthcare personnel who are required to maintain a professional detachment in the face of abuse and violence. Their findings are consistent with the emotional difficulties that disability support workers must manage to deal with unexpected physical responses. As a result, they underline the importance of caregivers developing methods to avoid taking violent or unexpected physical reactions personally, which will allow them to preserve emotional resilience and professional competence (Funk et al., 2021).

The incorporation of these studies into the difficulties of controlling unplanned physical responses in the context of disability support work highlights the multifaceted character of this component of providing care. The existing body of research offers a comprehensive framework that may be utilized to comprehend the ways in which readiness, risk management, emotional mediation, and resilience connect within the specific context of disability assistance.

Navigating Power Dynamics and Emotional Labour in Disability Support Work

Navigating power dynamics in disability support work involves managing the delicate balance between the authority inherent in the caregiver role and the empowerment of clients. This theme delves into the emotional labour required to maintain a professional yet empathetic demeanor while ensuring that clients feel respected and autonomous. The experience with Alex, a client with cerebral palsy and a sharp intellect, serves as a poignant illustration of these challenges. Alex's frustration over perceived encroachments on his autonomy highlighted the intricate power dynamics at play and the significant emotional labour involved in managing such situations effectively.

In the caregiver-client relationship, power dynamics often arise due to the inherent dependency of clients on support workers for daily tasks. This dependency can create tensions, particularly when clients feel that their autonomy is being undermined. The incident with Alex, where he became upset over a suggested transfer method, exemplifies this tension. Although the suggestion was made with the intent of ensuring his safety and comfort, Alex perceived it as a threat to his independence. This situation underscores the need for caregivers to validate their clients' expertise in their own care and actively involve them in decision-making processes. By doing so, support workers can help mitigate feelings of powerlessness and foster a sense of empowerment.

Managing emotional responses is crucial when navigating power dynamics, as caregivers must often suppress their initial reactions to maintain a supportive and professional demeanor. During Alex's frustration, I engaged in deep acting, aligning my internal emotions with an empathetic response to reassure him that his preferences were respected. This approach required significant emotional labour, as I had to balance my professional responsibilities with a genuine desire to support Alex's autonomy. Effective emotional regulation not only aids in de-escalating potential conflicts but also fosters a more collaborative and trusting relationship between the caregiver and the client.

Open and collaborative communication is essential in addressing power imbalances and ensuring that clients feel heard and respected. In Alex's case, asking him to explain his preferred method for transfers and incorporating his input into the care plan helped shift the dynamic from one of authority to partnership. This approach required me to actively listen and validate his concerns, demonstrating that his expertise and preferences were integral to the caregiving process. Client-centered communication strategies enhance the sense of control and

empowerment for clients, contributing to their overall well-being and satisfaction with the care received.

Experiences with power dynamics can lead to significant personal and professional growth for caregivers. The encounter with Alex prompted me to deeply consider the importance of empathy and active listening in care provision. This reflection highlighted the need for ongoing self-assessment and adaptation of caregiving practices based on client feedback. By continuously engaging in reflective practice, caregivers can improve the quality of care they provide and better manage the emotional labour associated with navigating power dynamics. This reflective process is crucial for maintaining emotional resilience and preventing burnout in the demanding field of disability support work.

Power Dynamics Between Management and Support Workers

One significant aspect of the power dynamics in the field of disability support work is the relationship between management and support workers. Navigating this relationship can be challenging, as it involves balancing the directives and policies set by management with the practical realities and needs of the clients that support workers encounter daily.

In many organizations, there is a clear hierarchical structure where management is responsible for making decisions regarding policies, procedures, and resource allocation, while support workers are on the front lines implementing these directives. This structure can create a power imbalance, where support workers may feel their insights and practical experiences are undervalued or ignored by those in managerial positions. A practical example comes from a situation that highlighted the complexities of power dynamics with management. I was responsible for caring for a client, Emily, who had physical disabilities and required a high level of care. One day, Emily's wheelchair broke down, leaving her unable to move around

independently. This was a significant issue because her mobility was crucial for her daily routines and overall well-being.

I immediately reported the issue to management, expecting a quick resolution. However, the response from management was delayed. When they finally addressed the issue, they informed me that replacing the wheelchair would take several weeks due to budget constraints. This response was unacceptable given Emily's immediate needs, and I felt a deep sense of frustration and helplessness.

