

Employment Needs of Young Adults with Visual Disability need to be Recognised in Kabul, Afghanistan

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: *The aim of this qualitative paper was to understand the employment needs of young adults with visual disability in Kabul, Afghanistan.*

Method: *The phenomenological approach was employed to obtain rich data based on the participants' personal experiences. In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with 14 adults with visual disability, between 20-40 years of age, using open-ended questions to shed light on the employment needs of this population. The data derived from the interviews was transcribed, translated, and thematic analysis was performed.*

Results: *Findings indicate that people with visual disability need to be equipped with essential skills to be competent workers. Support from employers and society is needed and, importantly, encouragement from family members and those involved in advocacy of the people with visual disabilities.*

Conclusion: *Improving the public's awareness regarding personal and vocational abilities of people with visual disabilities, enhancing the skills necessary for employment, promoting their abilities, family support and maintaining positive attitudes are some of the strategies which could result in better employment prospects for people with visual disabilities in Afghanistan.*

Key words: *young adults, visual disability, employment needs, Kabul city*

INTRODUCTION

Afghanistan is a landlocked country where war has been an ongoing phenomenon for over four decades. Consequently, many Afghans are living in poverty and enduring inadequate health services, education facilities, and poor

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job opportunities. This is affecting their intellectual and psychological well-being (Cardozo et al., 2004). A recently published survey noted that Afghanistan's poverty rate has compounded tremendously in the last five years as the economy has slowed down. More than half of the population is living on less than a dollar per day (Reuters, 2018).

Decades of conflict have led to widespread human suffering, ranging from psychiatric disorders to depression, anxiety and stress (Murthy & Lakshmi Narayana, 2006). People's health has been affected, both physically and psychologically. The cases of firearms or mine incidents, rape, permanent disability, diseases, forced migration, underage soldiers, lack of education, loss of family members, torture, and socio-cultural changes are on the rise (Çelik& Özpınar, 2017).

War has been the cause of many disabilities in Afghanistan. It is estimated that 3.7% of the Afghan population (over 850,000 people) has a form of disability (UNICEF, 2013). According to the World Health Organisation (2008), there are about 400,000 people with at least one visual disability in Afghanistan and 1,500,000 people with visual impairment. In addition, Afghanistan's Ministry of Public Health estimated that there were about 20,000-25,000 people with visual disability (The British Broadcasting Corporation, 2019). Specifically, 2% of the whole population of the country has visual disability or impairment (The British Broadcasting Corporation, 2019).

Main Contention

People with visual disability have minimal job opportunities in Afghanistan. The Law of Rights and Privileges of the Disabled (2011), in line with Article 22 of the Afghan Constitution, demands that the government should hire at least 3% of eligible people with disabilities. Ali Eftekhari, the spokesman for the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled, indicated that unfortunately, despite the repeated emphasis, this Article of the Law has not been implemented (Pajhwok, 2014). Some legitimate obstacles, along with the negative mentality of people in society, are the main causes which impede the employment of people with disabilities and the achievement of their rights (Community Centre for the Disabled, 2014).

In addition, people with visual disabilities are continuously fighting against all forms of discrimination. Referring to the Fundamental Rights and Duties of

Citizens, Article 22 of Chapter 2 of the Constitution (AFG. Const. Art. 22, Chap 2, 2004) indicates that any kind of discrimination and distinction between citizens of Afghanistan shall be forbidden. However, the rights of people with disabilities have been denied in various spheres of life: social, economic, political, cultural, educational, recreational, and sports (Article 15, Law of Rights and Privileges of the Disabled, 2011). Soraya Paykan, Deputy of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled, revealed the fact that the work done by the government and international organisations to improve the status of people with disability is not adequate in Afghanistan until now (The Killid Group, 2014).

