

Examining The Inclusion of Persons with Visual Impairment in The Formal Employment Sector in Uganda

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Abstract

This article examines the inclusion of persons with visual impairments (PwVIs) in the formal employment sector in Uganda. It examines their experiences while searching for jobs, the attitudes of employers towards their employment, and their working conditions. The article is based on research on access to and retention of PwVIs in formal employment in Uganda. The research was examined within the theoretical perspectives of disability as a social model and human rights issues. A qualitative research design using a phenomenological approach was applied to obtain information through interviews. Ten employees with visual impairment in the formal employment sector were possessively selected. Results indicated that employers did not have enough knowledge and specialized manpower to employ PwVI. They also lacked reasonable accommodation provisions for employees with visual impairment. In addition, employers had negative attitudes towards PwVI, which led to discrimination, exploitation, abuse, and humiliation.

Artikel ini meneliti inklusifitas bagi penyandang disabilitas netra di sektor ketenagakerjaan formal di Uganda. Artikel ini meneliti pengalaman mereka saat mencari pekerjaan, sikap penyedia kerja terhadap pekerjaan mereka, dan kondisi kerja mereka. Artikel ini didasarkan pada penelitian tentang akses dan retensi penyandang disabilitas netra di sektor ketenagakerjaan formal di Uganda. Penelitian ini diperiksa dalam perspektif teoritis tentang disabilitas sebagai model sosial dan isu-isu hak asasi manusia. Desain penelitian kualitatif menggunakan pendekatan fenomenologis diterapkan untuk mendapatkan informasi melalui wawancara. Sepuluh karyawan dengan disabilitas netra di sektor ketenagakerjaan formal dipilih secara positif. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa penyedia kerja tidak memiliki pengetahuan terkait ketenagakerjaan disabilitas yang cukup untuk mempekerjakan Penyandang disabilitas netra. Mereka juga tidak memiliki ketentuan akomodasi yang layak untuk karyawan dengan disabilitas netra. Selain itu, penyedia kerja memiliki sikap negatif terhadap penyandang disabilitas netra, yang mengarah pada diskriminasi, eksploitasi, penyalahgunaan, dan penghinaan.

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A. Introduction

Persons with visual impairments (PwVIs) are among Persons with Disabilities (PwDs). Fifteen percent (15%) or about 1 billion people in the world have a disability (WHO, 2014), of which 285 million have visual impairment. In Uganda, 14% of the population has a disability, of which 1.4 million have visual impairments (UBOS, 2019).

Uganda's strategy towards disability inclusion, including in employment, is impressive (Emong, 2014). As such, there is increasing awareness about disability, progressive disability laws and policies, representation of PwDs in legislative and policy-making organs of government, and advocacy for inclusion by disability organizations. The Ugandan disability laws and policies, such as the Constitution (1995) and the Persons with Disabilities Act (PwDA) 2020, guarantee non-discrimination against PwDs in employment and require employers to provide a conducive and accessible working environment. In particular, according to qualified PwDs: the affirmative action in recruitment, including statement in the job advert, which encourages PwDs to apply for the job; reasonable accommodation of individualized needs during recruitment and in perform job or tasks; and also providing them with assistive devices and auxiliary services they require in employment.

Estimates from UBOS (2019) point out that about 1000 students with disabilities are joining universities and other tertiary education levels (UBOS, 2019). This translates to similar numbers of more PwDs annually gaining qualifications required in formal employment. This therefore means that the employers should be ready to employ the qualified PwDs and as well as providing them with a conducive and accessible working environment guaranteed by the disability laws.

Theoretical Framework

Disability and discrimination in Employment: The theoretical argument of this article is grounded on three facts about disability-inclusive employment in Uganda.

- 1) Conceptualization of disability influences individual's attitudes towards PwDs. These attitudes are based on entrenched beliefs and assumptions about disability. If an individual's attitudes are negative, it leads to discriminatory acts in all aspects of life, including employment, hence, a significant barrier. Therefore, awareness of what disability is will potentially contribute to having disability inclusive work environment.
- 2) A right to employment and a right to non-discrimination in employment are both guaranteed as fundamental rights, and also disability-based discrimination in employment is prohibited in the same laws (Articles 2, 5, and 27 of the UNCRPD (2006) and section 9 (Person with Disabilities Act (PwDA), 2020) (Uganda Government Gazette, 2020; UNCRPD, 2006).