The emotional labour involved in this situation was immense. I had to manage my frustration and advocate persistently for Emily's needs while maintaining a professional demeanor. I was caught between following management's protocols and addressing the urgent needs of my client.

Integrating Literature Into Power Dynamics and Emotional Labour

Adams and Bond (2000) note that workers often face delays and bureaucratic hurdles when trying to address urgent client needs, exacerbating their stress and emotional labour. In many organizations, there is a clear hierarchical structure where management is responsible for making decisions regarding policies, procedures, and resource allocation, while support workers are on the front lines implementing these directives. This structure can create a power imbalance, where support workers may feel their insights and practical experiences are undervalued or ignored by those in managerial positions (Fernandopulle, 2021).

Grandey (2000) emphasizes the role of emotional regulation in the workplace, particularly in professions requiring high levels of emotional labour. Grandey's findings support the idea that deep acting, which involves aligning internal emotions with external expressions, is crucial for maintaining genuine and empathetic interactions in caregiving roles. This aligns with

the approach used in managing Alex's frustration, where deep acting helped in maintaining a supportive and empathetic demeanor.

Hochschild (2012) introduced the concept of emotional labour, highlighting the importance of managing one's emotions to meet job demands. In the context of disability support work, this involves not only providing physical care but also managing the emotional complexities of the caregiver-client relationship. Hochschild's framework underscores the significant emotional labour involved in balancing authority with client empowerment, as seen in the case with Alex.

Crenshaw (1991) discusses intersectionality and how overlapping social identities, such as race, gender, and disability, impact individuals' experiences. While the primary focus here is on power dynamics between caregivers and clients, the principles of intersectionality remind us that each client's unique background can influence their perception of autonomy and control. Understanding these nuances is critical for effective client-centered communication and empowerment.

Lu and Guy (2019) examine how emotional labour and performance goals can lead to burnout, especially when there is a lack of organizational support. Their research suggests that without adequate support, caregivers may struggle to manage the emotional demands of their roles effectively, leading to increased stress and burnout. This underscores the importance of providing comprehensive support systems for caregivers to manage the emotional labour involved in navigating power dynamics.

Banks (2016) explores the concept of the disability support worker as an emotional mediator, emphasizing the role of caregivers in managing not only their emotions, but also those of their clients. This dual emotional management is crucial in situations involving power

dynamics, where caregivers must balance their authority with the need to empower clients.

Banks (2016) highlights the importance of emotional intelligence in effectively navigating these challenges.

Gaps in Organizational Support for Emotional Labour in Disability Support Work

Disability support work inherently requires a substantial amount of emotional labour, which can be further intensified by numerous structural and organizational deficiencies. The human anecdotes aptly elucidate the emotional burden experienced by workers as a result of these deficiencies in assistance. This approach utilizes particular experiences to examine these disparities and their effects on the emotional well-being of workers.

Assisting Sarah, who has Down syndrome, frequently compelled me to become deeply emotionally involved. During a certain moment, Sarah encountered significant difficulty with a task, resulting in visible signs of struggle, leading to feelings of frustration and ultimately tears. This occasion necessitated a nuanced equilibrium between understanding and expertise. The emotional labour was significant as I struggled with the dilemma of wanting to relieve her distress while yet encouraging her to tackle problems on her own. The organizational support during these occasions frequently appeared insufficient, with minimal recognition of the emotional intricacies involved in promoting such autonomy.

The process of moving from Ghana to Canada had notable cultural and emotional obstacles, particularly in adjusting to novel methods of providing assistance to persons such as Alex, who had autism. The disparities in communication and engagement styles necessitated significant emotional exertion to adapt and deliver efficient assistance. The lack of organizational support was apparent in the little training or preparation for cultural shifts, which may have alleviated the emotional stress and enhanced the support offered.

Working with Naomi, who desired more autonomy in her everyday tasks, emphasized the subtle cultural aspects of managing and expressing emotions. The pursuit of autonomy in the Canadian culture was an opposite from the communal approach that I was accustomed to in Ghana. The organization failed to take into account these cultural dynamics, which had an impact on how support workers, such as myself, managed the emotional effort required to balance community support with promoting individual autonomy.

Another typical issue was the challenge of managing racial bias while working as a Black support worker. Dealing with racial prejudice from clients such as Peter increased the amount of emotional effort required, making it more difficult. The organization's inability to take proactive measures to acknowledge and reduce these biases resulted in me having to handle these situations mostly on my own, which intensified the emotional impact of these interactions. The necessity for implementing organizational policies and providing training on effectively handling bias and promoting diversity was very apparent.