Generally, persons with a disability are more disadvantaged and face greater challenges than other people. Apart from their physical, intellectual or sensorial impairments, they encounter prejudice, discrimination, stigmatisation, inequalities, isolation, and disrespect from the community at large (Trani et al., 2005). The consequences of these attitudes are evident. For instance, only 20% of children and youngsters with disabilities have access to educational services (Pajhwak, 2012). Lack of proper education affects their financial capability in leading independent lives and in seamless assimilation in society (Furlong, 2009). Education plays a big role in the development of not only economic, social and moral values, beliefs, and ideas, but also in providing future opportunities and direction (Farah et al., 2014). As the next step, employment for young adults is crucial for their development as well as the development of society.

Some Important Issues

a) Lack of Data

There is no statistical data available on the employment needs of people with visual disability in Afghanistan, although there is sufficient data available about the employment of people with disability from other low- and middle-income countries. The World Health Organisation's World Report on Disability (2011) provides information about services needed for the employment of people with disability. According to the report, in Namibia 47.3 % of people with disability need vocational training and other services to be employed, but only 5.2% receive such training and related services. Similarly, in Zimbabwe, 41.1% of people with disabilities need vocational services but only 22.7% receive them. In Malawi, 45.0% need vocational services but only 5.6% receive them, and in Zambia, 35.1% need vocational services whereas only 8.4% receive them (WHO, 2011). While relevant

information on the employment and vocations of persons with disabilities is available from several countries, in many cases it is not systematically gathered or reported. The International Labour Organisation's (ILO) survey of 2003 shows that only 16 out of 111 countries had data regarding employment of people with disabilities (Lepper, 2007). Despite recent improvements in low- and middle-income countries, the limitation of available data continues (WHO, 2011; Benshoff, Barrera, & Heymann, 2014). However, the data indicates that employment rates of people with disabilities are always lower than employment rates of the overall population.

One of the major concerns regarding people with visual disability is their low employment rates anywhere in the world (McNeil, 1997). Employment is important for people with visual disability because it affects their financial capability and independent living.

b) Current Status of Employment and Unemployment

A successful economic status contributes to the integration and inclusion of individuals in society (Furlong, 2009). One of the factors that seem to impact employment outcomes is the level of education. Higher and better employment outcomes are associated with educational attainment. Hence, it is the well-educated or trained individuals who are employed and who have prospects for better incomes (Bell & Mino, 2013). People with disability are employed in administrative, executive and managerial jobs. Job opportunities are available for them in technical, marketing and sales domains, including clerical service, precision production, crafts and reparation, agriculture, forestry, fishing, and related jobs (Wolffe & Spungin, 2002).

In an advanced country like the United Kingdom, a high proportion of persons with loss of sight are unemployed due to lack of proper training. Another reason for unemployment is the considerable discrimination which they face in the labour market (SSMR, 2009).

In spite of reportedly better performance at work, there are fewer employment opportunities for people with disabilities and most of them are jobless. Several researchers have identified numerous barriers to employment and suggested strategies to remedy those barriers (Crudden & McBroom, 1999). Barriers that have been identified are: difficulty with transportation (Rumrill, Schuyler & Longden, 1997; Samuel et al, 2013; Crudden et al, 2015; Cmar et al, 2018); history

of illness; and discrimination of women and those with low levels of education (Wehbi & El, 2007; Harrabi, Aubin, Zunzunegui, Haddad & Freeman 2014). Other barriers include a lack of general awareness about visual impairments or the attitudes of the public and employers towards people who are blind (McBroom, 1995; McDonnall, O'Mally & Crudden, 2014). Inadequate funding for adaptive equipment and lack of assistive technology (Malakpa, 1994), and the absence of role models (Young, 1994) are also barriers according to some other studies (Wehbi & El, 2007).