- 3) A recognition that having a job is closely linked to better health, well-being, self-esteem, and social inclusion ((Wickenden et al., 2020).

However, as discussed in the introduction section, access to and retention in employment is a challenge to PwDs as compared to their counterparts without a disability. PwDs have limited access to paid employment; 80% of PwDs of working age are out of work, and those who work often receive lower salaries, have fewer opportunities for promotion, and are at greater risk of becoming unemployed (Griffiths et al., 2020). This means PwDs are largely discriminated against in employment and arguably because of how disability is being conceptualized. Disability-based discrimination is explored below and followed by the conceptualization of disability.

Discrimination on the basis of disability: Disability-based discrimination in employment is articulated in Article 2 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and Section 9 (PwDA, 2020). In Article 2 of the UNCRPD, disability-based discrimination in employment refers to any exclusion or preference made on the basis of disability that directly or indirectly denies or limits a person with disability's enjoyment of a right to employment on an equal basis with others. It's further interpreted by the UNCRPD GC 6 in par. 18 to refer to any form of discrimination, including direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, and failure to provide reasonable accommodation or harassment in employment. Each is briefly explained below:

Direct discrimination: PwDA (2020) in Uganda provides that, during employment, direct discrimination occurs when an employer intentionally treats an employee with disability less favorably than other employees without disability in the similar working environment, either at the recruitment stage or/and during employment.

Indirect discrimination: Deriving from the commentaries on the concept of equality and non-discrimination, it can be stated that indirect discrimination in employment for PwDs is non-intentional discrimination. It occurs when employers' laws, policies, or practices appear neutral at face value but disproportionately impact an employee with a disability (UNCRPD GC Para. 18).

Denial of reasonable accommodation: Reasonable accommodation in employment means the necessary and appropriate modifications and adjustments accorded to an employee with a disability to avoid disadvantaging him/her in employment. It can either be reactive or proactive in nature.

Harassment on the basis of disability: Harassment in employment on grounds of disability are actions, words, or unwanted conduct directly or indirectly that violate the dignity of PwDs, such as creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive work environment.

The Concept Disability: the medical or individual model of disability perceives people with disability as 'abnormal,' incapable, dependents, and even burdensome. It equates disability to inability because it locates a disability within an individual, not the environment the person with impairment lives. This view of disability perpetuates negative stereotyping of people with disability, leading to direct discrimination in employment.

The social model of disability acknowledges the presence of impairment in a disability. However, it distinguishes impairment from a disability. It argues that disability occurs when an environmental barrier disables the person with impairment. It, therefore, views disability as a social construct arising from the economic and social disadvantage people with disability are subjected to ((Barnes & Mercer, 2005; Oliver, 2013). In light of employment, people with impairments are disabled by the work environment, not the necessary impairment the person has. This includes negative attitudes, inaccessible environment or information, insensitive policies, practices and criteria disadvantaging people with disabilities in recruitment and work. Therefore, the conceptualization of disability as a social construct can potentially lead to the avoidance of indirect discrimination of PwDs in employment. It focuses on change of attitudes, provision of reasonable accommodation, affirmative action practices, and ensuring accessibility of physical environment as well as access to information for PwDs.

The human rights model of disability sees disability as a social construct, part of human diversity, and as one of the grounds for discrimination. The adoption of the UNCRPD (2006) reaffirms and strengthens disability as a human rights issue (Degener, 2016). Therefore, in employment, impairment should not be a basis for the restriction or denial of employment for PwDs. Thus, disability policies and laws should consider the diversity among PwDs (UNCRPD GC 6, par.9).

