

Employers' Experiences of Employing Persons with Sensory Impairment in Tanzanian Higher Education Institutions

Raphael A. Mwambalasa¹, Mwajabu K. Possi² and Sarah E. Kisanga³

^{1 & 3} Department of Educational Psychology and Curriculum Studies, School of Education, University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

²Mbeya College of Health and Allied Sciences, University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

Abstract

This qualitative study explored the employers' experiences of the employment of Persons with Sensory Impairment (PSI) in Tanzanian Higher Education Institutions (HEI). The study, specifically sought to examine the employers' perceptions of the employment of PSI, and determine the factors for low employment rate for PSI in HEIs. 26 employers were involved in semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and observation, and thematic analysis was used to analyze data. Findings indicated that employers consider hiring PSI based on their productivity and good job performance; their motivation to students with disabilities in HEIs; and the need to diversify their workforce. Furthermore, the study established factors for low employment rate of PSI as: assumed costs associated with preparing accommodations, employers' negative attitudes, as well as lack of professional qualifications among PSI. The study recommends for awareness raising campaigns on capabilities of PWDs to reduce employers' negative attitude and preparing friendly working environment.

Keywords: attitudes, disability, employment, experiences, higher education, sensory impairment,

Introduction

World reports on disability estimate that Persons with Disabilities constitute more than one billion (15%) of the entire world's population. Data include women, men, as well as children. Two-thirds of them have their residence in Africa (Mgonela, 2010; WHO, 2011; & ILO, 2007). They further report that significant portions of this category of persons (2.2 billion in approximation) are reported to be with Visual Impairment (VI), while 466 million people have Hearing Impairment (HI).

Employment and decent work are considerably vital agents for preserving dignity and better livelihood, and ultimately economic empowerment and independent living among all people, with no exception of Persons with Disabilities. In addition, the vicious circle of marginalization and poverty among PWDs is more likely to be easily broken by offering them employment

opportunities and descent work. Furthermore, offering employment opportunities to PWDs is essential for breaking a state of social isolation emanating from a disabling condition (WHO, 2011).

However, PWDs, those with SI in particular, have been confronted with innumerable challenges when they try to access the open and competitive labor market. Among the substantial stumbling blocks lies on the fact that some hiring managers have been reportedly upholding negative perceptions on the capabilities of PWDs to engage in productive work in their businesses. Houtenville and Kalargyrou (2011) point out employers' lack of awareness on disability issues as a fundamental factor attributing to their negative perceptions towards PWDs. They further contend that employers view hiring PWDs as costly and cannot work competently: they also need closer supervision: and that it is incredibly hard to fire them when they exhibit underperformance in the assigned duties and responsibilities.

The employers' tendency towards people with disabilities subscribes to the "*category-based expectancies*" of constructing social reality as they hold an assumption that members of a particular group of people are more or less likely to behave the same and in a consistent manner (Horowitz, and Bordens, 1995). This view contradicts the "*target-based expectancies*" which take heed of the individual person's attributes and abilities which actually differentiate that individual from other persons within that particular group.

According to Munemo (2013), there is a rapid increase of unemployment and underemployment rates, as well as prevalence of beggary among persons with Sensory Impairment (VI and HI), even those possessing relevant qualifications for the labor market worldwide. This suggests that negative attitudes, stereotypes, and misconceptions harbored by the employers, family members, and the general public targets even specific categories of disabilities. Arguably, any efforts geared at tackling the challenge of unemployment for PWDs ought to pay an incredible attention on specific categories of disabilities rather than disability in general.

In order to mitigate the magnitude of the challenges facing PWDs, including those with SI, there had to be international initiatives in place. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), which is the most imperative and significant international human rights instrument set out by the United Nations (UN) for guaranteeing, promoting, and protecting the rights of PWDs, has declared disability a fundamental and an indispensable human

right (UN, 2019; WHO, 2011). The convention envisages a society that offers equal treatment and justice to all people, with greater emphasis on PWDs.

Since access to employment constitutes one of the major issues to be solemnly addressed, UNCRPD (Article 27) requires state parties to ensure the right to employment for PWDs, including those with SI (WHO, 2011). It clearly states that these individuals possess the right to work on an equal footing with persons without disabling conditions. It further incriminates all forms of employment related discrimination, and advocates for the provision of reasonable accommodations, including Assistive Technologies, in all work places.

