EXPERIENCES ABOUT DISABILITY-INCLUSIVE EMPLOYMENT BY EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES WITH DISABILITIES IN SELECTED INSTITUTIONS IN MALAWI

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JUNE, 2024

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BSc (Physiotherapy)

A Dissertation Submitted to Management Studies Department, Faculty of Commerce, in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Award of a Degree of Master of Business Administration

University of Malawi

The Polytechnic

June, 2024

DECLARATION

I, George Chimatiro, declare that this MBA Dissertation, submitted for the award of Master of Business Administration at the University of Malawi, the Polytechnic, is entirely my work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. Moreover, no part of this dissertation has been submitted anywhere for an award of any other degree or examination to any other university or college.

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

We, the undersigned, hereby certify that we have read and approved this dissertation entitled *"Experiences about disability-inclusive employment by employers and employees with disabilities in selected institutions in Malawi"* for examination by the University of Malawi, Polytechnic.

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DEDICATION

My late mother, Mary "aNangondo" Chimatiro, deserves special recognition for the "tough love" she provided me during my first 14 years of existence, and for that, this dissertation is dedicated. It feels like only yesterday that she went away to join the angels. As I've grown up, I've come to realize that she always had my best interests at heart, even though as the firstborn I couldn't fully comprehend the nature and depth of her love. Finally, as I realized later, her tough love positioned me in the proper life footage that endures. This work serves as further evidence of the virtues she and my father ardently instilled in me as a child—hard work, focus, tenacity, and resilience. I appreciate my parents.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABSTRACT

The concept of disability-inclusive employment ensures that modifications are made to the physical, communicative, and attitudinal aspects of the workplace to accommodate those with disabilities and enable them to work efficiently and comfortably. However, research on the experiences of people with disabilities often paints a gloomy picture, with negative cultural stereotypes and lack of knowledge about disability issues being main obstacles. There is growing demand for research on specific workplace barriers to disability-inclusive employment with potential exclude people with disabilities in areas with limited. The purpose of this study was to examine how employers and employees with disabilities experienced disability-inclusive employment in selected institutions in the country. As part of a social constructivist narrative inquiry, in-depth interviews were conducted among human resource (HR) managers from selected institutions with nine of them purposefully selected. Additionally, employees with disabilities (EWDs) were also invited, with seven of them, selected using snowballing. The data was analysed using reflexive thematic analysis. Applying the framework of the Theoretical Framework of Inclusiveness at the Workplace, seven themes were developed, presented, and discussed. These included unsupportive values and behaviours that create an unhelpful and toxic environment for EWDs, employer policy limitation due to a lack of sufficient knowledge of the particular policy requirements, employer dilemma related to HR-held beliefs and attitudes relating EWDs to low work performance, increased cost of accommodating them, unaccommodating workplace structures and behaviours that impede accessibility and a positive work environment, and organisational challenges related to unfavourable workplace practices and a lack of accessible transportation options. Additional themes were facilitators to disability-inclusive employment and mitigating challenges. In conclusion, disability-inclusive employment remains elusive in Malawi as there is less inclusive climate, leadership, and practices across the spectrum of included institutions. Having an understanding boss is a strong facilitator for disability-inclusive employment. There is a need to create interventions that alter organisational cultural values, improve HRs' understanding of disabilities in line with relevant, context-specific disability-inclusive policies, equip HRs with expertise in disability-inclusive employment, and strengthen EWDs' sense of self-determination. In the context of disability inclusion, more research is required on the experiences of persons with various disabilities, such as mental and hearing impairments, in the workplace."

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CRPWDs   Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

CSR   Corporate Social Responsibility

EWDs   Employees with Disability

HR   Human Resource

ILO   International Labor Organisation

LMICs   Low- and Middle-Income Countries

PWDs   People with Disabilities

SE   Self-Evaluations

UNCRPD   United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

WHO   World Health Organisation

WHODAS   World Health Organisation Assessment Schedule

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

People with disabilities, comprising around one billion people globally, face widespread exclusion, leading to poorer outcomes such as school attendance, employment, and community engagement (WHO 2011). It is known that unemployment is a major contributing factor to several of the economic and social injustices that people with disabilities (PWDs) encounter throughout their lives. There is strong evidence that PWDs suffer unemployment. For example, a review on employment issues published by the US Bureau of Labor Statistics in 2022 (Ralph et al., 2022) reported that PWDs had significantly lower employment rates than people without disabilities in all age groups. In addition, 29% of employees with disabilities (EWDs) worked part-time, compared to 16% of workers without disabilities. Yet employment is essential for PWDs to achieve financial independence and reintegration into mainstream society (Bonaccio et al. 2020). Exclusion of PWDs from employment therefore violates fundamental human rights as enshrined in article 27 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and, locally, in the Malawi National Disability Act of 2012. This ultimately hinders the achievement of development targets like the Sustainable Development Goals. Addressing this marginalized group is crucial for a full and engaged life.

According to management literature, unemployment among PWDs is high because there is no supportive institutional environment at work (Bonaccio et al., 2020; Harpur, 2020). Others, however, observe that issues that ensure disability-inclusiveness are not being addressed such that there is an absence of inclusive practices, inclusive climate, and inclusive values, knowledge, and skills throughout the workplace hierarchy (Smith, 2020).

1.1.1. Historical perspectives of disability-inclusive employment

In the past, the medical model of disability has viewed disability as a characteristic of the individual who has it and has advocated for "correction" of the issue. This refuted the theory that social or environmental variables could be the reason for PWDs' inability to participate in and perform meaningful jobs. People with disabilities had terrible experiences with this paradigm, which may account for the high rate of unemployment among PWDs. Disability experts, on the other hand, have fought against the medical model view throughout time and have made a dramatic shift in favour of the social model. In fact, a number of arguments have surfaced since the late 1990s, according to Barnes (2019), and they essentially contend that

disability studies will lose their significance in the absence of the social model of disability. Makuwira (2022) echoed the need of acknowledging the social elements of disability in discussions pertaining to disability-inclusive development. Mukiwa contends that support for a fresh strategy that takes into account the social and political conceptions of disability is vital. This led to the development of the new strategy known as "disability-inclusiveness," which aims to remove social obstacles and implement programmes tailored to the needs of people with disabilities in order to provide equitable access to services, means of subsistence, and political and social engagement (Makuwira, 2022).

Disability-inclusive employment, as defined by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in 2015 and emphasised by Shaw et al. (2022), is defined as hiring and workplace policies and practices that accept and enable PWDs as candidates and employees and give them the same opportunities as others to secure "decent" work that fits their goals and abilities. Assuming that persons will work in "mainstream" workplaces rather than isolated or segregated ones is at odds with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)'s Article 27 and Malawi National Disability Act of 2012; disability-inclusive employment therefore necessitates making changes to the physical, communication, and attitude aspects of the workplace in order to accommodate those with disabilities and allow them to work efficiently and comfortably.