Statement of the problem: Despite the positive policy developments mentioned above, many qualified PwDs find it almost impossible to access employment on an equal basis with others. The unemployment rate in Uganda is high, and coupled with negative perceptions towards PwDs, getting a job is a real challenge. A job, especially in formal employment, is rarely accessed by PwD through merit. Sometimes, it involves connections from friends and relatives, and in some cases, it may involve bribery. It becomes even more complicated when they have to struggle for the fewer positions available. A report by Humanity and Inclusion (2016) indicated that PwDs in 24 developing African countries are denied one of their fundamental rights – the right to work (GAATES, 2016; Nyombi & Kibandama, 2014). Further to that, during employment, they are exploited by paying them less than other employees without disabilities and employed in the lowest-status jobs.

Whereas all categories of PwDs are experiencing exclusion and discrimination in employment in Uganda, arguably, PwVIs are among the most marginalized in this inequality (Cheshire, 2017). The unemployment rate among PwVI of working age is 66% (RNIB, 2012), and only one in three registered PwVI of working age are in paid employment (Saunders et al., 2012). For those who are employed, the majority experience an unfavorable work environment, which they have to bear for the sake of maintaining the job (Iyundhu et al., 2021).

This paper, therefore, explores how formal employment is inclusive of PwVI, pointing out their experiences in searching for jobs, the attitudes of employers towards their employment, and their working conditions.

B. Methods

The study intends to portray the practices in formal employment that enable PwVI to perform their tasks like any other employee. A qualitative research design using a phenomenological approach was most suitable for the study as it explored in-depth information about the inclusion of PwVI in employment (Tenny et al., 2023). Phenomenology research explores the experiences from the individual's perspective (Cleland, 2017). It essentially looks into the 'lived experiences' of the participants and aims to examine how and why participants behaved in a certain way from their perspective. (Tenny et al., 2023).

The study population comprised PwVI, particularly the (blind) in the formal employment sector in six districts of Uganda. Blind people are considered to be those with visual acuity of 6/60 or less in the better eye with the best correction (WHO, 2021). Semi-structured interviews were developed. Ten participants, five male and five female, were selected purposely. Data was collected using semi-structured interviews. Information from the participants was recorded using an audio recorder, supplemented by note-taking. Data was analyzed as follows: interviews were transcribed, then data was coded and developed into themes/concepts according to the research questions (Noble & Smith, 2014). Table 1 demonstrates the details of the participants.

Table 1: Showing details of participants

Participants	Age	Gender	Ed. Level	District	Location
1 - P1	30	Female	Diploma	Masaka	Rural
2 - P2	28	Male	Bachelors	Kampala	Urban
3 - P3	38	Female	Bachelors	Oyam	Rural
4 - P4	40	Female	Diploma	Igaanga	Rural
5 - P5	34	Male	Masters	Kampala	Urban
6 - P6	40	Female	Bachelors	Kampala	Urban
7 - P7	47	Male	PhD	Kampala	Urban
8 - P8	32	Female	Certificate	Mubende	Rural
P 9 - P9	45	Male	Bachelors	Kamuli	Rural
10 - P10	35	Male	Certificate	Mubende	Rural

Source: Researcher

Ethical and validity considerations

The study was reviewed and approved by an accredited ethics committee in Uganda - The AIDS Support Organization Research and Ethics Committee [Ref: Protocol: #TASOREC/014/2020-UG-REC-009]. Informed consent to interview and record the participants' voices was sought from each participant, and permission to interview them was sought from their employers. To protect the participants from victimization by the employers, the interview venue was free from any chance of the information being recorded by any person other than the researchers. Confidentiality of obtained information was adhered to, and participants were assured anonymity. For example, individuals were not easily identified by their names, but they were identified by numbers.

C. Results

1. Experiences of Getting a Job in the Formal Employment Sector

The study sought to explore the experiences of PwVI in getting a job in the formal employment sector in Uganda. Findings are indicated below:

Advertisement:

There was a lack of provision for individual specific needs of PwVI by employers. The application process (advert, shortlisting, interviews) all lacked information in accessible formats, particularly Braille, that could be accessed by candidates with visual impairment, as illustrated below:

The advert was in a newspaper and no Braille format. (P7)

The advert appeared on the notice board at the district headquarters. (P1).

The employers did not consider affirmative action for PwDs as the advert did not specify that they are encouraged to apply. Instead, the advert indicated that a person with experience in management and working with PwDs was encouraged to apply. The study noted that PwVI had difficulties in accessing first-hand information regarding the advert for employment as provided by P6 thus:

I was informed by a friend that jobs for secondary school teachers were advertised in newspapers.