Moreover, in the 2030 global agenda for Sustainable Development, disability features as a crosscutting phenomenon in global matters. This denotes that the set goals and targets must be realized for PWDs as it is the case for their counterparts living without any disabling conditions, in order that they achieve their rights. Several issues characterize this global agenda as far as the welfare and the rights entitled to PWDs are concerned: poverty and hunger in SDGs 1 and 2, health and wellbeing in SDG 3, sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights in targets 3.7 and 5.6, and education in SDG 4. Other issues of concern include: gender equality and empowerment of women and girls with disabilities (SDG 5), availability of water and sanitation (SDG 6), access to energy (SDG 7), employment and decent work (SDG 8), access to ICT (target 9. C), just to point out a few (UN, 2019).

Other than efforts made internationally, diverse countries have been making great attempts to change the employers' negative perceptions and increase chances for PWDs to access the labor market and acquire employment opportunities through the adoption of Disability-Specific anti-discrimination policy and legal instruments. It is reported that at least 22 UN member states have enacted specific provisions in their constitutions which incriminate all forms of discrimination when it comes to offering employment opportunities to PWDs. Efforts have also been made in amending the existing policy and legal frameworks in order to combat all forms of discrimination against PWDs in accessing labor market opportunities (UN, 2019).

The United States of America serves as an example of the countries which have been for so long attempting to formulate and amend laws to promote the wellbeing of PWDs regarding employment opportunities. The 1973 Rehabilitation Act and the 1975 Individuals with Disabilities Act were put in place to serve the purpose. The 1990 Americans with Disabilities

Act led to greater improvements compared to the situation that prevailed hitherto 1990 (Barbra & Mutswanga, 2014). Studies conducted in the United States of America between the years 1999 and 2012 indicate that people's perceptions and attitudes towards hiring PWDs, including those with SI, have been reportedly favorable than before (McDonald, 2016). Besides the adoption of diverse policy and legal instruments, as well as positive change of attitude, persons with disabilities continue encountering many setbacks pertaining to securing and maintaining their jobs.

Efforts have also been observed in many African countries to ensure that the welfare and dignity of PWDs is maintained. The Republic of Zimbabwe has attempted to deal with discrimination against PWDs and abolish superstitious beliefs (such as having a perspective that disability entails "Bad Omen") by resorting to enactment of legal systems which require that PWDs should not be discriminated against in, among other things, employment opportunities (Barbra & Mutswanga, 2014).

Consequently, according to ILO (2010), the employers in some businesses worldwide have recently realized the capability and productivity of persons with disabilities, and that they are extremely beneficial workers in their workplaces. The latter have been observed to exhibit loyalty, productivity, dependability, better record of workplace attendance, when compared with non-disabled peers, as well as working in teamwork (Chomka, 2004). Therefore, they tend to be enthusiastic towards hiring them into their workforce.

Therefore, this study aimed at investigating the experiences of the employers who have already attempted to offer employment opportunities to Persons with Sensory Impairment in the Higher education Institutions' workforce in Tanzania. Likewise, studies conducted on the employment of PWDs appear to pay an incredible attention on disability in general (Possi 2014: & Twaweza (2014)). A study by Ntamanwa (2015), Houtenvile & Kalargyrou, (2014), and Shier et al (2009) underscore the propensity of conducting studies focusing on specific disabilities. The study was guided by the following questions:

- i. What are the perceptions behind HEIs employers' interest in employing people with SI?
- ii. What are the factors leading to low employment rates of persons with SI in HEIs?

Methodology

A qualitative case study (multiple case study) research strategy of inquiry was employed in order to solicit employers' experiences in recruiting PSI in HEIs. According to Yin (2002), a case study design attempts to deal with "why" and "How" questions, as far as the phenomenon of interest is concerned.

Semi-structured interview technique was employed to obtain diverse viewpoints on the employers' views on the work performance of employees with Sensory Impairment, as well as the factors leading to low employment rates of PWDS, those with SI in particular, Data were solicited from individual participants, as well as in Focus Group Discussions. Focus Group Discussion (FGD) method was employed for the purpose of triangulation. 26 participants were interviewed, and three Focus Group Discussions were conducted, one FDG in each Higher Education Institution. Likewise, observation was employed to find out the kind of services and job adjustments focused on persons or employees with hearing and vision impairments in Higher Education Institutions. Such issues as job related information dissemination platforms, roads, pathways, and buildings, had to be observed to check their accessibility for employees and job seekers with SI.

In order to identify, analyze, organize, and present meaningful themes or patterns emerging from the data collected on the employers in three selected HEIs, thematic analysis strategy was employed. Qualitative raw data which emerged from semi-structured interviews and Focus Group Discussions were laid open to thematic analysis procedure in order to allow flexibility when searching for ideas or themes which attempted to answer specific questions of the inquiry.