Finally, my relationship with Ben, where emotional attachments formed, showcased the emotional labour involved in managing such bonds. The organizational support for such dynamics was often inadequate, failing to provide strategies or training on balancing professional boundaries with emotional support, which left me to manage these delicate situations on my own.

Policies and procedures often fail to reflect the realities of day-to-day work, limiting workers' effectiveness and compromising client care. Encouraging worker participation in policy reviews can bridge this gap, allowing for the development of guidelines that are both practical and supportive. Regular feedback mechanisms further ensure that policies remain relevant and responsive to the needs of both workers and clients.

Resource limitations, including inadequate staffing, further exacerbate challenges in disability support work. Effective resource allocation strategies are essential to manage workloads and prevent worker fatigue. Additionally, organizations should actively pursue advocacy efforts to secure adequate funding, ensuring that sufficient resources are available to meet the needs of both clients and staff.

Integrating Literature into Organizational Support for Emotional Labour

It was discovered by Du & Wang (2021) that good management of emotional labour can improve workers' voice behaviours. This finding suggests that when workers feel supported by their organizations, they are more likely to engage positively in their tasks. The importance of organizational support in the management of the emotional labour encountered by disability support workers, such as those emphasized in the encounters with clients like Sarah and Alex, is fundamentally understood by this conclusion, which is vital for understanding the significance of organizational support.

Abresch et al. (2023) investigate the emotional labour that is associated with public health equity work. They highlight the difficulty of regulating personal and professional emotions in domains that require high degrees of empathy and human engagement. In a manner that is analogous to the difficulties encountered by disability support workers who must traverse racial bias and cultural differences in the course of their professional jobs, their study highlights the emotional toll that such labour takes and the necessity of solid support systems.

Aung & Tewogbola (2019) examine the effects that emotional labour has on the health of workers in the workplace. According to the findings of their research, emotional labour that is not well handled might eventually result in serious health problems such as stress and burnout. According to the findings of our research, the experiences of disability support workers are

consistent with this narrative. These workers are confronted with intense emotional situations that could have a negative impact on their health and well-being if they are not supported.

As demonstrated by the scenarios involving Sarah, John, and other individuals, the experiences of workers in the disability assistance sector provide a clear illustration of the enormous emotional labour that is involved in the duties that they perform on a daily basis. When these observations are combined with the findings from Du and Wang (2021), it becomes clear that enhancing organizational support has the potential to improve employee engagement at work and give workers the ability to control the emotional labour more successfully. The provision of this support is essential for the development of a constructive working environment and the promotion of proactive engagement in difficult circumstances.

In addition, the findings of Abresch et al. (2023) are in agreement with the necessity of comprehending and resolving the emotional complexities that are particular to positions that require cultural sensitivity and equity. Workers who are dealing with racial biases or cultural changes require extensive training and organizational policies that recognize and mitigate these unique obstacles. This understanding is particularly crucial for workers who are dealing with these types of challenges.

Finally, the health repercussions that Aung & Tewogbola (2019) observed highlight the critical need for interventions that address the negative effects of emotional labour. When it comes to disability support workers, organizational initiatives that include wellness programs, access to counselling, and regular mental health exams could be useful in lowering the dangers that are associated with these situations.

THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings also engage with theories of advocacy and empowerment, illustrating how these principles are applied in real-world support settings. By aligning practice with the Ethics of Care, this research highlights the relational aspect of disability support work, where the support worker-client relationship can be a dynamic catalyst for empowerment and change. Furthermore, the application of intersectionality theory provides a nuanced understanding of how multiple identities intersect to influence the experiences of both clients and workers, enriching the discourse on culturally competent care.

Building on the work of Hochschild (2012b), who originally conceptualized emotional labour, this research further explores the intersection of emotional labour with advocacy and empowerment within disability support work. This expands the theoretical framework to consider not just the emotional management for personal well-being, but also the strategic use of emotion to advocate for client rights and independence.

This theoretical expansion is supported by literature from authors like Erickson & Grove (2008) who discuss the role of emotional labour in advocating for client autonomy within healthcare settings, arguing that emotional labour is not only about coping internally but also about influencing external perceptions and organizational policies for better client outcomes.