Wehbi and El (2007) reported a range of issues which affect access to employment by people with disabilities: a lack of personal connections, discrimination, lack of available employment opportunities, transportation difficulties, family pressure not to be employed, and inadequate education or vocational training. Inadequate legislative support is another barrier listed by Wolffe and Spungin (2002) and Wehbi and El (2007). The major impediment towards the employment of persons with visual disability is the limited awareness of the public regarding their physical and mental capabilities. Unemployment among people with visual disability is still a problem and has not been resolved as yet (SSMR, 2009; Kelly, 2013; American Foundation for the Blind - AFB, 2015; Silverman, Mendez, & Bell, 2019).

c) Measures for Improving Job Opportunities

It is believed that one of the most difficult jobs of governments is to ensure reasonable accommodation for people with visual disabilities and remove the existing barriers (Butler et al, 2002). Some researchers have argued that the governments should improve public awareness regarding personal and vocational needs of people with visual disability, enhancing the opportunities for employment, promoting family support and maintaining a positive attitude towards people with disabilities (Salomone & Paige, 1984; Wolffe, Roessler & Schriener 1992; Young, 1994).

Employers need to be equipped with knowledge on how to adapt themselves and the workplace to the needs of people with disabilities. This support is necessary to ensure that people with disabilities have equal opportunities like their fellow workers without disability. In line with this, facilities for social interaction and interpersonal communication should be improved within companies that employ those with visual disability. Furthermore, the inability of the person with visual disability to communicate with others non-verbally needs to be recognised by all

employees to guarantee better social interaction. As a result, employees with a visual disability will be regarded as being employable (Naraine & Lindsay, 2011).

Companies which employ people with disabilities must be targeted for advocacy purposes as they can serve as an example – a role model – to others (Bell & Silverman, 2018).

Cimarolli and Wang (2006) argue that compared to unemployed people with visual disability, people with visual disability who are employed feel overprotected by people around them. By failing to fulfil the needs of citizens with visual disabilities and failing to help them integrate into the workforce, a great deal of labour productivity would be lost (Harrabi et al., 2014). The key issue for adults with visual disability is the level of support which they need, receive and demand in leading a 'normal' life.

Jezari (2012), in a study done in Uganda, concluded that people with disabilities should get suitable education. He identified two areas that need to be improved, namely, good education and proper support from and within society. People with visual disability must be supported by their family, government and civil society. Lack of social support will act as a barrier to accessing education, being integrated into society, and ultimately to finding employment (Gold & Simson, 2005; Jezari, 2012). Facilities at workplaces for people with visual disability need to be improved and, for instance, should include proper access to restaurants i.e., such facilities should be accessible without difficulty and assistance from colleagues (Naraine & Lindsay, 2011).

Finding most of the earlier publications outdated, quantitative in nature and not relevant to the current situation, the authors of the present study concluded that there is a need for new qualitative studies on the employment of people with visual disabilities living in low- and middle-income countries. They identified areas which deserved further research and analysis, especially regarding the employment needs of young people with visual disability in Kabul city.

Objective

This qualitative study about the employment needs of people with visual disabilities living in Kabul city aimed to gain insights into the experiences of young adults with visual disability on their journey towards employment.

METHOD

Study Design

A qualitative approach was adopted. In particular, a phenomenological approach was selected and adopted for examining participants' life experiences (Donalek, 2004). As a part of this study the researcher spent some time with the study respondents. Phenomenology helped the researcher to explore and understand encounters and experiences without any pre-assumptions of those encounters and experiences (Converse, 2012).

Participants

The respondents were selected based on the characteristics and objectives of the study. The study sample purposefully consisted of young adults with visual disability living in Kabul – in order to study the right and “information-rich” cases (Palinkas et al, 2015). There were totally 14 participants in this study (7 males and 7 females). All of them were adults, aged between 20 and 40 years, with a mean age of 30 years. Table 1 shows the demographic information of the study population.