Results and Discussion

Employers' perceptions of employing persons with sensory impairment

During the analysis of data, the inquirer came across four significant thematic areas: productivity qualities, Employees with SI as agents for promoting inclusion of PWDs, Merit factor, and Employment of PSI for diversification of the Workforce.

Demonstration of Desirable Productivity

The findings of this study indicate that majority (21 or 80.7%) of the employers' decisions to hire Persons with SI, in most cases, were attributed to the employers' perception that PSI possess required knowledge, skills and values, as well as high productivity qualities. It was reported that Some employers had experienced living and working with persons with either VI or HI in other institutions, in the teaching profession, community development, counseling, finance, librarianship, and Social Work. Other employers testified of being eyewitnesses of the abilities and excellent performance of these individuals in Primary and Secondary Schools, as well as in Colleges and Universities, where they spent most of their time together as co-students. This was claimed by P17, who said the following:

I see that they have an extraordinary ability because, before coming into this position, I was the Director of Undergraduate Studies. I did see students' applications. You find a student who is blind having scored three As. Then you come across persons who can see, and they are swaying with Es. What can you say regarding that? (P17, male, HEI 3).

The quotation connotes that the employers' perceptions were shaped incredibly by their experiences on the performance manifested by PSI. Moreover, it is uncovered that their entry qualifications appear to be more or less the same, or above those without disabilities (SI). Likewise, Studies conducted by Waxman (2017), Annuar et al (2017), have found that PWDs are hardworking, exhibit an incredible productivity, are imbued with the spirit of loyalty, they are people to be relied upon, and one can observe positive attributes in them, especially when they are given chances to perform their duties, as well as when suitable working environment and equipment have been put in place.

However, it is worth noting that PSI can also perform poorly when compared with non-disabled counterparts. This implies that a state of disability does not necessarily cause PSI to become best performers, whether in education or jobs. Much will depend on the influence of genetic as well as environmental factors. In that regard, it can be argued that HEIs in Tanzania have to adopt inclusive working environments so that they can enable persons with disabilities, including those with SI, easily apply for jobs and perform productively.

Employees with SI as agents for promoting inclusion of PWDs

The findings from the study have revealed that the employers were interested in employing Persons with SI due to their held perception that such employees were significant for promoting inclusive practices within their respective institutions. One of their important roles was reported to be provision of disability related educational and social support services to students with disabilities, including those with SI, in their institutions. Employees with SI were utilized to assist students with SI and other disabilities while pursuing their studies, since it was assumed that they manifested richer experience on disability issues as opposed to those who were non-disabled.

Moreover, PSI were portrayed as individuals who could enable the institution receive and easily accommodate PWDs, as well as air out voices of students with disabilities by speaking out about how they should be handled carefully by the institution in accordance with their disability status. In an emphatic manner, P15 said:

An employee with a disability knows what they need. He will be a link between the Dean of Students and students with Disabilities, including those with SI. If you don't have such a problem you cannot know. You may think that you have satisfied an individual with disability, while it isn't the case. So, because he knows, and fortunately, he is the chairperson of the Tanzania Association for Persons with Deafness, he attends many conferences, and whenever he asks for a permit we normally facilitate him, and he goes to the meetings. But he knows what PWDs need, he will always give advice (P15, female, HEI 1).

It is attested by the participant that persons with SI are aware of their needs, even more than the employers. Therefore, they can appropriately voice out their needs to employers, especially when there are challenges associated with the provision of disability related services.

Nevertheless, it should be made clear that, in addition to the experience possessed by PSI in disability issues, there are professionals who have studied disability issues extensively. These experts can also assist in offering quality services to PSI, as well as other disabilities. It should further be pointed out that PSI are not necessarily having richer experience in other categories of disability, such as physical impairment, intellectual disability, and albinism, rather, they are most likely to be confined to SI.

Other than their direct support, persons with SI were described as important role models for students and unemployed Persons with SI, in the sense that the latter would develop confidence

when they see a colleague with SI while at the work place. They can study hard, hoping that in future it would be their turn. This is vindicated by the words of one participant as follows;

The first advantage is that we have people who can take care of our students. We still have students with disabilities. So, if you have for example, a professor with visual impairment, he becomes a role model to our student. They can relate to him. They can say, "If so and so was able to do this, we can also do it." (P1, female, HEI 2).