While many PWDs want to work, there are several obstacles in their way of finding employment, maintaining it, and advancing their careers. According to published research by Bonaccio et al. (2020), deeply ingrained misconceptions about the abilities and entitlements of handicapped persons are one of the main obstacles to disability-inclusive employment. Accordingly, even those who manage to get past discriminatory hiring practices frequently experience stigma and a sense of undervaluation at work (Bonaccio et al. 2020).

1.1.2. Contextual dimension of disability-inclusive employment

Challenges to disability-inclusive employment are not only reported in Western studies. An analysis conducted by Shaw et al. (2022) on the 'Inclusion Works' initiative in four middle- and low-income countries revealed impediments to the advancement of disability-inclusive employment. The authors discovered that in reality, employers and job seekers with disabilities are frequently the main targets of disability-inclusive employment initiatives, leaving out other relevant parties and structural problems. Relationships and interactions between actors at work are among the issues that go unattended. Other studies agree in their findings on why current approaches to disability-inclusive employment fail. For example,

they ignore the dynamic, relational, and subjective elements that uphold unequal power relations and, thus, prolong exclusion from the workplace. According to Ebuenyi et al. (2020), these problems are made worse by a lack of awareness. Lack of awareness exacerbates these problems, as companies frequently view disability inclusion as challenging, a financial risk, or a solely altruistic effort to satisfy their corporate social responsibility (CSR) obligations as reported in African countries of Kenya, Uganda, and Nigeria (Ebuenyi et al., 2020, Shaw et al., 2022; Wickenden et al., 2020).

In Malawi, a study that explored institutional barriers to disability-inclusive employment in the urban centres, examining government-employer-trade union connections and potential for shared disability understanding produced vexing challenges. Claims by government officials and employers differs from that of employees with impairments. In particular, the authors discovered that policy-based presumption of a formalised workforce is in fact largely unrepresentative of the disabled labour force in informal employment. Secondly, that the long-term inclusion goals may be hampered by the disruptive, sporadic, and frequently reactionary nature of non-governmental organisation (NGO) initiatives, which have potential, jeopardise the efforts of disability activists in the country. Lastly, there was a discovery that stigma is based on economics, that is, there is a presumption that employees with disabilities won't create or earn enough to meet expectations for productivity, rent, or repayment expenses, hence they are discriminated against.

According to Shaw et al. (2022), to create a deeper understanding and offer answers, a collaborative approach engaging PWDs and others is necessary. Furthermore, more significant kinds of disability-inclusive employment may result from programmatic interventions that address power dynamics and stakeholder relationships (Shaw et al. 2022).

1.1.3. Conceptual Dimension of disability-inclusive employment

According to the Framework of Inclusiveness at Workplace (Smith, 2020), a workplace that is inclusive must have values like humility, acceptance of differences, openness to new ideas, and flexibility; knowledge that includes self-awareness, creating health coalitions, awareness of pertinent laws, and a macro perspective; and skills that include active listening, empathy, self-monitoring, appropriate communication tacit, ability to relate, and persuasion (Smith, 2020). Contextual elements, such as an inclusive climate, inclusive leadership, and inclusiveness practices, are also important for attaining a workplace that is inclusive (Smith 2020). According to his work, there is less likelihood of harassment and discrimination and employees are more likely to speak up and participate fully in an inclusive work environment.

The author claimed that transparent hiring and promotion practices, leaders' appreciation of members' contributions, open communication, and procedural fairness all increased employee perceptions of inclusion in the workplace. According to Smith (2020), strategies for resolving conflicts, information access, decision-making participation, communication facilitation, and avoiding stereotypes are among the practices that enhance inclusion.

To ensure that employers comply with requirements that facilitate disability-inclusive employment nations around the world develop policies and other instruments that form a country's institutional environment (Callus & Camilleri-Zahra, 2019). According to institutional theory, institutions have a "rationalised truth" or myth about how particular structures and procedures in specific spheres of society ought to be put into place (Aksom & Tymchenko, 2020). Because of this, organisations are more likely to eventually resemble one another (isomorphism). Accordingly, the ability of managers and employees to assimilate and be motivated by new information based on environmental patterns (the cultural-cognitive pillar), compliance with national policies (the regulatory pillar), social obligations, and the employer's moral standing (the normative pillar) all play a role in the decisions to hire, retain, and accommodate EWDs (Cheema et al., 2020; Aksom & Tymchenko, 2020; Hutchins et al., 2019). Any default in these pillars, according to institutional theory, will be reflected in the choices and actions of the organisations operating in that industry.

According to Chibaya et al. (2021), Malawi seems to have a favourable institutional environment. The country ratified the UNCRPD in 2009, and Article 27 of that agreement remains crucial. Discrimination against people with disabilities is prohibited by the Article, which also promotes their employment in both the public and private sectors. Though not the only ones, examples of such policies and actions include affirmative action plans, incentives, and other initiatives. There are several other government policies in Malawi that were impacted by the UNCRPD. For instance, Section 13 of The Malawi Disability Act 2012, another law, forbids discrimination against people with disabilities in the workplace with respect to any aspect of employment. However, it appears that none of these policies have an impact on PWDs' employment situation nationwide (Committee of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2017, p.8).

According to Suresh and Dyaram (2022), although there were other equally significant factors, an average employer's decision to hire a person with a disability was influenced by their knowledge of institutional provisions and its accommodation mandate. This is in line with the principles of the Framework of Inclusiveness at Workplace (Smith, 2020). On the

flipside, hiring decisions are impacted by ignorance of institutional regulations that facilitate the employment of PWDs. Smaller businesses, who frequently know less about the law and are less likely to hire and retain PWDs, are especially affected by this lack of awareness of the institutional regulations (Bonaccio et al., 2020).

It is possible that ignorance and eventual indifference contributed to the rise of less inclusive values, workplace practices, leadership, culture, and abilities (Glade, et al. 2020). There is the perception that EWDs prefer specific types of jobs that may allow more flexibility or have other characteristics that may be appealing to them, but employers ultimately choose to hire those who are perceived to have less difficult to work and meet deadlines for their assignments at the workplace (Alston, 2023). In addition, there is the belief that an individual with a disability cannot accomplish the work and that they run the risk of losing money as a result of lessened productivity. Finally, negative stereotypes and the attitudes of coworkers can also be obstacles to employment for EWDs because they foster a toxic work environment that makes it difficult for them to work freely and contentedly (Ameri et al., 2018). EWDs may therefore encounter various obstacles to employment, although some institutions encouraging their employment are in place.

1.2.   Problem statement

Disability-inclusive Disability-inclusive employment refers to working in an environment where individuals with and without disabilities coexist and are treated equally (Bonaccio et al., 2020). Shaw et al. (2022) noted that various initiatives aimed at promoting disability-inclusive employment seek to establish truly inclusive workplaces. Generally, Shaw et al. (2022) emphasised that these approaches concentrate intervention techniques on two key populations, namely employers and job seekers with disabilities.