PwVI also had difficulties resulting from inappropriate mediums of communication by employers during advertisements for jobs when they advertised in newspapers because they are expensive, and they have to depend on other people to read for them. The venue for application submission was not clearly spelt out by the employer. PwVI faced problems concerning the submission of the application forms as follows:

I overheard someone saying that the submission center will not be the place where we picked the applications, but at the National Celebration playground. (P6).

Application

The study identified that PwVI had challenges filling hard copies of application forms and had to submit soft copies by email, although this was not provided for by the employer, there by reducing their chances of succeeding in getting jobs. (P7).

Selection of employees

The study identified that PwVI faced challenges in getting application feedback. The employers did not clearly specify how and when the shortlist would be communicated to the applicants thus:

Although we indicated our email addresses and telephone numbers on the application forms, I kept checking my email and also waiting for a telephone call for the interview but in vain. Sometimes I could go to check physically... The fourth time when I went to check the shortlist was at the notice board but I had to pay someone to check for my name from the long list. (P6).

Interviews

The study identified that while PwVI appreciated the oral interviews, there was a lack of support for the individual needs of PwVI in written interviews; for example, there were no Brailled copies of the written questions for the interviews, and had to answer those questions using the same amount of time like others who were sighted thus:

The written interview had a set of mathematics questions and quite challenging for me because I did not have specialized equipment such as a talking calculator for solving mathematics questions. (P7)

In another written interview, the questions that were supposed to be Brailled for PwVI were instead read by someone, and PwVI responded orally. This form of interview was also challenging as there was little time for thinking. Similarly, in public service, the aptitude test was not presented in Braille format and, therefore, required one to read questions on a paper and fill in the gaps with answers. While the interviewer insisted that PwVI had to write in Braille, there was nobody in the district who could transcribe work from Braille to print. Following this dilemma thus:

The interviewers asked me what alternative I had. I informed them that a person can read for me the questions, I provide the answers and the person fills for me the answers on the form. (P1)

Participants expressed that some responses they experienced during interviews were disappointing, frustrating, and discouraging. Thus:

After responding to all the questions during the interview, the human resource officer said they cannot work with blind people. Do you also study? How will you read and record whether a person is HIV positive or negative? P1

...you are a good candidate and have performed very well in the interviews. But I will not take you because of your disability. P2.

Job placements

Job placement of PwVI was identified to be a problem for both employers and PwVI. This was exhibited by some employers when they took longer periods to place PwVI than their non-disabled counterparts in respective working destinations and also placed them in remote areas as follows:

I was first given an appointment letter and informed that a posting letter will follow later. We were three, and two were posted to the two sub-counties within the town. My posting letter came 8 months after the other two

had received theirs. I was informed that they were still debating where to post me. Later, I was posted to the farthest sub-county out of the three sub-counties.

PwVI met resistance when they were posted as some staff they were supposed to replace harassed them and refused to hand over the office. P1, for example, reported that it took four months for the staff (she was supposed to replace) to hand over the office because the staff gave the excuse that:

People in the community will not love to work with disabled people.

The study made an astounding discovery that, some PwVI who were interviewed and passed the interview but were neither appointed nor placed as reported by P6 thus:

I was not informed when to expect the results of the interview, but I just went to check and I was told that I passed the interview very well but we have nowhere to place you. I went back home and it ended there.

Another discovery was that there was corruption in form of bribery to be considered for job placement. P6 expressed:

My colleagues informed me that I need to organize at least five hundred thousand Uganda shillings for each of the five people on the panel.

The three participants who got jobs easily were favored by special circumstances. P4 and P9 were recruited at a time when there was a high demand for teachers with specialized skills in Special Needs Education. P5 got a job opportunity because of his assertiveness by demonstrating his expert skills in adapted technology to the employer, who was impressed and offered him a job. P5 narrates:

They were eager to know how I use a computer when I don't see. I explained the inbuilt micro soft narrator in all computers running windows 2000 that enables a computer to talk. I used that opportunity to demonstrate and it started talking. They were excited and I said; wait that is just the beginning! There are so many things that this computer can do. And that was my starting point!