The above statement reveals openly the participant's perception that employing PSI is essential for raising the morale among higher education students with disabilities, particularly those with SI, in studying hard so they can realize their dreams, including expectations to get better jobs in the future, irrespective of their disabling conditions. Bereman & Hargrave (2007) emphasize that there is an advantage in recruiting PWDs in the workforce owing to the fact that the customers are also diverse, including those with diverse disabilities. This calls for diverse institutions to design services and goods to cater for the needs of diverse groups, including PWDs, SI in particular.

Merit factor and the employment of PSI

This study came up with the findings that employers, when hiring workers for their workforce, pay much attention to knowledge, skills, and competencies possessed by the prospective employees. This entails that PSI or people representing other categories of disabilities are subjected to equal employment rules and standards together with those without disabilities. 16 participants revealed that it has been their perception that persons with SI have the fundamental right to employment, just like the non-disabled counterparts. It was further pointed out that denying PWDs employment opportunities refers to deliberately taking away their fundamental rights. Persons with SI, as well as other disabilities deserve to be employed anywhere, including HEIs. This idea was elaborated by one participant whose words are indicated here under:

For me I can say that there is an advantage, because as a Human Resource Officer, if you add any manpower in an institution, he/she is going to help the institution in achieving organizational goals. So, if you employ a PSI, it means that he has some kind of qualification or knowledge which will add value to the organization. So, I am talking from a human resource officer perspective, that a person you employ should be a skilled person regardless of whether or not he/she has a disability. (P18, male, HEI 3).

The extract from the interviewee indicates that, in some occasions, employers receive job applications from both persons with and without disabilities. Applicants with SI, other categories with disabilities, and those without disabilities, are subjected to a competitive process, irrespective of their differences. Therefore, when a PSI secures an employment opportunity, it is because of his or her merits, not his or her disability. Both employees with and without disabilities must be accorded equal chances so they can offer their contributions towards the achievement of the institutional goals.

Current studies on employment of PWDs report the paradigm shift from the mandatory quota schemes which have been dealing with individuals, to the civil rights approach which is emphatic on changing the society in order to make it equally accessible for all PWDs when it comes to securing and maintaining employment opportunities (Heyer, 2005). Thus, there is no need to deal with the individuals with disabilities, as the medical approach suggests, but rather doing away with such social barriers and offering equal rights and support services to PWDs, provided that they have necessary and sufficient qualifications, as well as relevant knowledge, skills, and values for the advertised job vacancies.

Employment of PSI for diversification of the workforce

Several participants reported that they hire SI, as well as other categories of disabilities, for diversifying the workforce in the institutions. They perceived that it is advantageous to the institutions since hiring such persons advertise and brands the institution or organization locally and internationally as an inclusive one. It was further pointed out that any institution perceived to be inclusive is likely to receive benefits from the agencies or organizations supporting PWDs, inside and outside the country so they can better provide support services to students and employees with disabilities, including those with SI. This is vividly reflected in the following participant's assertion:

When it appears that there are employment opportunities, PWDs have to be given priority. This can be equated to women who are considerably few in this institution. Therefore, when it happens that a woman scores high, she is considered first (P2, female, HEI 3).

The participant contends that efforts dedicated by the community on empowering women should be echoed on promoting equal rights for PSI, and PWDs in general.

The participants observed that persons with disabilities, especially those with SI, have been encountering difficulties and innumerable challenges through the entire education system, and that they should be offered employment opportunities, provided that they meet the minimum qualifications for an applied job vacancy. It was also pointed out that persons with disabilities should not be subjected to competition for a job, on equal basis, with persons without any disabling condition, and that it should be regarded unfair due to the fact that the categories are different in nature. It was further asserted that it is improper for employers to subject persons with disability in a competition with nondisabled people when competing for a job owing to the reason that their disabilities might have impacted them differently in life.

Among the most salient concerns in management, in all sectorial areas, is the issue of diversifying the workforce of every institution (Pitts & Wise, 2014). Employment of PWDs, including those with SI, has been confirmed by other research studies as an approach leading to work settings that are inclusive and diversified, and that such settings lead to conducive work environment in diverse businesses. Therefore, it can be argued from the point of view of the employers in HEIs who have endeavored to hire Persons with SI, that much has to be done in regard to education and awareness creation on the employers, from other HEIs in Tanzania, as well as the importance and advantages accrued from employing persons from this Marginalized and invisible groups.