Table 1: Demographic Information of the Participants

Name	Age	Gender	Education	Major	Job	Marital Status
P1	39	Female	Bachelor's	English	Teacher	Married
P2	31	Female	Bachelor's	Special Education	Teacher	Single
P3	33	Female	Double Master's	1. Law and Political Science 2. International Relations	Commissioner of Human Rights	Married
P4	40	Female	General college	English Literature	Teacher	Married
P5	30	Female	Bachelor's	Law	Prosecutor	Single
P6	29	Female	Bachelor's	Special Education	Jobless	Single
P7	25	Female	Bachelor's	Literature	Jobless	Single
P8	27	Male	Master's	Commentary and Hadith (Tafsir and Hadith)	Teacher	Married
P9	40	Male	Bachelor's	Education	Owner of NGO	Married

P10	34	Male	Bachelor's	Literature (Dari)	Presenter of radio programmes	Married
P11	40	Male	Bachelor's		Teacher (online teaching)	Married
P12	32	Male	Bachelor's	Special Education	Teacher	Married
P13	29	Male	Bachelor's	Special Education	Jobless	Married
P14	40	Male	Double Bachelor's	Education Sharia	Head of Islamic Education department in a special school Owner of Alfalah Madrasa	Married

Data Collection

A semi-structured interview was designed, to obtain subjective responses from participants about a particular situation or phenomenon they had experienced. Interviews continued until the point of data saturation was reached and no new information was given.

The interview guide consisted of two parts. The first part contained demographic information such as name, age, gender, educational background, type of job, marital status, and type of disability (congenital or acquired before the age of 5 years). The second part was designed to address the employment needs of the participant; this part had a total of six main questions.

The data collection procedure was done in two phases - the pilot interview and the actual interview. The pilot interview was followed by the actual interviews during which open-ended questions were used to generate data from the participants. The sessions were recorded with the participants' permission. A consent form was obtained from the participants prior to the interview sessions. The interviews were conducted in two Afghan national languages - Pashto and Dari.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was applied to analyse the data and the six-step procedure was followed as suggested by Creswell (2016).

Ethical Considerations

Priority was given to ethical issues such as informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity, and protection of the study subjects.

RESULTS

The objective of this study was to gain insights into the experiences of people with visual disability regarding their employment journey. Three themes and five sub-themes were identified as employment needs.

Equipping with Essential Skills to be Competent Workers

People with visual disabilities need certain skills to participate fully in daily life activities, whether at home or at the workplace. The first theme that emerged was the necessity for people with visual disability to be equipped with essential skills to be competent workers. Most of the participants mentioned skills that a person with visual disability must have in order to be hired and to be competent in the labour market. This will be elaborated on under the two sub-themes: professional skills and life skills.

Professional and Vocational Skills

Participants reported that professional skills are essential for successful career development. The professional skills mentioned were: adaptability and flexibility; ability to speak several languages - especially an international language; persuasiveness - such as the ability to convince an employer during a job interview; digital literacy skills; and, communication skills. Regarding vocational skills, the interviewees gave the example of weaving. Most of the participants mentioned the importance of being equipped with vocational skills that meet the requirements of employers so that they face fewer difficulties in doing their jobs well.

“I know that I can do any job. The only thing I need is to have some skills, which mostly I have. I have a bachelor’s degree. I have skills in computers, I can speak the formal languages of my country and English too I can speak” (P2).

“We must be fully skilled in the required fields as an employee. I need to be skilled in technology, I must be flexible in my job place and as a blind person, I have to adapt to the environment. Otherwise, those who are hiring us, why not hire a person who has normal sight and who can work normally” (P11).

“In order to compensate for the absence of our vision, we need to be fully skilled in technology, communication, and time management. We must be creative so we can work effectively and do our job successfully” (P9).

Life Skills

The importance of possessing the necessary skills to obtain and succeed at a job was confirmed by approximately three-fifths of the participants. However, they referred to the need for life skills as well, e.g., coping well with one's disabilities, having problem-solving skills, and possessing some creativity.

“First of all, we must have the skill and ability to cope well with our disability. We have to accept our disability, and we have to recognise our abilities so there is when we can do any job with more confidence. Secondly, we must be skilled in communication in order to convince the employer and then continue our job. Being skilled in communication is much needed for people with visual disability because this is the best way for us to show the ability we have. Third, we must be skilled in working with computers, using smartphones and other necessary technology creatively. Last but not the least, we must be adaptable and flexible in the field where we work in order to not differentiate from other workers” (P3).