Following his demonstration of abilities, he was given the job opportunity to work in a public relations office in an international organization.

2. Attitudes of Employers Towards the Employment of PwVI

The study sought to find out employers' attitudes towards the employment of PwVI in the formal employment sector. In this paper, attitudes will be expressed in two ways:

a. The way people believe in the ability of PwVI to contribute towards work

Some participants experienced doubt from clients about their work output. P2 Expressed:

While employed as a receptionist, some of the clients used to tease me telling me to open the book and show them the page where they should sign. I decided to leave the visitors' book open with a pen on that page.

Even when he recommended a sighted guide of his choice who was desperately looking for a job, she turned against him and took over his job, not regarding herself as a guide. P2 narrates:

I felt that the guide was a threat to my job as she endeavored to prove to clients that she could perform better than me. This confusion between me and the guide made the organization terminate my services.

b. The way people create the atmosphere to enable PwVI work

Due to the negative attitudes, getting application forms was a struggle and not easy. P1 laments thus:

The secretary for the district service commission asked me whether I would really manage to do the job. She first hesitated to give me the application forms and asked me whether I had the qualifications for the job.

Even during interviews, the interviewers had negative attitude because they did not expect PwVI to pass the interviews as illustrated by P1:

When I correctly answered the question asked, they were amazed! They laughed and expressed excitement: One of them said; we have asked this question to five people before you, but all of them failed it! How do you read newspapers when you are blind?

3. Working Conditions of Employees with Visual Impairment

The study sought to determine the working conditions of employees with visual

impairment in the formal employment sector. In this paper, working conditions were reflected in the following ways:

Remuneration

Employees were faced with exploitation and underpayments, thus:

P2 was informed that he was going to work as an intern. After explaining that he had completed his studies and was no longer a student, he was appointed a volunteer but cautioned that he should introduce himself as a program officer whenever he goes to workshops or official meetings where he would meet sponsors. The only remuneration that was communicated verbally was a transport refund of USD 2.5 per day, paid at the end of the month, and there was no salary. He expressed his frustration:

When you are sick, there is no pay and on weekends and public holidays, no pay. I reached a time when I failed to get transport and lunch because they were not catered for, but just because I had no alternative, I had to bear with the situation.

Similarly, P6 worked with dedication to the satisfaction of employers and workmates. At the time of recruitment, her monthly payment was not clear. They first promised to pay her 34 USD per month. However, after a period of two months without any payment, she was paid only half of it (17 USD) at the end of the second month, yet her non-disabled workmates were paid monthly. She expressed:

They used to make sure that you remain demanding them a month before they pay you another one. For example, they used to pay the salary of March in April, so that if you decide to leave the job, you leave there some balance.

Regarding transport, she was paid less than half a dollar daily, which was only enough to bring her from home to the taxi park. From the taxi park to the school, she was told to walk. When she complained, one of the employers told her:

Meanwhile continue walking, you will get used it.

Auxiliary and support services:

Participants experienced difficulty getting employment because employers considered their need for sighted guides an extra expense. P1 narrates:

During an interview, I was asked; You will need a guide? Who will pay the guide?

After convincing the panel that she was going to use a sighted guide of her own and use part of her salary to pay her, she was offered a job opportunity. One of the participants was given a sighted guide after experiencing physical abuse and reporting the matter to high authorities. P3 narrates thus:

When I asked for a sighted guide, the employer slapped me. I reported the matter to the Minister of Gender, Labor and Social Development (GLSD). He instructed the Commissioner for Disability and Elderly to write a letter to him explaining the rights of PwDs and demanding the district to employ for me a sighted guide.

Provision of information in accessible formats

The study found that only two participants out of ten were provided with facilities to adapt the information to accessible formats. P5 worked in an organization with a positive policy of equal opportunities and non-discrimination. His employer provided the Jaws software program and all the technologies and gadgets required to access information and perform effectively. He expressed:

Even at work, fellow staff members keep wondering how I do my work effectively including navigating through an email.