Employers' views on factors for low employment rates of persons with SI

Costs associated with accommodating PSI

The study findings (from 19 participants) indicated that some employers are aware of the abilities and work performance of PSI, but apprehend to hire them in the Higher Education workforce due to the presumed expenses on offering job accommodations as well as other support services. The participants voiced out on their perceptions on solving challenges emanating from preventing PWDs to get employed. It was observed that despite the fact that PWDs are very few, particularly those with SI, the manufacturers of equipment and facilities to be utilized by PSI are very expensive. Further, due to the few buyers and users of the products, the price was reported to be not only high, but also the demand was said to be low. Regarding the observation, one participant said the following:

A Perkins Brailler is worth 2.5 million Tanzania shillings, while a pen is just two hundred Tanzania shillings, or even five hundred. An expensive pen is worth one thousand. So, if you compare the two, you can see that it is very expensive to use Perkins Braillers. The screen reader, is almost six hundred thousand Tanzanian shillings for one person. An individual without a disability can buy a computer for six hundred thousand shillings, and can use it even without installing a screen reader. So, you can buy your laptop at, let's, say one million shillings, and then buy a screen reader programme at six hundred thousand shillings. Therefore, your laptop will be worthy one million and six hundred thousand shillings. So, it is expensive. Ok, let's talk about braille papers. One piece of braille paper is worth 200 Tanzania shillings, while a single A4 sheet is 50 shillings (P4, female, HEI 1).

Here, the comparison is made between Assistive Technological Devices used by PSI and other facilities used by non-disabled counterparts, by pointing out their differences in terms of purchasing prices. The participant contends that facilities and equipment for PSI are more expensive compared to those used by people without disabling conditions.

National policy and legal frameworks in Tanzania, as well as international legislations, for instance the Persons with Disabilities act No. 9 of 2010, the Tanzania's 2004 National Policy on Disability, and the 2006 United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, assert clearly that the employers are obliged to accommodate employees with Disabilities within their organizations, provided that they need such job adjustments, and only if such job adjustments do not interfere negatively with the general functioning of the organization (URT, 2004: URT, 2010: UNCRPD, 2006). However, Possi (2014) points out that some employers were not aware that they were required by law to hire PWDs by fulfilling the three per centum or quota scheme reserved for PWDs for each organization having a number of twenty employees or above.

However, it can be argued that it is possible for the employers to accommodate PSI reasonably by incurring little or zero cost. There are some free screen readers available on internet which can be installed in Personal Computers and make them accessible for persons with VI who have undergone specialized computer training. Moreover, the employers, in the first place, have to consider employing PWDs, and that they have to discuss with them (PSI) about the type of accommodations needed by such people for them to work smoothly and comfortably in their organizations.

Negative attitudes and lack of awareness on PWDs' issues

The findings of the study, as depicted by 24 interviewees, show that some employers have been upholding negative perceptions towards employing PSI in higher learning institutions. The prospective employees, irrespective of their performance academically and possession of adequate job qualifications, have been facing discrimination when attempting to seek for jobs in higher learning institutions. They have been, for so long, perceived to be incapable of handling diverse jobs due to their disabilities. This was voiced out by P21 as follows:

I don't know whether we are right or wrong. There is a perception that PWDs, including PSI, should be pitied and be given few activities for them to perform. They do not know that giving such people many duties would improve their performance. Therefore, you will realize that sometimes there is a perception that we will be very unfair to PWDs (P21, male, HEI 1).

From the voice of the participant, it can be pointed out that some employers in Higher Education Institutions hesitate to employ PSI on the ground that doing that means giving them less responsibilities, as opposed to persons without any disabling condition. This implies that such employers pay a considerable attention on disabling conditions rather than focusing on the knowledge, capabilities, and potentials possessed by PSI.

The participants remarked that Persons with SI have been going through stigmatization and discrimination in workplaces or when hunting for jobs by some fellow employees who are non-disabled, and the employers as well. Due to negative attitudes amongst the employers, matters related to persons with disabilities have been accorded less priority in the institutional arrangements and budgets. For instance, a good number of the employers have been hardly encouraging PWDs to apply for various announced job vacancies in their institutions. However, when Persons with SI managed to get access to information, send their applications, and get selected for attending interviews, panelists, who represent employers, do not treat them accordingly. This was an experience from P24 who said:

I have an experience of one of my students who once applied for a job at institution "T". When job announcements were published, he got informed by his colleagues. Of course, people share information in groups. He applied for that vacancy. When he went for an interview, you can't believe it. There were no braille facilities. Of course, later on he felt that they had negative attitude towards him from what they were saying. They were asking themselves, "What shall we do?" They were worried that there would be expenses related to providing services for him, as a person with disability (P24, female, HEI 3).