Thus, participants believed that having the afore-mentioned skills would make it easy for people with visual disability to get and successfully retain their desired jobs.

Support from Employer and Society

According to the participants, while the people with visual disabilities have to qualify or make themselves suitable for a job, the employer also has certain responsibilities when hiring. In this context there are two sub-themes that require attention: 1) creating opportunities for people with visual disability, and 2) raising community awareness about the abilities of people with visual disabilities.

Creating Opportunities for People with Visual Disability by the Employers

The findings revealed that there is not very much difference in the abilities of people with and without visual disabilities. The participants felt that the factors that could contribute towards more work opportunities for people with visual disabilities were: employment prospects; creating more jobs, internship or placement opportunities; job training; the availability of transport, accommodations and financial resources.

“The government needs to provide more employment opportunities and vacancies for us. The more we have job opportunities, the more we will feel confident to apply. Because most of the time we apply but wherever we go there

is no single job for us” (P13).

“We can do our job as others can do. We just need some equipment, conditions, and a barrier-free environment to perform our job well. Effective accommodations allow persons with disabilities to perform their duties to the best of their abilities. It is important to have the right accommodations in our workplace so we can participate as valued members of the working team” (P9).

Another participant suggested that opportunities for employment might not be available because employers think that the tools needed by people with visual disabilities are expensive.

“I am not asking for costly tools or special treatment, but some simple steps which pave the way for creating equal access to be equal contributors in my job. We request often little cost accommodations or sometimes even no cost is needed to be paid and can highly impact our success in the job” (P10).

For some participants, the working environment was very important. One of the participants who worked in a governmental organisation valued the environment a lot.

“Most of the time, the environment is not prepared for the acceptance of persons with visual disability to be integrated into many organisations as employees” (P5).

A participant who was a teacher was concerned about other people with visual disability.

“We need to work; if we do not work then we have to beg, which is something really shameful in our culture. Our government must consider some specific training and instruments so we can do anything. I was weaving jackets besides teaching. During the Taliban regime when women were not allowed to work, I was knitting jackets at home and selling them. And there was an NGO which gave us 7kg of flour substitute for one jacket. I got even a prize for knitting the best jackets. But now I am not weaving anymore because of the Chinese goods which are very cheap. My husband was killed, and I have to take care of my children too with my salary” (P1).

Raising Community Awareness about Abilities of People with Visual Disabilities

Participants mentioned that raising public awareness about the abilities of people with visual disabilities is as essential as creating awareness about their disabilities. In other words, the public must be aware of both their disabilities and abilities. The participants laid particular emphasis on the dissemination of information regarding the abilities of people with visual disabilities in the community and introducing successful employed people with visual disabilities as role models to the community and to the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled.

“Actually, they are not aware of employment laws and plans regarding people with disability. Otherwise, they will get ready to hire and work with us. Often employers are afraid of hiring us due to being unsure how we work and how they work with us” (P8).

“We must be placed in different posts according to our abilities, but unfortunately, due to not having enough knowledge regarding us, they just focus on our disability and forget about our abilities as human beings. Therefore, mostly the employer denies hiring us” (P6).

“I want to tell those who are not aware of our abilities and disabilities. Our differences with them are just at the level of being able to see and not being able to see. We are similar in the abilities; there are certain things that we cannot see but once we learn about it or if it’s tangible things or doable, we can do it except if it’s only to do with the sight” (P4).

“Our employers and colleagues may feel uncomfortable while working with us because they are not aware of blindness, or they do not understand what we need. They cannot be blamed because they never had the experience of working with us” (P11).

Some of the participants were emphatic about their own awareness regarding their responsibilities, abilities, and disabilities.

“We need to be aware and accept our responsibilities as an employee and our employer must provide services and facilities to remove the barriers which are impeding us to be fully participating and integrating with workload” (P3).

