

Women in Rehabilitation: Publication Track Records

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Myers, J. E. & Wedl, L. (1985). Women in rehabilitation: Publication track records. *Journal of Rehabilitation*, 51(4), 63-66.

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Abstract:

Each issue of 3 major rehabilitation journals published during the past 10 years was reviewed to determine the extent of refereed article authorship of by women. The results indicate that although women are becoming more frequent authors of journal articles, they still have a long way to go to achieve numbers of publications equal to their male counterparts. An additional finding of the study was a dearth of professional articles addressing the needs of disabled women.

Article:

Women comprise slightly more than one half of the population of the United States (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1983), and today more than half of all women work (Hollingsworth & Mastroberti, 1983). Though the trend is toward aspirations for higher level occupations, women today are affected by sex role stereotyping in career planning (Holcomb, 1984). Hollingsworth and Mastroberti (1983) reported a tendency for women to be locked into traditionally feminine occupations, such as sales and clerical work. Teaching, nursing, and similar "nurturing" functions have long been the domain of the working female.

Women have been involved in rehabilitation since its inception; however, rehabilitation "is usually perceived as a program developed and directed primarily by men" (Rehab Brief, 1983, p.3). A recent study by Perlman and Arneson (1982) revealed that the ratio of male to female counselors in state rehabilitation agencies is two to one, a figure hardly reflective of the current proportion of women in the population. Even more impressive was their finding that the ratio of male to female administrators in these settings was four to one. Datoff (1983) reported an even more restrictive figure: only 20% of supervisory and administrative positions in state rehabilitation agencies are filled by women. She also noted that 38% of direct service workers are female.

According to the recent directory of the National Council on Rehabilitation Education (NCRE Directory, 1984), approximately 23% of rehabilitation faculty members in university settings are female. Within educational settings, the issue of lower pay for women reflects the situation found elsewhere in the labor force (Datoff, 1983). In general, men earn larger salaries than women, have more responsibilities for budgets and decision making, and are more often promoted and advanced in employment (Datoff, 1983; Hollingsworth & Mastroberti, 1983).

While obviously inequitable for women in general, the current lack of opportunities for women in the labor force is intensified for disabled women. They have less access to jobs, less opportunity for advancement, and receive lower pay than their male counterparts (Hollingsworth & Mastroberti, 1983; Thurer, 1982). Within rehabilitation, their special needs simply have not been addressed (Thurer, 1982). The dearth of literature concerning disabled women has been studied recently, and is seen as a worldwide problem (Ellen, 1983). Holcomb (1984) noted that only 31 articles concerning disabled women were found in a search of both women's issues and rehabilitation. Interestingly, the search uncovered 17,500 articles on disabled people in general and 3,300 on women without regard to disability. In effect, "the current status of women in rehabilitation is a microcosm of the general status of women today. One implication is that more women in leadership roles in rehabilitation might lead to improved outcomes for women clients." (Rehab Brief, 1983, p.3).

The issue of opportunities and roles for women in rehabilitation is fairly new, in spite of a rich tradition of female involvement in rehabilitation programs (Rehab Brief, 1983; Walker, 1982). The involvement of women is based on the continued expansion of professional roles for women, and the increasing opportunities for them in professional leadership positions (Barker, 1982). The National Rehabilitation Association (NRA) established a Task Force on Women in 1979, and continues to support the task force in seeking ways to achieve sex equity in rehabilitation programs, from the dual standpoints of consumers and providers of services.

An important function of the NRA task force has been the generation of information concerning the status of women within the profession, as well as recommendations for changing that status in desirable ways. Datoff (1983), for example, indicated that women could improve their position by earning more academic degrees; participating in inservice training programs in the areas of management and administration; increasing visibility through professional presentations, workshop presentations, and increased involvement in professional associations; and forming a national network of contact persons who can assist women in achieving their goals.

One aspect of rehabilitation service and professionalism that has received little attention to date is that of publications by women, especially refereed publications in the professional literature. The present study was undertaken to survey the professional literature in rehabilitation to determine the nature and extent of publications by women. It was hypothesized, based on the information presented earlier, that the involvement of women in publication efforts is substantially less than that of men. This type of baseline information is needed to effect change and to achieve the goal defined by Thurer (1982) that ... "Sexism in rehabilitation should become a non sequitur" (p.197).

Methodology

Publications by women were examined in each of three major rehabilitation journals spanning the 10 year time period from January, 1973 through December, 1983. The three journals chosen for inclusion in the study were the **Journal of Rehabilitation**, (JOR), **Journal of Applied Rehabilitation Counseling**, (JARC), and the **Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin** (RCB). A variety of information was sought in several major areas, from a review of each issue.

First, the total number of articles in each journal over the 10 years studied were analyzed, comparing the number of articles authored by men alone or in combination with other men, women alone or in combination with other women, and women in combination with men. Then, each issue of every journal was reviewed in order to determine whether the editor, assistant editor, and/or guest editor were male or female, as well as the number of males and females on the editorial boards.