P9 had an adapted computer and Victor readers: The rest of the participants had no access to information in accessible formats. P1 experienced challenges when offering guidance and counseling services to persons infected with HIV / AIDS. For example, clients could present themselves for counseling, but information about their results was not provided in Braille for her to base her findings on. P1 expressed:

I used to wait to ask some staff members to provide information, but sometimes they were not available in the counseling room. Neither was I briefed about the status of individual clients, yet the information was vital for basing on.

P2 expressed his disappointment:

I presented a need for Jaws and a promise was made but was not fulfilled. I rely on Colleagues to type, read and write for me. I ask anybody around for help but it affects accuracy because I am not sure of what they type.

P3, P4 and P8 lacked most of the basic facilities for use by PwVI like slates, styluses and Braille paper, yet P3 and P4 were teachers whose work is based on information access. P4 expressed:

Throughout the six years on this job, there has been no attempt made for me to have work in accessible formats. I use bright students to mark exercises with my guidance. Sometimes I rely on colleagues who I pay, while others offer to help.

Similarly, P8 was often left out for outreach counseling activities which generated some allowances. She expressed:

I Braille the information I need by myself including new books to the department. However, I miss out some parts because I cannot Braille information in the whole book.

D. Discussion

1. Experiences of getting a job

a. Job advertisement and application

The study revealed that, employers' adverts for jobs was in Newspapers (print media) or printed internal memos within the organizations. To potential candidates with visual impairment, these modes of job advertisements were not in accessible formats for them and as such, they (PwVI) were greatly disadvantaged in knowing advertised job opportunities because they depended on other people to provide them with information concerning the availability of job opportunities. This sometimes made them receive inaccurate information about the jobs or getting it when it was too late to apply. In addition to that, the adverts did not specify that persons with disabilities were encouraged to apply. These acts of employers using a uniform method of recruitment process without due regard to some people with disabilities amounts to indirect discrimination, which Chhabra (2021) views as 'neutral recruitment policies' that focus on 'ableist assumptions' and exclude PwVI (Chhabra, 2021).. The indirect discrimination against people with visual employment contravenes section 9(2)(a) and 9(3)(b) of the PwDA (2020) which provides for widening of employment opportunities for PwDs in formal employment.

Some of the key contributors to the indirect discrimination experienced by PwVI in employment is associated with the limited knowledge of employers regarding the employment needs of PwVI and the inadequate use of adapted technologies for people with disabilities. Thus, the negative attitudes and adamant refusal to address the individual needs of PwVI such as the provision of Braille during the processes of employment as (Steverson, 2020).

Article 9 of the UNCRPD (2006) in provides for facilitation of PwVI to effectively participate in all aspects of life including employment and provision of Braille,

tactile communication, accessible multimedia whether in audio, human-reader in augmentative or alternative modes, formats of communication, including accessible information and communication technology.

Selection of employees

The employers' lack of support for the individual needs of PwVI during interviews such as non-provision of Braille copies of written interviews was identified as one of the barriers to job access. O'Donnell (2014) considers this inability to provide braille copies and a failure to provide other reasonable accommodation for PwVI during interviews to be discrimination (O'Donnell, 2014). To some employers, during written interviews, would get a person to read questions to the candidate with visual impairment and the person writes in the responses from the candidate with visual impairment. PwDA (2020) provides for reasonable accommodation yet some candidates felt that the support they received was inadequate for example, time for thinking and generating appropriate responses. In addition, the person recording the responses might not accurately convey the intended message. In some instances, PwVI had to answer questions at the same amount of time as others who were sighted.

Job Placement

The study noted that some employers took longer periods to place PwVI who qualified for jobs compared with their non-disabled counterparts. Other PwVIs were placed in remote areas where support equipment required by were hard to access as such they received minimal support they required for their impairment. While this happened, some PwVI who passed the interview were neither appointed nor placed and this category experienced direct discrimination. Bell and Mino (2015) point out that, in addition to lack of access to adaptive equipment and Braille, the most significant problem faced by employers was the difficulties in placing employees with visual impairment (Bell & Mino, 2015). Similarly, McDonnall (2020) contends that, there are lots of important issues concerning the employment of PwVI that need full investigation but are under-looked for example in this case where this PwVI was interviewed, passed the interview but was neither appointed nor placed! (McDonnall, 2020).