In conclusion, support from employers and society has been counted as one of the important initiatives in enabling employment for people with visual disabilities. Most of the participants laid emphasis on raising community awareness about the abilities of people with visual disability and on creating opportunities for hiring this population.

Encouragement and Support from Family Members and those involved in Advocacy of People with Visual Disabilities

Another vital theme that emerged from the interviews was that as employees, people with visual disabilities needed encouragement and support from their families and all those who played a role in advocating for their access to employment. They valued the support they received from teachers, non-governmental organisations, their families, and social support in general. They mentioned the role and importance of family support and encouragement to them.

“Wherever I apply for a job, and I could not get the job, my brother was telling me ‘this place was not made for you because you have more abilities than this job’. Sometimes he was giving me the example of other people who even were sighted but they were jobless, then I realised yeah, he is right I will get the job once it’s made for me. Next time I would apply with more confidence and more morals” (P11).

Another participant shared an interesting story of family encouragement and emotional support.

“My mother was my big inspiration. She was very much concerned about me. I guess she is still but now when I have my job, she says she is satisfied with my side, but I can understand she is still concerned about me. When I was a child, she heard from someone on the bus that there is a school where students with visual disabilities can study. When she came home, she was so excited. She took me there the next day. She was always telling me ‘I want to see the day when you graduate from school’. When I reached the end of my school she added on her demands and then she was expecting me to study my bachelor’s. She was the one who was reminding me about my abilities. I was not expecting myself to finish school even, but my mother kept telling me ‘when you can go to school and can study there, why not a university?’. And then, when I was in university, she was telling me ‘Once you get the job, that will be the biggest day of my life to see you independent’” (P2).

Teachers' support was also mentioned by several participants. In fact, they considered teachers as the most meaningful people in helping them achieve their aspirations.

"I will say there were some teachers who behaved the way that I was feeling I am the most incapable person in the world. One of my teachers would always talk to me and he was telling me 'you have to try more than other students, you have to show others that you have the abilities that they don't have, so they will only think what you can do and how you can do instead of what you can't do and why you cannot do'. I always pray for him. This was his support and encouragement that I am working now in such a place where even people with normal sight dream about to work" (P5).

It was inferred that while support from family and teachers is largely emotional and indirect, it however plays a vital role in terms of giving confidence to apply for a job or to carry on at the job successfully. Non-governmental organisations however, always had a tangible and direct effect on their employment and placement.

"I got all my training from NGOs. They taught me Braille, provided me teachers, and trained me in mobility and orientation. Shortly, whatever I am today, the NGO has played a huge role in my success. They even provided the opportunity of my admission to a school near my home. Otherwise, we were never aware of the fact that visually disabled can study" (P13).

"All the skills I have, have been blessed by NGOs. Tools I needed, skills I needed, training and anything else was provided by the NGOs. I mentioned before, anything we need cannot be found in the bazaar. If the NGOs were not providing these all services, I don't know what would happen to me. Software and hardware for the computer, repair of the instruments we use for Braille writings, and even beyond them are given to us by them. A tape recorder, converting Braille, printing Braille, and any other service, all are provided by these few NGOs in Kabul city. I always appreciate their services and support they provide to the visually disabled" (P12).

This sub-theme shows that family, teachers, and non-governmental organisations play a significant role in encouraging people with visual disabilities to believe in their abilities. They support them to strive for jobs and provide them the essential skills, tools, and training.

DISCUSSION

Equipping with Essential Skills to be Competent Workers

There are few opportunities in the city of Kabul for people with visual disabilities to be hired as employees. A similar situation has been noted by the National Federation of the Blind (2010) in the United States of America. Obama (2010), Agran, Hughes, Thoma, and Scott (2016), Erickson, Lee, and von Schrader (2016), Preston (2018) and Silverman et al. (2019) also indicated that those who are blind are mostly from a disadvantaged socioeconomic background and this population is less likely to be employed. In addition, Pellerin (2010) in a study found that despite having fair reasons for employability and having legislation support such as the Americans with Disabilities Act, opportunities available to make use of employment services such as rehabilitation and vocational training, and a high level of accessibility to technology, people with visual disabilities still struggle to become part of the workforce and lack equal opportunities. Similarly, Benschhoff et al (2014) showed that in India employment rates of people with sight loss are way below the average employment rates.