Each article having a woman as an author was examined in detail. The content of each article was identified according to the 12 core curriculum areas for preparation in rehabilitation established by the Council on Rehabilitation Education (1983). Each article was examined to determine if women, especially disabled women, were part of the target population studied. The types of articles authored by women were classified according to the following categories: research, state-of-the-art, literature review, trends, methodology and techniques, issues, and descriptive literature.

Demographic data were then compiled to identify the education, position, and geographic location of the 356 women authors included in the study. The regional groupings of states as designated by the NRA were used to determine the geographic location of the authors. Frequency tabulations were compiled using standard statistical programs.

Results

A total of 131 issues of journals were reviewed for the 10 year period from 1973 to 1983, including 49 issues of JOR, 42 issues of RCB, and 40 issues of JARC. The total number of refereed articles included in these issues was 841. A breakdown of these articles according to the gender of the authors is shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Refereed Articles, 1973-1983

Journal	Article Authors							
	Male		Female		Both Male & Female		Total Refereed Articles	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
JOR	210	63	67	20	57	17	334	40
JARC	185	75	29	12	32	13	246	29
RCB	161	62	34	13	66	25	261	31
Total	556	66	130	16	155	18	841	100

As can be seen in Table 1, the total number of refereed articles written by males was 556, or 66% of the total; those written by females numbered 130, or 16%; and 155 (18%) had joint male-female authorship. Therefore, the number of articles written by women alone or in combination with either men or women was 285, or 34% of the total. The percentages of refereed articles for each journal written by women only were as follows: 20% of the JOR articles, 13% of the RCB articles, and 12% of the JARC articles. The percentages of articles jointly authored by men and women for the three journals, respectively, were 17%, 25%, and 13%.

Ninety-six (73%) of the total 131 issues reviewed had male editorship. Seventy-eight (60%) of these issues had a male assistant editor, 33 (25%) had a female assistant, and 20 (15%) did not list an assistant editor. Of the 1,049 editorial board members listed in 107 issues (24 issues of JOR did not list board membership because the journal was not refereed until around 1978), 912 (87%) were males and 137 (13%) females. There were a total of 117 guest editors during the ten year period. Of these, 109 (93%) were males and 8 (7%) females.

Of the 285 articles authored by women, singly or in combination, 166 (58%) focused primarily on 4 of the 12 core content areas. These areas included rehabilitation history (55 articles or 19%), counseling theory and techniques (43 articles or 15%), psychology (36 articles or 13%), and service delivery (32 articles or 11%). The other 8 core areas were addressed in varying degrees in each of the remaining 119 articles. The area least often addressed by women authors was independent living rehabilitation services with only 6 articles (2% being written in this area).

An examination of the content of all 841 refereed articles further revealed that only 51 (6%) of the total number of articles published addressed issues related to disabled women. And of the 285 refereed articles, which included women as authors, only 7 (2%) specifically addressed the needs of disabled women.

When analyzed by type of article, the data showed that a substantial portion of the articles were reports of research (N = 112, or 39% of the 285 articles authored by women). Articles dealing with methodology represented 20% of the total (N = 56), as did articles that focused on issues and/or philosophical ideas. Descriptions of programs and practices accounted for 11% (N = 32) of the articles, while the remaining articles were trends in rehabilitation (19 or 6%), state-of-the-art (8 or 3%), and literature reviews (2 or 1%).

Information concerning the professional preparation of the women authors was not included in 126 of the journals, or 35% of the total. Those that did include this data indicated that 75 (21%) of the women authors had a Ph.D., 11 (3%) had an Ed.D., 64 (18%) had a M.S. in rehabilitation, 42 (12%) had a M.S. in a field other than rehabilitation, 33 (9%) had a B.A. or B.S., 3 (1%) had a R.N., and 2 (1%) had a degree in another field.

An examination of the positions held by the women authors revealed that approximately one-half of the women in the study were involved in higher education (see Table 2). Table 2 shows that 92 (26%) of these women were college professors and 73 (21%) were graduate students. Those employed by state bureaus of vocational rehabilitation accounted for 14% of the sample (N = 49). A total of 36 (10%) were facility administrators, 26 (7%) were involved in research, 17 (5%) were facility staff members, 16 (5%) were rehabilitation supervisors, 13 (3%) were state administrators, and 11 (3%) had positions as private rehabilitation counselors.

Table 1
Positions Held by Women Authors

Position	Journal			Total	%
	JOR	RCB	JARC		
College Professor	41	34	17	92	26
Graduate Student	33	22	18	73	21
Employed by State					
BVR Program	16	18	15	49	14
Facility Administrator	18	12	6	36	10
Researcher	6	14	6	26	7
Rehab Supervisor	5	7	4	16	5
Facility Staff Member	11	4	2	17	5
State Administrator	8	3	2	13	3
Private Rehabilitation					
Counselor	5	3	3	11	3
Data Not Available	15	0	8	23	6
Totals	158	117	81	356	100

Geographic data were available for 343 (96%) of the women authors included in the study. Seventy-three (21%) were from the Great Lakes Region, 72 (21%) from the Northeast Region, 67 (20%) from the Southeast Region, 53 (15%) from the Mid-Atlantic Region, 31 (9%) from the Pacific Region, 28 (8%) from the Southwest Region, and 19 (6%) from the Great Plains Region.