Blanck (2020) contended that the "accommodation principle" is a key principle that underpins the inclusion mandate, requiring employers to make reasonable accommodations to tasks and workplaces so that qualified individuals with disabilities can participate in these areas on a regular basis. However, the majority of research results regarding the actual experiences of people with disabilities paints a gloomy picture. For instance, a study on the lived experiences of librarians with disabilities revealed that the main obstacles to disability participation in the workplace are negative cultural stereotypes about disabilities and a lack of knowledge about disability issues (Oud, 2019).

Another study by Khayatzadeh-Mahani et al. (2020) found that stigma, late start to the "concept of work" and workplace culture education, employers' knowledge, capacity,

attitudes, and management practices all have a negative impact on or completely prevent PWDs from participating in the labour market. However, Khayatzadeh-Mahani et al. (2020) argued that more qualitative research using in-depth interviews is necessary to assess the identified barriers because most of the data is derived from quantitative sources, which are typically more descriptive than explanatory. Research is required to address some of the particular workplace barriers for disability inclusive employment that may exclude PWDs (Oud, 2019). Research on managers' hiring practices in addition to workplace stigma, such as structural stigma, is suggested by Janssens et al. (2021), who supported this recommendation. Beyond the insights gathered from individuals with disabilities, McKinney and Swartz (2021) noted that research involving employers and HR professionals could offer a more comprehensive viewpoint.

According to Remnant et al. (2022), Malawi has some of the highest rates of unemployment overall, and it is even worse for people with disabilities. People with disabilities make up only 12% of the employed workforce in the nation when epilepsy and albinism are taken into account (National Statistical Office2019). When these conditions are taken out of the equation, however, this number drops to 0.9% (Remnant et al., 2022).

Additionally, as found by Remnant et al. (2022), Malawi's formalised workforce is generally not representative of the disabled labour force in the informal sector; non-governmental organisation (NGO) initiatives are disruptive and often reactionary, potentially endangering the work of disability activists; and there is a pervasive stigma against EWDs in the workplace. It remains pervasive to know if the institutional environment that Malawi boasts of translates to actual implementation of disability-inclusive employment practices as hoped for in various national policies.

The author hopes that gaining an understanding of the country's contextual workplace barriers to disability-inclusive employment from EWDs and employers (HRs) could bring out the state of disability inclusiveness or lack thereof. The result could further initiate a dialogue about mainstreaming-effective disability-inclusive strategies and potentially increase the number of qualified and capable people with disabilities who participate in the workforce.

1.3.   Main objective
To examine the experiences of disability-inclusive employment by employers and employees with disabilities in selected institutions in Malawi to see if the experiences could explain the low number of EWDs in the workplaces.

Specific objectives

    i.   To analyse employer experiences regarding disability-inclusive employment in line with their values, knowledge, and skills.

    ii.   To analyse the lived experiences of PWDs regarding disability-inclusive employment in their workplaces.

1.4.   Research questions

    i.   What are the experiences of employers regarding disability-inclusive employment in line with their values, knowledge, and skills?

    ii.   What are the lived experiences of PWDs regarding disability-inclusive employment in their workplaces?

1.5.   Significance of the study

While the country's unemployment rate is high overall, but it is disproportionately higher for people with disabilities (PWDs) (Remnant et al., 2022; National Statistical Office, 2019). The Malawian government is a signatory to and developer of both international and local policies, emphasising the right to employment for people with disabilities and the necessity of removing all obstacles to workplace inclusion (Chibaya, et al., 2021).

Gaining an understanding of the nation's unique workplace barriers to disability-inclusive employment could support the initiation of a dialogue about mainstreaming effective disability-inclusive strategies and potentially increasing the number of qualified and capable people with disabilities who participate in the workforce. Additionally, it might encourage the creation of policies that address important concerns affecting workers with disabilities. The results may influence the course of future studies in this field. In fact, even a small snapshot in time could help recognise the problem and encourage more research and possible solutions. This study could also fill the gap of knowledge in disability inclusive employment in the country with paucity of research activity.

1.6.   Outline of dissertation

Chapter one provides an overview and background of the study, emphasising its significance in relation to disability and employment in Malawi. This chapter goes on to address the research problem, study objectives, research questions, and the importance of this study.

Chapter two reviews literature related to disability-inclusive employment. The theoretical framework that served as the current research's guidance is presented. In order to have a thorough understanding of the subject, it also covers disability and its functional impact on

people with disabilities, the institutional environment in Malawi, the disability-inclusive environment, and an empirical evaluation of the literature regarding PWDs' employment.

Chapter three presents the research setting, an explanation of the adopted qualitative research design, and a description of the study population and sample. The chapter also highlights the data-collection instrument and reflective thematic analysis method used. Trustworthiness of research and ethical considerations are also discussed.

Chapter four presents study findings and discussion on the experiences of employers (HR managers) and employees with disabilities (EWDs), and how their viewpoints may influence government oversight functions and HR management strategies in the pursuit of disability-inclusive workplaces.

Lastly, chapter five provides the study's conclusion and recommendations. An effort is made to draw attention to study limitations and future research directions.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1.   Introduction

Disability-inclusive employment in this research is used to mean an inclusive climate, inclusive leadership, and inclusive processes that are supported by favourable institutional environments, hiring practices, and other workplace policies that prevent the exclusion of people with disabilities. Article 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) defined a person with a disability as 'someone who has long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments which, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others' (UN 2006). Key stakeholders in disability-inclusive employment are EWDs and employers (HR) (Oud 2019). In this research, EWDs are those people with disabilities who are employed in the formal employment sector, and are governed by employer policies, rules and regulations. On the other hand, HR manager and the word 'employer' are used interchangeably to mean an organisational leader with an important role in shaping human resource systems that are responsive for the well-being of employees (Nishii & Paluch, 2018).

In keeping with Oud's (2019) observation, exploring the experiences of employers and EWDs helps to understand disability-inclusive employment in a balanced way. Experience, as defined by Collins Dictionary, is the impact that everything or anything that has happened to a person has had on them, causing them to react differently to situations, emotions, etc. While positive experiences are the most sought-after outcomes in disability-inclusive employment, negative experiences are also helpful as they enhance meaning in life by stimulating comprehension, which is, understanding how the event fits into a broader narrative of the self, relationships, and the world (Vohs et al. 2019). This study hoped to understand disability inclusive employment experiences, generally, among the HRs and EWDs. In this chapter, an empirical review of literature is covered in the area of disability-inclusive employment, functional impact of disability and experiences of disability-inclusive employment by HRs and EWDs. Two theoretical frameworks have also been discussed."

Disability and its impact on functionality

According to Sabariego et al. (2022), who produced comprehensive functioning and disability data for the World Bank and WHO, 15% of people worldwide live with a disability, with 2.9% experiencing severe functional limitations. The authors also pointed out that over 80% of people with disabilities reside in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). Since observational studies revealed that most of them were vulnerable and marginalised within their communities, the issue is even more severe in LMICs like Ghana and Malawi (Jiya, et.al. 2022; Dosu & Hanrahan, 2021).