Specifically, in her publications from 2009 and 2011, Eva Feder Kittay delves into the moral obligations and ethical issues that are inherent in the process of providing care for those who have significant cognitive disorders. Her comments on the ethics of care are particularly insightful. The practical situations that disability support workers are confronted with are highly congruent with Kittay's argument for an ethics that recognizes the existence of dependency and interdependence. This theoretical perspective provides a justification for the profound emotional

engagement of workers as an ethical reaction to the dependencies that are characteristic of the relationships that exist between support workers and clients such as Eli. It also highlights the moral necessity of building personal autonomy and empowerment.

As noted by Reindal (2008), “The Social Model of Disability places an emphasis on the idea that disability is not caused by an individual’s impairment or difference but rather by the way in which society is organized” (p. 175). It examines several approaches to reducing obstacles that limit the life options available to people with disabilities.

Studies by Joseph (2007) and Byrne & Mclaughlin (2007) show that within the context of managing unexpected physical responses, this model has the potential to promote a re-evaluation of environmental and organizational structures that may worsen such situations. Some examples of such structures are rigid care routines or physically restricting surroundings.

Additionally, this model promotes behaviours that strengthen the autonomy of individuals with disabilities. It advocates for surroundings and interactions that support the ability of these individuals to express and manage reactions in a natural and secure manner.

To reduce the number of incidents and improve the quality of care, policies should be centred on the creation of surroundings that are both adaptive and inclusive. These environments should be able to satisfy the demands of all clients, including those who have involuntary bodily responses.

CHAPTER VI: CONCLUSION

This research has undertaken a comprehensive examination of the multifaceted role of emotional labour in disability support work, integrating personal experiences with a broad range of academic literature to illuminate the complexities and challenges faced by support workers. By dissecting themes such as emotional labour, advocacy and empowerment, cultural sensitivity, intersectionality, and systemic influences, this thesis provides a nuanced understanding of the dynamics at play in the field of disability support.

The findings from this research highlight the pivotal role of emotional labour in not only managing personal and professional interactions, but also in enhancing client care. Emotional labour, as revealed, extends beyond mere emotional regulation to include strategic emotional engagements that are crucial for advocating for client needs, navigating cultural and interpersonal dynamics, and addressing systemic barriers. These activities are essential for fostering environments where clients feel valued, understood, and empowered to lead more autonomous and fulfilling lives.

The implications for practice and policy are profound. The research highlights the necessity for organizations to develop robust support systems that recognize and mitigate the emotional toll on workers. This includes implementing regular emotional health check-ins, providing comprehensive training in emotional regulation and advocacy, and fostering a workplace culture that values the contributions of support workers. Moreover, policies need to be revisited and revised to ensure they promote rather than hinder the independence and inclusion of

clients, taking into account the insights from frontline workers for more effective implementations.

This study suggests several avenues for further investigation. Longitudinal studies could provide deeper insights into the long-term impacts of emotional labour on workers' health and career trajectories. Additionally, comparative studies across different care settings could illuminate universal strategies that mitigate the challenges of emotional labour, enhancing support across the spectrum of care services. Exploring technological solutions to support emotional labour management could also offer innovative approaches to enhancing worker well-being and client care.

In conclusion, this research contributes to a greater understanding of the integral role of emotional labour in disability support work, advocating for a holistic approach that considers the emotional, cultural, and systemic dimensions of care. By continuing to explore and address these themes, stakeholders can enhance the quality of care provided and improve the working conditions for those in the field, ultimately leading to better outcomes for individuals with disabilities. This study not only enriches the academic discussion, but also provides practical insights for enhancing the well-being and effectiveness of workers, ensuring that disability support remains a compassionate and sustainable profession.

CHAPTER VII: RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Establish Regular Emotional Health Check-Ins

Implement structured emotional health check-ins for support workers as part of regular supervision schedules. These sessions should be conducted by mental health professionals or trained supervisors specializing in occupational health. Regular emotional health check-ins can help identify early signs of emotional fatigue, burnout, or other mental health issues, providing a safe space for workers to express concerns and receive support.

2. Develop Training Programs in Emotional Regulation and Boundary Management

Develop comprehensive training programs focused on emotional intelligence, emotional regulation, and professional boundary management. These programs should include workshops, seminars, and interactive role-playing scenarios. Training support workers in emotional regulation and boundary management equips them to handle the emotional demands of their roles more effectively, leading to improved client interactions and reduced personal stress.