Discussion

It is apparent from this study that women have been underrepresented both as authors and in positions of editorial leadership. Although women represent more than 50% of the population and have been involved in rehabilitation since its beginning, they have only been included in the authorship of 34% of the 841 articles included in this study. This percentage drops considerably when the number of articles authored by women alone is compared with those written by men only. Stripped of co-authorship with men, women authored only 130 (16%) of the refereed articles compared with the 556 (66%) that were authored by men alone.

On one hand, the significant difference between articles authored by men compared with those by women could simply reflect the fact that there are more men employed in the field of rehabilitation than women. On the other hand, it could raise questions such as: Have women been writing but failed to have their articles accepted for publication? If their articles have not been accepted, has it been because the content seemed irrelevant to the editors or that the writing did not meet the standards required for publication? Or does it mean that perhaps women have simply not been publishing in rehabilitation journals because rehabilitation continues to be perceived as a program developed and directed primarily by men (Perlman & Arneson, 1982)? Whatever the reasons, women are far behind men in professional publications.

A cursory glance at the editorial leadership of the journals published between 1973 and 1983, suggests that rehabilitation is a field primarily directed by men. Women have been greatly outnumbered in every aspect of editorial leadership, perhaps because they were not asked to serve in those capacities, were not considered capable of leadership, or were not felt to be knowledgeable about the field of rehabilitation. On the other hand, they may not have sought such positions or may have been asked to serve but refused for any number of reasons. Whatever the reasons, women have not as yet made inroads into the arena of editorial leadership.

Several interrelated core areas emerged as those most frequently addressed in the articles written by women. Of these core areas, articles addressing the history, philosophy, and legal aspects of rehabilitation appeared most frequently (55 or 19%). The emphasis on this core area by women authors seems to reflect a new consciousness of the responsibilities that counselors and service providers have for their clients. The manner of providing these services seems to be reflected in the core areas of those articles that address counseling theories and techniques (43 or 15%), psychology (36 or 13%), and service delivery (32 or 11%).

The core area least often addressed was independent living rehabilitation services (6 or 2%). The fact that so few articles were related to this area may reflect both the newness of the concept of independent living and/or that women have not had much experience in the provision of independent living services.

The content of the articles was also examined to see how many women wrote articles concerned with the problems and issues confronting women with disabilities. Since only 7 (2%) of the articles specifically addressed disabled women, perhaps women themselves do not realize that the problems of disabled women can be quite different from the problems confronting disabled men. If women themselves are not aware of the unique problems of disabled women, it should not come as a surprise that some men are oblivious to these needs.

A look at the total number of articles written by women reveals that many (39%) were research articles. Some questions that could be raised include whether women actually wrote more research articles than other types, or whether journals were more likely to accept this type of article. If the latter is the case, some women may have written research articles to be more assured of acceptance for publication. It is interesting to note that over 50% of the articles written by women and published in RCB were research articles.

An accurate picture of the relationship between the education of the authors and the articles published was difficult to obtain since educational information was not available for over one-third of the women authors. However, based upon the available data, over 54% of the women who published articles had either a doctorate or a master's degree. All of the women included in the study had at least a R.N. or a B.A./B.S. degree.

Women in educational settings also tended to publish more than women in other positions and settings. Almost half of the women who published articles between 1973 and 1983 were either college professors or graduate students. Perhaps the "publish or perish" dictum that is a reality for many college professors causes persons in education positions to publish and keep publishing. In addition, the encouragement and co-authorship of colleagues and mentors might account for the large percent of publications coming from women in educational settings. Private rehabilitation counselors published the least number of articles, perhaps because the private setting offers the opposite motivators: direct service to clients rather than to the discipline, a lack of colleagues interested in publishing, and minimal encouragement to publish.

Finally, a look at where the women authors come from may also have some relationship to educational centers of leadership and support. Three regions had an almost equal number of women authors. These three regions include the Great Lakes, led by the states of Illinois and Wisconsin; the Northeast, led by New York; and the Southeast, with Florida producing the leading numbers of women authors. The publishing authors from each of these regions came primarily from university settings. Thus, an encouraging educational setting seems to be more directly related to the number of women who publish articles than the population or size of the state or region.

Conclusion

Women are only beginning to make inroads into rehabilitation publications. And the lack of attention given to disabled women in rehabilitation literature might be due, at least in part, to the limited involvement of women in research and publication.

Publication in rehabilitation represents an area where women can achieve because of the anonymity available through blind reviews, if for no other reason. Although women are not publishing as much as men, at the present time, it cannot be determined why this situation exists. Perhaps women do not feel prepared to publish in professional journals unless they are working in educational settings. Or, perhaps there are more incentives for publication in these settings. The lack of attention to the needs of disabled women in the literature, even among women authors, deserves close examination.

Whatever the reasons underlying the disproportionate number of publications by women in the rehabilitation literature, the impact of this situation results in continued sexism, a lack of adequate female role models, and a failure to attend to the needs of disabled women.

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