The participant's voice depicts clearly that negative attitude held by some employers on the employment of PSI can be directly attributed to their fear on providing reasonable accommodations and support services to PSI. However, when such documents as the United Nations Convention on the rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Tanzania's Persons with Disabilities Act No. 9 of 2010 were reviewed, it was clear that such legal documents incriminate all forms of discrimination against PWDs, including denial of employment opportunities on the basis of disability, as well as the employers' failure to provide support services and job-related adjustments.

It can further be argued that, in this case, some employers in Tanzania HEIs still believe on the Medical Model of Disability by attributing poor performance to individuals disabling conditions (Hodkinson & Vickerman 2009: Thomas & Woonds, 2003: Barnes & Mercer, 2003). The perception lies on the assumption that a disabling condition must be cured for an individual to be considered fit to undertake certain activities. However, a plethora of studies conducted, for instance by Munemo & Tom (2013, Benoit et al (2012), reveal that as employers become aware of knowledge, abilities, competences, as well as the incredible performance of persons with SI, they become familiar with and develop an enthusiasm to hire persons from this category.

PSI and Access to job related information

The findings indicate that one of the most challenging situations for PSI, those with VI in particular, is lack of access to, among other issues, job announcements. It was reported that announcement of job adverts is based upon normal procedures; that is "one shoe fits all". PSI have been forced to depend on sighted individuals so they can read normal printed job adverts for them on notice boards and in various websites. Sometimes advertisements are slotted in a printed media, such as newspapers, which are also not accessible for persons with VI. This has been depicted to be among the major contributing factors for their low employment rates in Higher Education Institutions, as well as other public and private hiring agencies. This was clearly stated by P2 when he said:

We don't discriminate. We design our websites and post announcements with a notion that we are going to reach people out there. We assume that everyone thinks that he/she can access the announcement easily. Maybe we are blind also on that, we cannot think that when we are making job adverts there are other

people who cannot see. Likewise, we should design electronic advertisements which people can hear properly. But audio advertisements are expensive. Sending just a small advert, for instance quarter a page for ten minutes to TBC radio. My friend (P2, female, HEI 3).

The employers in HEIs are reported, in the quotation above, to make use of the internet to make information related to jobs accessible to the general public, irrespective of a disabling condition. Their assumption is founded on the notion that, “one shoe fits all”. However, they indicate that they lack awareness on proper mechanisms to make such information reach PSI, particularly those with VI. However, there are individuals with VI who are computer literate, and they can competently use screen readers. Therefore, this category of persons with VI can access easily job-related information slotted in websites provided that they are in an accessible format, meaning that they can be accessed by using screen readers.

However, it was revealed that persons with HI are not challenged by the media used by institutions to announce job vacancies, as it has been the case for Persons with VI. The former can read normal printed job adverts, newspapers, and have easy access to the internet. For individuals with HI, the only challenge lies merely on communication.

It is clearly indicated in the availing literature that access to information is not only a challenge for PSI who are trying to make their way to the open and competitive labor market, but also it poses obstacles to them while pursuing education in various levels of education (Kisanga, 2017). Consequently, PSI fail to adhere to diverse institutional scheduled undertakings, for instance submitting assignments timely. It can be argued that challenges related to information accessibility for PSI should be dealt with from the grass-root (education system) instead of capitalizing merely on the transitional period from schooling to work.

Unavailability of qualified PSI in the labour market

Unavailability of qualified persons with SI in the open labor market was found to be among the reasons for low employment rate of persons with SI in Higher learning Institutions. The participants revealed that Tanzania’s enrollment rates are very low compared to the available information as far as the enrollment rate in countries such as Kenya and Uganda are concerned.

In other words, Tanzania's enrollment rate of students with disabilities is the lowest among the East African countries, as P19 extrapolates:

Let me tell you my friend, Tanzania's enrolment rate at pre-primary and primary school levels are very low. It is considered to be the lowest rate in East Africa. It is four to five percent. That means among 100 pupils who enroll in nursery schools, four to five of them manage to ascend to the university. The question to ask is, can a person with a disabling condition who comes from the village be among those four or five students? (P19, male, HEI 2).

Obviously, the participant points out the challenges inherent in the education system, as major factors which hinder PWDs in general and those with SI in particular from participating and acquiring education on an equal basis with those without disability.