3. Enhance Organizational Policies to Support Emotional Well-being

Revise and implement policies that explicitly address the emotional dimensions of disability support work. Policies should include guidelines for managing emotional incidents, allowing mental health days or support breaks, and developing feedback mechanisms for workers. By institutionalizing support for emotional labour, organizations can foster a more resilient workforce, enhance job satisfaction, and reduce turnover rates.

4. Implement Structured Support Systems

Organizations should implement structured support systems such as regular debriefing sessions, emotional well-being programs, and advocacy training for support workers. Structured

support systems can help workers manage the emotional complexities of their roles more effectively, enhancing their well-being and the quality of care provided to clients.

5. Promote Cultural Competence and Diversity Training

Mandate continuous cultural competence training to ensure that all staff can provide respectful and effective support across diverse cultural contexts. Cultural competence training helps workers navigate cultural and racial dynamics, promoting a more inclusive and supportive environment for both workers and clients.

6. Evaluate and Reform Systemic Policies

Critically evaluate and reform policies to support the autonomy and inclusion of clients, removing unnecessary barriers to independence. Systemic policy reforms can enhance client autonomy and improve the effectiveness of support services, ensuring that clients' rights and preferences are upheld.

7. Advocate for Adequate Resources and Staffing

Actively pursue advocacy efforts to secure adequate funding and resources to manage workloads and prevent worker fatigue. Adequate resources and staffing are essential to managing the emotional and physical demands of disability support work, reducing the risk of burnout among workers.

8. Foster a Supportive Workplace Culture

Create a workplace culture that recognizes and values the emotional contributions of support workers, providing recognition and support for the emotional aspects of their roles. A supportive workplace culture can enhance job satisfaction, reduce the risk of burnout, and improve the overall well-being of support workers.

9. Involve Support Workers in Decision-Making Processes

Encourage active involvement of support workers in organizational decision-making processes, particularly those that directly affect their roles and responsibilities. Establish regular forums, committees, or advisory groups where support workers can share their insights and feedback on policies, practices, and changes within the organization. Involving support workers in decision-making empowers them, ensuring their perspectives and expertise are considered, leading to more practical and effective organizational strategies that enhance both worker satisfaction and client care.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Limitations

1. The subjective nature of autoethnography is evident in this study. Since the research relies on the researcher's personal experiences and perceptions, the findings are inherently subjective. This reliance on individual experiences can limit the generalizability of the results, as the researcher may not fully capture the broader trends or experiences of other disability support workers. The deeply personal context of the researcher's experiences might not reflect the diverse realities faced by professionals in different settings or with different backgrounds.
2. Another limitation is the lack of external validation. Autoethnographic research does not typically involve a wide range of participants or viewpoints, which can constrain the applicability of the conclusions drawn. The insights gained are based on the researcher's individual narrative without corroborative perspectives from other professionals in the field. This lack of multiple viewpoints may reduce the robustness of the findings and their relevance to other contexts.
3. Bias is an inherent risk in introspective methodologies like autoethnography. The researcher's beliefs, values, and emotions can influence the analysis and interpretation of the data, potentially compromising the objectivity and balance of the research. This personal bias might skew the findings, affecting their reliability and applicability to broader populations.

Future Research Directions

1. Future research should consider incorporating multiple perspectives to enrich the findings and enhance their representativeness. Involving other disability support workers in a collaborative study would provide a broader range of experiences and viewpoints. This approach could deepen the understanding of emotional labour in disability support work, making the findings more robust and widely applicable.
2. Conducting longitudinal autoethnographic studies could also provide valuable insights. Observing changes and developments in the emotional experiences of disability support workers over time would offer a dynamic view of how emotional labour evolves. Such studies could reveal how interventions impact worker well-being and effectiveness in the long term, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges and potential solutions.
3. Expanding the research to different cultural settings is another important direction. Cross-cultural studies would explore how cultural factors influence emotional labour in disability support work, helping to tailor support systems that are culturally appropriate and more effective. Understanding cultural variations can lead to more inclusive and effective support strategies.
4. Integrating autoethnography with other qualitative or quantitative methods could also be beneficial. A mixed-methods approach would validate and expand upon the findings, offsetting the limitations of autoethnography alone. This comprehensive approach could provide a more rounded understanding of emotional labour in disability support work.
5. Researching the impact of specific interventions designed to manage emotional labour is crucial. Investigating the efficacy of mindfulness training, peer support systems, and other strategies would help assess their practical effectiveness. This research would inform the

development of targeted interventions to mitigate the challenges identified through autoethnographic research, ultimately improving the well-being and effectiveness of disability support workers.

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