The WHO Disability Assessment Schedule (WHODAS 2.0) can be used to conceptualise disability in a clear and concise manner. The WHODAS 2.0 facilitates comprehension of disability as a phenomenon resulting from an imbalance in six distinct domains. Among them are: 1) Cognition, which entails conversing and comprehending with others; 2) Mobility, or moving around and getting around in the community; 3) Self-care, or taking care of oneself through eating, dressing, and staying alone; 4) Getting along with others; 5) Activities of daily living, such as work, school, leisure, and household duties; 6) Participation, or the capacity to engage with others in communal endeavours. Thus, long-term physical impairments affecting mobility; mental impairments affecting a person's comprehension and communication skills; and intellectual or sensory impairments affecting a person's degree of independence in daily living activities are all included in the definition provided by Article 1 of the CRPD.

According to Singh et al. (2021) and Jamali-Phiri et al. (2021), the most prevalent disabilities in Malawi are communication difficulties, visual impairment, hearing loss, and mobility issues. According to research conducted there, the nation's population's "health condition (per the WHO DAS demographic list)" and social settings interacted to create persistent problems. A few prominent environmental barriers that contributed to participants' clear definitions of disability included the absence of sturdy pathways around homes, difficult-to-use water and/or toilet sources, narrow doorways with steep entrance steps, and limited or far-off public transportation (Soni, et al. 2020; Harrison et al. 2020). These functional limitations ultimately affect employment at least from biomedical level.

Disability inclusive employment

The primary roots of the emphasis on employment that is inclusive of people with disabilities are the American Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Some elements from these Acts were used to establish the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990. The ADA is significant for the idea of disability-inclusive employment because it consciously advances two crucial components: The first is social institutions, which are key in helping people with disabilities exercise their right to full participation in society by actively removing barriers that are structural, discriminatory, and attitude-based. Second, they follow the "accommodation principle," which requires employers, government agencies, and public areas to adapt tasks, workspaces, and public areas so that eligible individuals with disabilities can participate equally (Blanck, 2019).

The importance of ADA was again highlighted by Blanck (2020) who gave evidence of different legal cases that were advanced against any individual or institution for the breach of "accommodation principle" that in the workplace require employers to make reasonable modifications. He concluded that America is better on disability issues following the adoption of ADA in 1990. Additionally on the work and employment for people with disabilities, Article 27 of the CRPD recognises the right of persons with disabilities to work on an equal basis with others. This includes the right to the opportunity to gain a living from work freely chosen or accepted in a labour market and work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities. State parties are to safeguard and promote the realisation of the right to work, including for those who acquire a disability during the course of employment, by taking appropriate steps, further detailed in Article 27.

There are multiple strategies that employers can implement to create inclusive and accessible work environments for individuals with disabilities. Four strategies that organisations use to stress disability inclusion were outlined by Gould et al. (2020). Statements about supplier diversity initiatives, employee resource groups, diversity and inclusion policies, and targeted recruiting and hiring were among them. These were emphasised as potentially fostering real inclusivity and acknowledgment of workers. The authors did highlight the need for more research on inclusive workplace policies, organisational cultures, and work practices.

2.2.   Employment for people with disabilities in Malawi

The institutional Theory argues that an organisation's courses of action are guided by different external forces including national policies (Haleem et.al. 2022). In particular the theory offers a theoretical framework through which researchers can identify and investigate forces that support the survival and legitimacy of organisational practices, including elements such as culture, social environment, and regulation (Meyer & Schotter, 2020).

According to Aksom and Tymchenko (2020), institutions have a "rationalised truth" or myth about how specific procedures and structures in particular societal sectors must be put into place. Thus, to demonstrate their legitimacy through the adoption of sustainable practices that stakeholders deem appropriate and proper, organisations must rely on environmental institutional patterns for their actions and reactions (Meyer & Schotter, 2020; Hutchins et.al. 2019).

As a result, organisations in a sector gradually become more isomorphic, or similar to one another in terms of structure and operations, due to the need to attain legitimacy. Aksom and Tymchenko (2020) posit that isomorphism can be attained through three "pillars of institutions." They are cultural-cognitive, normative, and regulative. Hutchins et al. (2019) also listed coercive, normative, and mimetic factors.

The formal regulations, which include laws and other similar rules enacted by official authorities, are the foundation of the institutional regulative pillar (coercive). Formal sanctions are used to enforce compliance within this pillar. Regulatory institutions, in particular, contain governance guidelines and rules along with the monitoring and sanctioning procedures that go along with them. In the end, regulatory pillars use incentives for adherence to rules and sanctions for non-adherence (Aksom&Tymchenko, 2020).

The second or normative pillar is based on standards that have been set by professionals in their field and are upheld by the companies where they are employed. Common norms and values are part of the pillar. Cheema et al. (2020) claimed that these normative drivers compel employers and companies to conform in order to seem like they are acting in a morally-upright manner. As such, they encourage businesses to be more socially and environmentally conscious.

According to Aksom and Tymchenko (2020), normative systems specify aims and purposes (values). For example, the normative system reinforces the goals of profit-making, including defining methods to reach these goals (norms) and maintaining honesty and integrity

throughout the profit-making process. According to Aksom and Tymchenko (2020), compliance with the normative pillar only entails qualities like morality, social obligations, self-evaluations, and binding expectations, in contrast to the regulatory pillar's extensive use of coercion.

Regarding the normative pillar, the social obligation perspective restricts socially responsible endeavours to legal compliance and sees business as having primary economic goals (Johnston et al., 2021). In the narrow sense, Self-Evaluations (SE) indicate that an organisation is neither socially nor commercially conscious because the social answer (in the form of its products or services) can be sold on marketplaces. In this sense, SE may result in novel approaches to social problem-solving while raising participant satisfaction levels(Erpf et al. (2022).

SE provides an explanation for companies with business units focused on both social and commercial aspects. In the case of the non-profit organisation, its market-oriented unit might be organized as a profit centre that provides support to its nonprofit-oriented divisions. However, binding expectations are those that are mutually and voluntarily acknowledged in a relationship, not when there is an imbalance of power or inequality, as argued by Brown and Arnold (2019). Their arguments effectively illustrated this point. The mutually agreed-upon expectations that tie an organisation's performance consequently force it to act in the best interests of its stakeholders. Lastly, the term "morality" has a long history that dates back to Aristotle and Plato's days. According to Johnstone (2022), morality is defined as prescriptive judgments about justice, rights, and welfare that specify how individuals should behave towards one another. Thus, the author alludes to morality as an idea that views people as equal, rational beings who should always be viewed as ends in and of themselves rather than just as a means to an end.

Lastly, the cultural-cognitive pillar (mimetic) is ultimately accountable for institutions that emerge directly from a collective construction of reality based on the cognitive maps of the organisation's members (Aksom&Tymchenko, 2020). Specifically, mimetic isomorphic drive arises when organisations attempt to replicate the route to success and ultimately legitimacy by copying the actions of profitable industry rivals (Aksom&Tymchenko, 2020; Hutchins et.al. 2019). The impact of the environment on the behaviours of organisation members is thus explained by this pillar. The idea that intentional policies, practices, processes, and behaviours of other organisations that are perceived to be succeeding across the sector can have an impact

on individuals within the organisation is supported, in this context, by cultural-cognitive pillar (Kaartemo et al., 2020).