The present study indicates that those with visual disabilities need to be equipped with essential skills to secure jobs. A number of skills are required to convince an employer to hire someone with a visual disability. Groh et al (2016) also had similar findings. They argued that while formal schooling provides people with visual disabilities some technical skills, to be a successful employee, other skills are needed too. These skills include social interaction skills, skills for working in a team, skills for reacting professionally, and especially personal presentation skills for job interviews.

Preston (2018) argued that to prepare people with visual disabilities for employment, the existing support programmes must be comprehensive. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act or WIOA (2014) laid significant emphasis on the rehabilitation of adults with disabilities via the provision of services and training. Having adequate education and vocational training is very important for people with disabilities (Wehbi & El, 2007; Bell & Mino, 2013; Lindstrom et al., 2013). The skills needed to be a competent worker are categorised in the present study as professional and vocational skills, life skills, and soft skills. The government and employers in Afghanistan rarely provide training and workshops specially for people with disabilities to become skilled in certain areas of work. This study found that, despite the importance of life

skills needed for the employability of the youth, there are few such programmes available in the study region.

The present study supports the study by Naraine and Lindsay (2011) that lays great emphasis on enhancing communication skills of people with visual disabilities. Naraine and Lindsay (2011) recognised the communication difficulties which many people in this group have, as a failure for interacting socially. Therefore, Salomone and Paige (1984), Wolffe et al. (1992) and Young (1994), concluded that people with visual disabilities need to be equipped with essential communication skills to be competent employees.

Support from Employers and Society

The findings of this study showed that people with visual disabilities need support from employers and society to find jobs and perform them well.

Enhancement of the abilities of people with visual disabilities will contribute to increased employment rates for this group. The Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled should be asked to consider the rights of people with visual disabilities to get jobs. In addition, those who are working successfully should be introduced to the community as role models. Crudden and McBroom (1999) explained that role models are significant factors in creating and maintaining motivation of people to get a job. Crudden and McBroom further explained that role models do not only serve as examples to people with visual disabilities but also can provide information on employment opportunities. Rehabilitation providers must be in contact with role models to generate and develop support systems for others with visual disabilities. Support systems could be valuable for those who may receive limited family support.

Baril (2013) and Bell (2010) also showed that the use of mentors and role models play a significant role in improving self-esteem. Some of the earlier studies (Salomone & Paige, 1984; Wolffe et al., 1992; Young, 1994) have shown that improving the public's awareness regarding personal and vocational abilities of people with visual disabilities and making use of role models are ways to overcome the barriers preventing the employment of people with visual disabilities.

Raising awareness, especially among the employers, is very important. This finding is in support of the Bell (2010) and Silverman (2018) studies. Bell and Silverman demonstrate in their respective studies that employers must know how to adapt themselves to employees with visual disabilities to ensure that they receive the

same support as their other co-workers. McDonnall, Zhou, and Crudden (2013) and McDonnall (2014) demonstrated that employers' negative attitudes form a major barrier for the employment of people with visual disabilities. Therefore, the aforementioned authors emphasise the importance of educating employers about the abilities of people with visual disabilities.

Mishra (2019) recommended implementing Total Quality Management (TQM) within the organisation (a concept which was developed by Shewhart in 1920). TQM gives importance to encompassing respect for each and every employee, considering everyone equal with latitude, flexibility, and innovative interaction. This includes creating and providing working opportunities for people with disabilities and others who also are at risk of losing their work in the labour market for various reasons. TQM also assists organisations to create a friendly working environment, with freedom to exchange opinions and ideas. In addition, the SSMR survey (2009) in the United Kingdom states that there is less awareness among employers particularly about employees with visual disabilities, even if their sight loss does not affect their working abilities. Informants of this survey believed that the main reasons for unemployment of people with disabilities are discrimination of employers, based on ignorance and fear.

