



An analysis of the Rio +20 discourse using an ability expectation lens

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Abstract

The aim of the study was to content analyse documents related to Rio +20 through an ability expectation lens and to evaluate the impact of the exhibited ability expectations on marginalized groups, specifically people with disabilities. An ability expectations implies that certain abilities are seen essential within a discourse¹. Content analysis of academic and grey literature sources covering Rio+20 using the software's Atlas-ti and knowledge share. Academic databases being used include EBSCO; 275 articles have been found relevant (English language, not books and PDF available). Non-academically sources included the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) Reporting Services and Google. Data collection continued until the end of August 2012 in order to include the literature post-dating Rio+20, which offers a rich source of newspaper articles. From the articles we can identify certain ability expectations (e.g. the ability to consume, the ability to work, etc.) which come with certain consequences, such as the lack of development in certain economies due to exclusion. Exclusion can be detrimental to a population, leading to issues with health, poverty, and education. The authors submit that this may lead to further marginalization of certain groups. This marginalization can lead to even greater health, poverty and education issues for these marginalized groups. Using the ableism lens reveals ability preferences, which may in turn reveal the risk of marginalization and discrimination. This research is beginning to reveal the potential issues which may arise in the climate change discourse.

References

1. People with disabilities and social determinants of health discourses. Canadian journal of public health. 2011. *Revue canadienne de santé publique* 102(4):317.