Contextually, Article 27 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) continues to be essential about work and employment for people with disabilities (Chibaya, et al. 2021). As noted by Chilemba (2020), the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2017) states that the UNCRPD was ratified by the Malawian government on August 27, 2009. The article specifically states that "States Parties shall, by taking appropriate steps, including through legislation, safeguard and promote the realisation of the right to work, including for those who acquire a disability during the course of employment." Thus, among other things, discrimination against individuals with disabilities is forbidden by Article 27. Additionally, it encourages their employment in the public and private sectors through the application of appropriate policies and measures. Affirmative action plans, incentives, and other initiatives are examples of such policies and actions, but they are not the only ones.

Therefore, several government policies that are heavily influenced by the UNCRPD provide Malawi's institutional regulatory pillar for the inclusion of people with disabilities. For instance, the Constitution contains clauses that support ideals consistent with a democratic and open society. Particularly, the Constitution's Chapter (iv) Sections 34 and 35 emphasise that everyone has the right to freedom of expression and opinion, respectively. The Malawi Labour Relations Act of 1996 also grants employees the freedom of association, which includes the freedom to join a trade union. This makes it possible for both employees and employers to successfully engage in collective bargaining. The Malawi Disability Act of 2012 is an additional policy that specifically safeguards and advances the achievement of individuals with disabilities' right to employment and work. Specifically, discrimination against people with disabilities in the workplace, contravenes Section 13 of the Disability Act in all employment-related matters.

Regardless of their physical condition, Malawian workers typically have unprecedented opportunities to demand greater participation in decisions that affect them at work, as demonstrated by the highlighted policies. The Committee of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2017 report, however, found that the reality on the ground is the exact opposite of what the Committee uncovered, defying this expectation. The quote "Persons with disabilities in Malawi still face challenges in social exclusion from mainstream society, although disability issues are implicitly provided for and several Malawian policies and legislative documents" makes this clear. They are still marginalised in society and subject to

discrimination. They have little to no access to essential social services like jobs, healthcare, and education. This demonstrates that there is most likely a mismatch between the goals of the government and the ratification, implementation, and policies regarding disabilities. The Ministry of Labour as the custodian of the oversight function regarding the players in respective sectors' implementation, monitoring, reward, and sanction, seems to be missing out on something, the report says. It is necessary to comprehend what employers know and apply regarding government policies to determine whether a gap exists in reality and how to close it.

2.3. Employer experiences with disability-inclusive employment

An even more lucid explanation for why individuals with disabilities have the lowest employment rates relative to those without disabilities comes from managers' perspectives on employment for people with disabilities. It is well known that some managers or employers have genuine but misguided beliefs that cast doubt on the abilities of individuals with disabilities to perform their jobs. According to Bonaccio et al. (2020), the effects of these viewpoints are evident throughout the whole employment cycle, including social integration, performance management, recruitment, and selection. Next, these are emphasised.

During the hiring phase, when prospective employees aim to anticipate their future employers' needs and actively seek out prospective employees, both parties become aware of the relationship that already exists. Currently, managers claim that candidates with disabilities are not frequently found in the applicant pool (Bonaccio et al., 2020). However, the claim is demonstrably false when considering the proportion of employable individuals with disabilities. The World Bank and the WHO estimate that 15% of people worldwide are living with disabilities (Sabariego et al., 2022).

Secondly, HR managers wonder if potential candidates with disabilities possess the necessary skills during the selection process. According to Bonaccio et al. (2020), managers have expressed difficulties in luring suitably qualified candidates with disabilities. Hiring managers also believe that, of the candidates who make it into the applicant pool, the candidates with disabilities might not want to work at all or might not want difficult assignments as part of the job (Alston, 2023). The open worry expressed by managers that they will have to modify their hiring practices if they come across applicants with disabilities and the issue of providing accommodations for EWDs with disabilities are noteworthy (Alston, 2023; Bonaccio et al., 2020).

Thirdly, concerning social integration, it has been reported that managers worry about employees with disabilities' capacity to "fit-in" socially because of possible attitudes from their peers (Krisi, et.al. 2022). Furthermore, it appeared clear from these authors that managers are ignorant of the best ways "they" can promote the successful social reintegration of individuals with disabilities. Managers were therefore worried that EWDs might have a detrimental effect on staff morale as a whole (Bonaccioetal., 2020).

Finally, when it comes to performance management, managers are said to be worried about several aspects of actual work performance. Deeply held worries stem from the assumption that workers with disabilities are generally less dependable than those without disabilities, are too slow for demanding work, struggle with time management and absenteeism, or are just less productive than those without disabilities (Alston, 2023; Bonaccio et.al. 2020; Krisi, et.al. 2022;). Furthermore, some reports claimed that managers make decisions based on their fears. The concern is that workers with disabilities may encounter workplace mishaps and safety hazards while going about their daily business (Bonaccio et al., 2020).

It is evident that hiring and retaining PWD raises significant concerns for managers and employers, concerns that might remain hidden in the absence of a thorough research project including one-on-one interviews.

2.4.   Employee experiences with disability-inclusive employment

The institutional context makes it abundantly evident that Malawi has policies in place to safeguard the employment interests of individuals with disabilities. Nonetheless, the level of satisfaction and sense of inclusion that EWDs experience within an organisation depends on the values, competencies, and knowledge that are prevalent throughout the organisation's hierarchy. Contextually, it also depends on inclusive practices, inclusive leadership, and an inclusive atmosphere (Smith, 2020).

People with disabilities recognise that their health, illness, impairment, or disability limits the amount or type of work they can perform, but they also face obstacles when trying to find and keep a job (Nogueira et al., 2021). The Auchan Portugal Group conducted a mixed-method study with 50 disabled employees and 314 coworkers. The findings showed that the participants believed that there was 1) pervasive prejudice with obvious suspicion, discomfort, or fear in all workplace interactions with management and colleagues; 2) typical pessimism regarding re-entry into employment among previously working people with disabilities; and 3) pervasive discrimination at the recruitment and selection stages. These

results are consistent with a qualitative study carried out among South African employees who have bipolar disorders, which revealed that others misunderstand and stigmatise these employees, leading to the possibility of discriminatory mistreatment based solely on their bipolar disorder (Morris, 2020).

Additionally, research revealed that the main causes of the difficulties faced by EWDs are as follows: 1) managers and coworkers' ignorance of impairments and health conditions; 2) a propensity to assume negatively about the abilities of people with disabilities; 3) the belief that people with disabilities do not fit the organisation's image; and 4) bullying and harassment, including coworkers' resentment of perceived "special treatment" to EWDs by employers (Whelpley, et.al. 2021; Barbareschi et.al. 2021; Andrews, 2019). This demonstrates how managers' concern for their organisation's reputation and ignorance of disability issues contribute to an adverse workplace culture that discriminates against individuals with disabilities. However, suspicions and the ensuing behaviour of coworkers, according to the authors, create circumstances that impede the development of inclusive, disability-friendly workplaces.