Most of the participants in the present study reported that they got their jobs through mediators. The mediator is a broker who hires the person with visual disability (legally or illegally) because of a personal relationship, a bribe, or for being the relative of the employer himself. The study participants asserted that the mediator plays a significant role which cannot be ignored. It is of vital importance for people with visual disabilities to get a suitable job in Kabul city. Some of the participants are still jobless because they do not have any mediator in governmental institutions. There is no documented empirical research to support this finding. Contrary to this, the mediator has been mentioned in other studies as counsellor and advisor in choosing a profession, finding and maintaining a job, and mending disputes in several aspects of working life (Mishra, 2019). However, in line with the previous studies, it can be concluded that people with visual disabilities are in need of support from employers and society.

Encouragement and Support from Family Members and those Involved in Advocacy of People with Visual Disability

Encouragement and support from family members and those involved in advocacy of people with visual disabilities were identified as significant and

important. This finding is consistent with the research conducted by Crudden, and McBroom (1999) and Pellerin (2010), which showed that family members and partners are important. They help to overcome the barriers of unemployment. In the study of Budiarti (2018), family support and social support were considered as the most influential factors for successful employment of those with visual disabilities. Emotional support for those with sight loss is very important (Jackson & Lawson, 1995; Bambara, 2008).

The support of family is essential when searching for a job and maintaining it. Encouragement, for example, in helping people with visual disabilities to apply for a job is significant. Besides, family support helps them to reach the workplace. This finding is in line with Crudden and McBroom (1999) who revealed that in addition to assistance with transportation, family encouragement and support increase motivation and confidence of people with visual disabilities, especially when the job search is not progressing well. Moreover, Bell and Mino (2013) explained that friends, peers, and social circles also extend their support along with support of the family. They also stated that positive support from the family can play a major role in the employment of people with visual disabilities.

Support from NGOs in Afghanistan is largely in the form of assistive devices and orientation and mobility training; nowadays this is limited because of the current political situation. It is worth noting that NGOs offer support largely in the domain of education but the participants in this study identified their support in the employment domain as well. The need for support from NGOs and those involved in the advocacy of people with disabilities is fully recognised by Ilieva (2006). Her study in Bulgaria highlighted three important roles of NGOs and stressed that those who are involved in the advocacy of people with disabilities should work on projects which really target their needs. The first role is that NGOs should contribute to the improvement of the educational level of people with disabilities and help them in finding jobs. The second role is to facilitate vocational training for people with disabilities. The third role is to empower people with disabilities by creating a communication platform and providing possibilities for adapted and accessible information.

From the findings of this research it can be understood that it is necessary for people with visual disabilities to get a job which is in line with their abilities. Encouragement and support from family members and NGOs have played an important role in their education. In addition, support from NGOs is needed for people with visual disabilities to get and maintain their jobs.

CONCLUSION

The current political and economic atmosphere in Afghanistan is responsible for the negligible employment of people with visual disabilities. In addition, their right to secure work has been seriously neglected in Kabul. It is important to highlight, in the context of this research, that the absence of national employment policies for people with visual disabilities have caused major setbacks to this community. Furthermore, they need to be equipped with the skills essential to be competent workers, and support is required from family members, employers, and society at large. In addition, creating opportunities for people with visual disabilities and raising community awareness regarding their abilities would increase their self-confidence, and pave the way for better employment opportunities.

Findings from the literature state that providing role models, improving the public's awareness regarding personal and vocational abilities of people with visual disabilities, enhancing the skills necessary for employment, promoting the abilities of people with visual disabilities, family support and maintaining a positive attitude are some of the strategies for overcoming employment barriers. Adopting these principles and strategies in Afghanistan could result in better employment prospects for people with visual disabilities.

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