Regarding job placement, some PwVI interviewed experienced direct discrimination and others indirect discrimination. Direct discrimination according to Chhabra (2021) arises from employer's negative attitude towards PwVI. Munemo and Tom (2013) argue that some PwVI are 'just seated at home' yet they have good qualifications but employers are reluctant to give them employment due to societal attitudes. These employers' actions of discriminating against PwDs in employment contravenes Section 9 of PwDA (2020) which provides that:

An employer discriminates against a person with a disability where the employer refuses to accept an application made by PwDs; selection criteria exclude applications by PwDs; not correctly gauge the performance of PwDs; remuneration or benefits are less than that given to the other employees who perform similar tasks; not considered for promotion; transferred from a job or task which he or she is capable of performing; medical examination performed on PwDs is not performed on the other employees; and termination on the basis of the disability.

Corruption tendencies: Corruption tendencies in employment in Uganda are viewed to be common due to the scarcity of employment opportunities (Uganda Forum Against Corruption Entities (2022)). These tendencies add to the narrow chances of PwVI getting formal employment opportunities.

Abuse and humiliation: Participants experienced abuse and humiliation while searching for employment. The most regrettable incident was reported by P2, who reported being humiliated due to his disability despite his excellent performance. This is against the Persons with Disabilities Act 2020. Part II: 9 which prohibits against this kind of discrimination.

Assertiveness: The study noted that assertiveness by demonstrating abilities is one of the effective strategies for gaining employment by PwVI. The finding relates to the recommendations by McEachran (2012) that PwVI looking for employment should take control of their career as a sure sign of confidence and not let their disability become a barrier to employment (McEachran, 2012).

Attitudes of employers

The study also discovered one of the key factors determining the employment of PwVI in formal employment from job advertisement, interviews, placement, promotion and exit was employer's attitudes towards PwVIs in relation to work. The attitudes of the employers can either be positive or negative towards PwVI. When employer's attitudes are negative, McDonnall and Cmar (2017) identifies it as a common barrier that PwVI experiences while searching for jobs jobs (M. McDonnall & Cmar, 2017). Bruner and Heir (2022) considers it a source of exclusion for PwVI in employment (Bruner & Heir, 2022). Negative attitudes by employers lead qualified PwVI to develop loss of self-esteem, frustration, and giving up the search for job opportunities. When an employer has positive attitudes towards employment of PwVI, it motivates him/her to ensure a conducive and favorable work environment for PwVIs in the organization. These include provision of reasonable accommodation, adopting pro-disability policies and ensuring accessibility among others.

Working conditions

Remuneration: The study noted that some employees with visual impairment were exploited and to some extent used to gain funding. For example, in one of the organizations, P2 was appointed as a volunteer but was cautioned not to introduce himself as a volunteer but rather as a Program Officer before sponsors. He was also underpaid, with only a transport allowance of USD 2.5 per day paid at the end of the month, with no salary. P6 was promised a salary of 34 USD per month, but only half of it was being paid at the end of the second month, while her non-disabled workmates were paid monthly. Experiences of underpayment and exploitation by the PwVIs interviewed resonates with similar findings in a report by Humanity and Inclusion (2016), which indicated that in some employment in the developing countries, PwDs always earn less money than their colleagues without disabilities (GAATES, 2016).. However, it should be noted that in Uganda, experiences in discrimination in salaries for the same task or job is some practices by some employers in the private sector or civil society organizations, but not in government public service employment. In government public service employment, PwVI like any other civil servants earn according to the salary scale as per employment structure of the institution.

Auxiliary and support services: Most employers in Uganda do not provide sighted guides and other support services required by employees with visual impairments in employment. Without auxiliary and support services, employees with visual impairments would be limited in performing their tasks. Employers are by law required to employ sighted guides for employees with visual impairments as part of providing reasonable accommodation for them, however, most employers including government institutions rarely do that. As such, some PwVIs interviewed had to convince employers that they would facilitate themselves with auxiliary and support services before being given a job. Donaldson (2017) observed that lack of support can interfere with life goals and coping processes for PwVI (Donaldson, 2017). LD Facility Services (2022) has recommended auxiliary services for helping the organization get the right people required to achieve its needs and thus save costs (LD Facility, 2022). P3 experienced slapping because of the demand for a sighted guide. Policy documents have condemned such acts of violence and abuse to PwDs (UNCRPD, Article 16). Wittich, et al., (2012) contend that this kind of mistreatment can lead to depression and prevent them from maintaining employment (Wittich et al., 2012).