The evident experience of unfair treatment, discrimination, bullying or harassment at work, disrespectful and humiliation or ridiculed and in some cases physical violence against EWDs could explain the reported widespread unemployment of PWD in Malawi (National Statistical Office, 2019).

2.5. Theoretical framework

A theoretical framework, according to Varpio et al. (2020), is only a manifestation of the work that goes into a researcher applying a theory to a specific study; it consists of a logically constructed and connected set of concepts and premises that a researcher produces to guide a study. The framework is based on information that has been published and tested in the past (Kivunja, 2018). Grant and Osanloo, (2014) said that in order to establish a theoretical framework, any theories and concepts that will serve as the foundation for the research must be defined, logical linkages must be made between them, and these notions must be connected to the study that is being conducted in order to establish a theoretical framework. The current study adopted the Theoretical Framework of Inclusiveness at Workplace to anchor the research (Smith 2020).

The Theoretical Framework of Inclusiveness at Workplace was founded by Dr. Albert Joseph Smith, assistant professor in the department of political science at the St Joseph's Evening College in India. The framework was established based on the author's observations of

growing trends related to the notion of inclusion in earlier organisational literature (Roberson, 2006) as similar research streams were also being carried in social work (Barak, 2000) and social psychology (Brewer, 1991).

This framework states that three particular competencies and skills across the organisational hierarchy as well as three contextual factors are necessary to have an inclusive workplace. The specific knowledge, skills, and competencies include 1) self-awareness, building health coalitions, awareness of pertinent laws, and flexibility; 2) active listening, empathy, self-monitoring appropriate communication tacit, ability to relate, and persuasion; 3) skills about building health coalitions, building awareness of relevant laws, and macro viewpoint. Conversely, inclusive leadership, inclusive practices, and an inclusive atmosphere are the highlighted contextual elements of achieving an inclusive workplace.

According to Dennissen et al. (2019) state that "the removal of obstacles to the full participation and contribution of employees in organisations" is a necessary condition for feeling included at work. Furthermore, employees should be able to think that "their organisations engage in efforts to involve all employees in the mission and operation of the organisation concerning their individual talents". This is consistent with Bonaccio et al. (2020)'s definition of disability-inclusive employment. According to these writers, the idea refers to working in an environment where individuals with and without disabilities coexist and receive equal treatment. An additional perspective is that inclusion is a process that calls for a shift in perspective from everyone working in an organisation's diverse environment. In this study, the term "disability-inclusive employment" refers to the recognition and elimination of barriers that prevent people with disabilities (PWDs) from working in a diverse environment where they are free to express their full potential and capacity in the service of achieving organisational goals.

Focusing on the contextual factors, Smith (2020) defined the first factor, inclusive climate, as one in which the policies, practices, and actions of organisational agents align with equitable treatment of all social groups, with a particular emphasis on groups that have historically faced discrimination and stigma in their communities. Thus, in an inclusive environment, resistance and conflict are lessened because both minority and majority members are given a sense of belonging and appreciation. To explain further, an inclusive work environment is where there is less likelihood of harassment and discrimination and employees are more likely to speak up and participate fully (Smith 2020).

Secondly, inclusive leadership. Smith (2020) emphasised that there is mounting evidence highlighting the importance of top management philosophy and principles about equal employment opportunities and diversity. According to his observations, a leader can demonstrate inclusivity by thanking others for their contributions and accepting group members provide feedback. Such viewpoints may directly influence the policies and procedures that are put in place in that organisation, which may help or impede inclusion. The author claims that transparent hiring and promotion practices, leaders' appreciation of members' contributions, open communication, and procedural fairness all increased workers' feelings of inclusion in the workplace.

Last but not least, inclusive practices. Smith (2020) emphasised that a variety of practices have emerged that could enhance inclusion. These practices include information access, participation in decision-making conflict resolution techniques, communication facilitation, and avoiding stereotyping.

The Theoretical Framework of Inclusiveness at Workplace was seen appropriate as it relates to the current study that seeks to examine the experiences of disability-inclusive employment by employers and employees with disabilities in selected institutions in Malawi to see if the experiences could explain low number of EWDs in the work places. The three contextual factors embedded in it are key in guiding this exploratory study so that relevant data regarding disability-inclusive employment is captured in line with the research objectives. In particular, as highlighted by Korkmaz et al. (2022), inclusive leadership entails supporting organisational efforts such as promoting organisational mission on inclusion, recognising efforts and contributions, fostering employee uniqueness, strengthening belongingness within a team, and building relationships. By fostering employee uniqueness, for example, EWDs will feel "at home" in the workplace.

Secondly, the concept of an inclusive climate pertains to the inclusiveness of work environments. It is based on the idea that individuals who work in such environments feel more personally included. This climate is influenced by three main factors: (1) interactions among coworkers; (2) organisational practices; and (3) objective work setting characteristics (Shore et al., 2018). An employee can personally feel fully included when all these aspects of the inclusive climate are appropriately managed, and this is also true for EWDs who ultimately feel included.

Lastly, on the contextual factor of inclusive practices, Fan et al. (2023) found that there is a correlation between perceived organisational support and inclusive HR practices. This means with inclusive practice, employees including EWDs feel supported which is necessary for a general feeling of inclusion in the workplace. In this study, therefore, the specific independent variables are leadership, climate, and processes, whereas the dependent variable is the experience of disability-inclusive employment by the research participants.

2.6.   Summary

This chapter introduced the concept of disability-inclusive employment, an analysis of how disabilities affect function, an overview of the existing literature on disability-inclusive employment, an explanation of Malawi's institutional environment and how it affects inclusive employment, and an empirical review of the literature on employers' and EWDs' experiences with disability-inclusive employment. A framework for this research is presented last.

The review reveals that Malawi's institutional environment does not influence organisations' responses to workers with disabilities. Discrimination persists in the workplace, including during recruitment and selection processes. Employers often link challenges like the lack of qualifications, challenging assignments, and social integration issues to negative impacts on morale. The literature review has limitations, as local research has not fully investigated these challenges and structural barriers are not evident. It is thus necessary to understand contextual challenges to disability inclusive employment to close the local knowledge gap and facilitate development of evidence-based, homegrown strategies to help change trajectory of employment-for-PWDs.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1.   Introduction

This chapter describes the study population, sample, research setting, and qualitative research design. The reflective thematic analysis approach and data collecting tool are also highlighted. Additionally, ethical issues and the trustworthiness of the study are covered.