It was reported that persons with physical impairment, when compared to those with SI, seem to have little obstacles in accessing education and employment opportunities due to the fact that they can see and hear as well. For persons with hearing and visual impairment, it is difficult for them to get access to education at primary, secondary as well as tertiary levels of education. This seems to be accelerated by, among other aspects, absence of adequate reasonable accommodations and community negative attitudes towards them.

Studies conducted in different countries, both developed and developing ones, by Norani et al (2001), Martz & Xu (2008), comply with the findings of this study. They report that lack of adequate as well as relevant Educational qualifications among PWDs has been among the fundamental stumbling blocks toward securing employment opportunities in the current open and competitive labor market. This denotes that inclusion of persons with disabilities in education and training systems is a challenge for both developing and developed countries.

Conclusion

From the findings on the employers' perceptions on the employment of PSI, it can be concluded that the employers in HEIs who have attempted to employ PWDs, those with SI in particular, attach a positive image on job seekers and employees with SI. Putting in other words, the employers' behavior on hiring PSI has been greatly influenced by their perceptions towards them. It can be contended that the employers who attach a negative image on PSI or PWDs are most likely to be hesitant to give them employment opportunities. Therefore, the employers, in

HEIs, who have attempted to hire PSI represent other employers at global level who are likely to set an example to other employers who find it tedious to employ and provide reasonable adjustments to PSI, and those with other categories of disability.

Moreover, a critical scrutiny of the employers' perceptions on the inclusion of PSI in their institutions reveals that the employers are motivated by utility or economic factors, their social obligations towards PWDs, human right reasons, and prior experience with PSI. Therefore, in most cases, the employers treated PSI in fair grounds, as it is the case for non-disabled counterparts. However, some were too ambitious about the performance of PSI, since virtually all participants (24 out of 26) reported that PSI and PWDs in general exhibit an incredible work performance and productivity, even more than those without disabilities. This is also exemplified by the reason offered by the participants that PSI concentrate on their assigned duties and responsibilities because they have nothing else to concentrate on. It is also worth noting that PSI and PWDs in general can have poor performance and low productivity, mainly because of other factors, like learning difficulties.

The fact that some employers in HEIs recruited PSI in their workforce on the basis of merits or employment standards and regulations, especially when they did not consider the applicant's condition (whether they have disabilities or not) seems to place all job seekers or applicants in a fair ground. Actually, that is how issues are supposed to operate as far as the employment policies and laws in Tanzania are concerned. The findings of this study indicate that the employees with SI do not have Assistive Devices or Guide Persons so they can work smoothly within those institutions. With that regard, it can be contended that even job applicants with disabilities, PSI in particular, do not enjoy support services and reasonable accommodations, especially when they attend or participate in the recruitment process in those institutions. In order for the employers, in HEIs or elsewhere, to create a fair ground for PWDs and those without disabilities during the recruitment process, they have to make sure that they prepare themselves to support and accommodate PWDs, in accordance with their specific needs.

The enumerated factors associated with low employment rates of PSI in Tanzania HEIs prevail within HEIs which have employed PSI or PWDs. It should be expected that the situation is even worse in the institutions which have not yet attempted to hire PWDs. For instance, some employers were not aware of how to make job advertisements posted on the websites, notice boards, or even newspapers, accessible to PSI, particularly those with VI. This connotes that

there is an incredible and solemn need to address the employment barriers facing PSI, or PWDs, in all HEIs, irrespective of their attempt and enthusiasm to hire PWDs.

Moreover, there is a great need for students, job seekers, and employees with SI in Tanzania to be well equipped with knowledge, skills, and values related to Assistive Technology, as well as providing them with Assistive Technological Devices, such as computers with screen readers, note takers, and hearing devices. Likewise, it should be pointed out that promoting access to quality education and information have been part and parcel of international policy and legal frameworks. However, it has been difficult for diverse stakeholders in disability issues, including the government, to make those aspects practical. Prioritizing on the use of Assistive Technology in consistency with persistent awareness creation campaigns to diverse stakeholders, including the employers, on the capabilities and competencies of PSI is more likely to increase the participation of PSI in integrated communities, including obtaining jobs in diverse businesses.

Recommendations

Employers have to establish a network and platform for diverse employers who have experienced hiring and working with PWDs, particularly those with SI, and those who have never experienced hiring and working with them, so they can share their experiences related to the benefits accrued from employing PWDs (SI), as well as find best ways to deal with the challenges hindering their inclusion in the labor market.

The government and other key hiring agencies, including Tanzania HEIs, should establish disability friendly, accessible, and inclusive channels and platforms for distributing job related information, and attract qualified Persons with Disabilities, including those with SI, in the workforce.