Providing information in accessible formats

The provision of information in accessible formats by employers was made to only P5 and P9 due to the positive policy of equal opportunities and non-discrimination in their organizations. This is in line with McEachran (2012), who states that a great

equal opportunities policy helps support the work needs of PwDs (McEachran, 2012). Thus, most participant n = 8 out of 10 did not have access to information in accessible formats. Yet, Article 5 of the UNCRPD requires employers to provide reasonable workplace accommodation to cater to employees with disabilities.

A lack of important information was required for productive work output. Non-provision of the Braille format made it difficult for P1 to get information on whether a client was HIV positive or negative. MINKEN Employment Lawyers (2022) have indicated that such accommodations are essential for PwVI to maintain employment (Minken Employment Lawyers, 2011). Where the accessible format was lacking, P2 relied on colleagues to read and write for him, which was misinterpreted as a way of minimizing them (Donaldson, 2017). He recommends employers and workers to provide appropriate social support to PwVI at work because their lack of support can influence their ability to meet their needs.

The reliance on colleagues often led to the limited accuracy of the work output, as experienced by P2. For example, there were no computers installed with JAWS-Job access with speech software, and thus, he used to ask anybody to help him type the work, which was often found to be inaccurate. Herrera (2018) observed that even with all the new advances in technology and software development today, PwVI are still encountering barriers with their ability to carry out their job duties (Herrera, 2018)..

Lack of accessible formats led to inefficiency and delay of PwVI in completing their work tasks. P8 could not efficiently Braille the information needed to conduct guidance and counseling by herself. Thompson (2021) stated that the Equal Opportunities Commission expects employers to hold disabled employees to the same standards as any other employee as long as the company is willing to make Reasonable Accommodations for the Employee (Thompson, 2021). This would enable the PwVIs to meet the regular performance standards.

E. Conclusion

Uganda has a progressive positive legal and policy environment for disability inclusion in employment. The policy requires employers to provide a conducive and accessible working environment so as to ensure that people with visual impairment gain an employment without discrimination on the basis of equal opportunities. The study found out that, whereas there were attempts to comply with policy requirements, still many qualified PwVIs were excluded and found it almost impossible to access formal employment on an equal basis with others. Even the few PwVIs who had the opportunity to be employed were marginalized and discriminated. Although there were some employment opportunities available in the formal sector in Uganda,

the study found out that there were negative perceptions towards PwVIs coupled with limited knowledge about reasonable accommodation needs of employees with visual impairments. In addition, the study observed that employers had perceptions that employees with visual impairments are expensive to employ due to the support they required. Thus, there was no provision for individual specific needs to PwVIs throughout the recruitment process, job placement and during employment. The study confirmed that the intertwine of these factors indicate how PwVIs were excluded in formal employment. Patience, assertiveness and demonstration of good work abilities were found to be some of the values that PwVIs in employment exercised in order to be retained in employment. Overall, the inclusion of PwVIs in the formal employment sector in Uganda was generally lacking. The study recommended government to:

- 1) Create awareness to employers and the general public on the need for inclusion of PwDs in employment.
- 2) In addition, government should implement and enforce the provisions in the Persons with Disabilities Act – PwDA (2020) such as:
 - Section 9(5 - 7) which provides for widening of employment opportunities for PwDs in formal employment.
 - Section 9(5) which offers a motivation for employers who employs PwDs some deductions of up to ten percent on the chargeable income.
 - Section 9(6) which allows the Minister responsible for disability in consultation with the Council and employers' organizations to determine the quota of persons with disabilities' workforce for employers, and publish the agreed quota at least once in every two years.
 - Section 9(7) makes it an offense to discriminate against PwDs in employment and guarantees a fine and a conviction of an employer who discriminates against PwDs in employment.

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