3.2.   Research setting

HR managers (employers' group) were invited from three public institutions and six private ones in Blantyre. The institutions were from different sectors particularly manufacturing, distribution, telecommunications, education and service organisations including health care and financial institutions. Blantyre-based employers were chosen as Blantyre is the largest commercial City in Malawi with the Head offices located in that city. Established in the 1870s by Scottish Missionaries, Blantyre City is the oldest urban centre in Malawi. It was designated as a planning area in 1897. It serves as Malawi's centre for cooperation, commerce, and communication. When Lilongwe became the capital in 1975, Blantyre's prominence in terms of influence started declining. With mild, and generally warm and temperate climate, Blantyre remains a significant commercial city in the country. Earlier report by UN Habitat (2011) indicated that Informal settlements, which make up roughly 23% of Blanytre's land, are home to more than 65% of the city's people. There are 24% of people living in poverty and 8% of people without jobs, and many are within the productive age of 15 to 64. Collecting data from different sectors added power to the research as World Health Organisation (2020) observed that data from multiple sectors could 1) provide a basis for development planning that is both demographically sensitive and coherent across sectors and 2) provide a solid point of departure for action, towards formulation of universal policies. The findings could potentially be useful in the development of employment policies that accurately reflect the needs of diverse employees across employment sectors.

3.3.   Research design

A narrative qualitative design was used in this study with in-depth interviews of the chosen organisations' HR managers to gain a deeper understanding of the difficulties related to disability-inclusive employment. This method, as opposed to a quantitative study, assisted in gathering rich and insightful data that assisted in providing adequately detailed answers to the study's questions (Wagstaff & Burton-Wylie, 2020). The study's foundation is social constructivist narrative inquiry, which maintains that to improve PWDs' employment

experiences, employment, and disability issues must be understood as the result of human interactions and relationships (Lombardo & Kantola, 2021). In the current study of disability issues, where stereotypes and false assumptions are thought to be pervasive and may severely impede the ability of people with disabilities to reintegrate into the workforce, qualitative research is appropriate (Nogueira, et.al. 2021; Morris, 2020).

3.4. Study population

HR managers from public and private institutions, as well as employees with disabilities, participated in this study. Of the 12 HR managers who were approached, nine took part; five were male and six were from private sector (table 1). HR managers play a crucial and strategic role in shaping the general work environment and organisational culture of their organisations (Phaladi, 2022). Additionally, nine employees with disabilities (EWDs) working in different institutions were invited to take part as a second group of study participants. Of the seven who eventually took part four were male, five were from public sector and participants had an age range of 35 to 60. Four of the employees had physical disability while three were visually impaired (Table 2). The employees provided lived experiences necessary for the formulation of policies and interventions that better meet pressing public needs (Belton et.al. 2023).

Table 1. Participant details for HR managers

Participant code	Gender	Designation	Nature of organisation	Sector
IDI/HR/1	M	HRM	Water Generation and distribution	Public
IDI/HR/2	M	HRM	Power Generation and distribution	Public
IDI/HR/3	F	HRM	Health Care	Private
IDI/HR/4	F	Acting HRM	Telecommunication	Private
IDI/HR/5	F	HRM	Health care	Private
IDI/HR/6	M	HRM	Financial institution	Private
IDI/HR/7	M	HRM	Financial institution	Private
IDI/HR/8	M	HRM	Tertiary education	Private
IDI/HR/9	F	HRM	Healthcare	Public

Table 2. Participant details for employees with disabilities

Participant code	Age	Gender	Nature of disability	Nature of employer	Sector
IDI/EWD/1	41	F	Physical (stroke)	Water Generation and distribution	Public
IDI/EWD/2	35	F	Visual	Health care	Public
IDI/EWD/3	39	M	Physical (quadriplegia)	Welfare	Public
IDI/EWD/4	37	M	Visual	Media	Private
IDI/EWD/5	60	M	Physical (paraplegia)	Manufacturing and distribution	Private
IDI/EWD/6	53	M	Visual, stroke	Welfare	Public
IDI/EWD/7	54	F	Visual	Primary Education	Public

3.5.   Study sample

Nine HR managers representing their organisations were purposefully selected and interviewed. Braun and Clarke (2021) stated that in a qualitative study, the adequacy of sample size is determined by the consistency and quality of data, which was the case with the HRs who participated in this study. The goal of purposeful sampling is to select information-rich participants whose engagement in research gives answers to the questions under study (Sukmawati et.al. 2023).

Additionally, seven employees with disabilities (EWDs), who were selected by the snowballing technique, a non-probabilistic way to obtain data from selected groups of individuals also participated in the study. Akpan and Piate (2023) stated that snowballing can be used to successfully choose samples from vulnerable populations or persons in exceptional circumstances where privacy concerns take precedence. The key strength of snowball sampling is enhanced trust and rapport between researcher and participant relying on social networks and personal connections, leading to more open and honest responses during the data collection phase (Akpan&Piate, 2023). Technically, participants were carefully introduced to the research aim and the procedure was clearly explained. After consenting, participants were asked to invite others of similar characteristics to take part. Such participants were then contacted by the researcher, in repetitive steps until 7 out of the planned 10 participants were interviewed.

Purposeful and snowball techniques share a common weakness in that they are subject to sampling bias with potentially erroneous conclusions (Akpan&Piate 2023; Sukmawati et.al. 2023). Additionally, although numbers nine and seven participants appear small, Akpan&Piate 2023 agreed that a relatively small sample that is properly selected may be much more reliable than large samples poorly selected. Clear clarification of research aims and procedures were explained, ensuring that only suitable candidates are included.

3.6.   Data collection instrument

In-depth interviews, using an interview guide, were conducted to collect data from the HR Managers and EWDs. This is an unstructured technique for obtaining data with the potential to uncover underlying motivations, beliefs, attitudes, and feelings on the topic of inquiry (Kaae & Traulsen, 2020). Kaae & Traulsen (2020) said that a period of 30 minutes to one hour is enough time to gather information and allow the interviewer to collect data from all time frames (past, present, and future). This research therefore viewed this as a relevant factor

for understanding the disability-inclusive employment experiences of the two groups of participants. The interview guide had two sections: section one recorded demographic details such as designation or job title, gender, name of employer, sector of employing organisation, and interviewee code. The second section had semi-structured questions and probes that covered the phenomenon of interest.

3.7. Data collection

After explaining the aim of the research and seeking consent from the participants, the researcher with permission from the participant, recorded the interview, while his assistant wrote some of the important points and observations that emerged from the interview. Throughout the interviews, the researcher effectively responded to any question from participants regarding the interview and research question generally. Research participants were then asked to explain what they do in the organisation so that the researcher had a clue regarding their job demands. The researcher used a protocol to guide the individualised in-depth interviews in a private room and at the designated time as agreed by the participant.

3.8. Data analysis

The The researcher analysed data from two participant groups - HRs and EWDs - using reflective thematic analysis. Braun and Clarke (2019) suggested that reflexive thematic analysis practices uphold the values of a qualitative paradigm by giving priority to researcher subjectivity, organic and recursive coding processes, and the importance of in-depth reflection and engagement with data. Hence the researcher viewed the six-phase reflexive thematic analysis as pertinent to the current study, which is part of the expanding field of disability-inclusive employment research in Malawi and around the world (Smith, 2020; Remnant et al., 2022).