HEIs, and other autonomous hiring agencies, in Tanzania have to put in place internal policies and regulations for guiding the provision of support services and reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities, as well as job seekers and employees with disabilities who are in their workforce.

References

- Annur, A., Isa, M. F. A., & Manaf, A. R. a. (2017). Employees with Disabilities: Malaysian employers' reflections. *International Journal of Academic Research, Business and Social Sciences*, 7(12), 270-283.
- Barbra M. & Mutswanga, P. (2014). The Attitudes of Employers and Co-workers towards the Employment of Persons with Disabilities in Zimbabwe, *International Journal on Managerial Studies and Research*, Vol, 2; No.3 pp7-19.
- Bereman, N., & Hargrave, S. (2007). *Sun trust banks*. In hidden talent, ed. Mark Lengnick-Hall, 56-66. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). *Using thematic analysis in psychology*. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3, 77-101. Doi :10.1191/147808876qp063oa.
- Bryman, A. (2016) *Social Research Methods*, 5th Ed. Oxford University Press, New York.
- Chomka, S. (2004). *Disabled Workers Help Solve recruitment issues*. *Food Manufacture*, 79: 56-57.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research Design (Qualitative, Quantitative & Mixed Methods Approaches)* (4th Edition) Sage Publication Ltd, Los Angeles, London/New Delh, Singapore, Washington.
- Heyer, K. (2005). *Rights or quotas? The ADA as a model for disability rights*. In L. B. Neilsen, & R. L. Nelson (Eds.) *handbook of employment discrimination research: rights and realities* (pp. 237-257). Dordrecht: Springer.
- Houtenvile, A., & Kalargyrou, V. (2014). Employers' Perspectives about Employing People with Disabilities: A Comparative study across industries. *Cornell Hospitality quarterly* 1-12.
- International Labour Organization, (2007). *The Right to Decent Work of Persons with Disabilities*. International Labour Office, Geneva.
- Kisanga, S. E. (2017). Education barriers of students with sensory impairment and their coping strategies in Tanzania higher education institutions (Unpublished PhD Thesis). Nottingham Trent University.
- Kisanga, S. E. (2019) 'It is not our fault. We are the victims of the education system': Assessment of the accessibility of examinations and information for students with visual impairment in Tanzania. Paper accepted for publication at the Journal of International Association of Special Education.
- Kisanga, S. E. (2020). *Social Barriers Faced by Students with Sensory impairment in Higher Education in Tanzania: Perceived perceptions of others across settings*. Manuscript Submitted for Publication.
- Munemo, E., & Tom, T. (2013). Problems of unemployment faced by visually impaired people. *Greener journal of social sciences*, 3(4), 203-219

- Martz, E., & Xu, Y. J., (2008). Person-related and Service-related Factors Predicting Employment of Individuals with Disabilities. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, 28, 97-104.
- Mgonela, V. A., (2010). *Obstacles and Challenges Faced by Disabled Women in Employment Opportunities in the Public Civil Service in Tanzania: A Case Study of Dar es Salaam*,
- Norani, M, S., Khalid, A., &NorIsha, B. (2001). *Job opportunities for special needs population in Malaysia*. *Journal Pendidikan*, 27, 77-85
- Possi, A., (2014). *Persons with Disability's Right to Work in Africa: A Comparative study of Employment and Disability Laws, Policies and Relevant Institutional Mechanisms of Tanzania and Selected African States*. Friedrich-Alexander-Universitat, Erlangen-Nurnberg.
- Shenton, A. K., (2004). *Strategies for Ensuring Trustworthiness in Qualitative Research Projects*. *Education for Information* 22: pp. 63-67. IOS Press.
- Thomas, D. & Woonds, H. (2013). *Working with people with learning disabilities*, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, London.
- United Nations, (2006). *The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and optional Protocol*. General Assembly Resolution of 2006, New York, United States of America.
- United Republic of Tanzania (2004), *National Policy on Disability*, Ministry of Labour, Youth Development and Sports.
- United Republic of Tanzania (2010). *Persons with Disability Act*. The Parliament of the United Republic of Tanzania.
- Waxman, D. (2017). *Model of successful corporate culture change integrating employees with disabilities*. Pp. 155-180 in Barbara M. Atman(Ed) (2017). *Factors in studying employment for persons with disability: how the picture can change*. United Kingdom, Emerald publishing.
- World Health Organization (2011). *World Report on Disability*, Geneva: World Health Organization.
- Yin, R. K. (1994). *Case study Research Design and Methods* (2nd Ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.7