3.8.1. Phase 1: Familiarizing oneself with the data

Before beginning any analysis, this researcher undertook an iterative process of reflexivity in which he examined himself both as a unique person and as a researcher who was aware of the potential effects of his personal biases on the research process (Braun and Clarke, 2019). Throughout the qualitative dataset analysis, this remained a continuous process (Thurairajah, 2018). The researcher read the transcripts of the interviews after engaging in the reflexivity process. A significant amount of data was generated by the interviews (43 pages for EWDs and 47 pages for HRs). To comprehend the depth and scope of the interview and identify items of potential interest in disability-inclusive employment, the researcher read the textual data several times and highlighted key themes.

3.8.2. Phase 2: Generating initial codes

Following his immersion and familiarisation with the dataset, the researcher considered the initial research questions. It was necessary to make changes to both questions so that the first one, which asked how prepared employers were for disability-inclusive employment by task and workplace accommodations, now asked HRs experiences with disability-inclusive employment in accordance with their values, knowledge, and skills. The researcher reasoned that leadership, task and workplace accommodations that benefit people with disabilities, and the creation of an inclusive workplace climate are all impacted by these values, knowledge, and skills across the organisational hierarchy. Additionally, the second question was reworded to ask, "What are the lived experiences of EWDs regarding disability-inclusive employment in their workplaces?" instead of, "How do specific workplace and task accommodations, or lack thereof, affect employment participation by PWDs?" The researcher was able to conceptually present the dataset's coding and interpretation with the aid of the revised questions.

The coding process was discussed during a meeting between the researcher and his BSc-level rehabilitation background assistant, JP. Codes for every interview were given by each. To compare the codes and interpretations that each person made, these were then discussed in the two meetings that were held. Campbell et al. (2021) stated that during the meeting, the codes that were generated were honoured and any tendency to reject one another's codes was checked. To better represent the story in the data on disability-inclusive employment, the researcher and his assistant had the opportunity to reflect on and alter their codes during the second or third meeting after reading the transcriptions together.

3.8.3. Phase 3: Generating initial themes

The initial name of this phase was "searching for themes," but in 2019 the authors revised it to "generating initial themes" to emphasise that theme generation is an active process carried out by the researcher rather than a passive one (Braun & Clarke, 2019). The researcher and his assistant met to sort the codes towards the formulation of initial codes. The codes and resulting themes were presented separately in chapter four as Table 4.1, for HR managers which was responding to specific objective number one; and Table 4.2 for EWDs and answering specific objective number two. Initially, the HR data yielded 35 codes, nine subthemes, and five themes that included employment policy limitation, unsupportive values, unaccommodating workplace artifacts, employer dilemmas, and mitigating challenges.

Whereas the EWDs data yielded 28 codes 10 subthemes and five themes that included mobility and access challenges, unsupportive values and behaviour, organisational challenges, impact on EWDs, and mitigating challenges.

The researcher and his assistant re-looked the themes and the corresponding codes to find differences and similarities. "Unsupportive values" from HR managers was seen to be similar to "unsupportive states and values" from EWDs. The researchers agreed to modify the themes to create one common theme between the two sets of participants. The new theme became "Unsupportive values and behaviours". Similarly, "Unaccommodating workplace structures" from HRs were merged with "mobility and access challenges" to form "Unaccommodating workplace structures and behaviours". Additionally, "Mitigating challenges" from both sides were left without a change in name. "Employer dilemma" which was from HRs was maintained as is while "Employment policy disparities" from HRs was maintained with some changes to read "Employment policy limitations". Also maintained were "Organisational challenges" which were from EWDs alongside the impact of experiences on EWDs. Furthermore, the researcher decided to form an additional theme from the data, "Facilitators to disability-inclusive employment". Being a data-driven process, this theme could not be ignored. Eventually, the results presented in chapter four (table 4.1 and 4.2) have six themes for each group with four common themes. Themes from HR (Table 4.1) are Unsupportive values and behaviours, Unaccommodating workplace structures and behaviours, Employer dilemma, Employment policy limitations, Mitigating challenges, and Facilitators to disability-inclusive employment. Whereas themes from EWDs (Table 4.2) include Unsupportive values and behaviours, Unaccommodating workplace structures and behaviours, Organisational challenges, Impact of experiences on EWDs, Mitigating challenges, and Facilitators to disability-inclusive employment.

Phase 4: Reviewing the themes

Two levels are distinguished in the review procedure. Braun and Clarke (2006) suggested two methods of reviewing a dataset: first, looking at individual transcripts or coded data, and second, looking at the entire dataset to understand the meaning it presents. Following another review of the data and codes, the researcher kept six themes for HRs as well as six for the EWDs group (see tables 4.1 and 4.2 in chapter 4).

3.8.4. Phase 5: Defining and naming themes

Braun and Clarke (2013) claimed that the best way to convey the essence of the analysis is to give qualitative themes "catchy" yet meaningful names. The names of the themes, according to the authors, may come from direct quotations or may only refer to the identification of an interpreted version of the data from both participant groups. The results were maintained with minor changes highlighted in phase 3. The final set of themes remain as presented in tables four and five in chapter four.

3.8.5. Phase 6: Producing a report

According to Braun and Clarke (2006), the generated qualitative reports ought to provide a brief and captivating narrative that emerges from the data, encompassing both themes and subthemes. This indicates that when answering their research question, researchers should avoid the temptation to just provide a summary of the data. To bring the voices of the dataset together and present the findings logically and consistently, the researcher should be in charge of the report (Campbell et al., 2021). Each theme and its related subthemes were defined, elucidated, and bolstered by quotable passages and discussion. The findings were concluded with recommendations.

3.9. Research trustworthiness

According to Johnson et al. (2020), since qualitative research design is still in its infancy, there is room for misunderstanding. Thus, trustworthiness is the primary criterion of research quality when aiming for validity and reliability (Johnson, et al. 2020). Kyngäs, et al. (2020) identified five constructs that advance trustworthiness: authenticity, transferability, confirmability, and dependability.

3.9.1. Credibility

Credibility was defined by Kyngäs et al. (2020) as trust in the "truth" of the results. Credibility in this study was guaranteed by using appropriate interviewing techniques and probes to better understand the opinions shared by research participants (Kyngäs, et al. 2020). Triangulation was satisfied since data was collected and examined from two distinct participant groups: HR managers and EWDs (Johnson, et al. 2020). Following Johnson et al. (2020), two impartial observers (SM & WC) were asked to assess the quality of the transcription, and another two from each group of research participants (HR/3, HR/5, EWD/2, and EWD/6) were randomly contacted in person to confirm that the data accurately reflected their views regarding the topic.

3.9.2. Dependability

One way to demonstrate the reliability of qualitative data is through dependability. Dependability, in particular, shows that the results are reliable and repeatable (Kyngäs, et.al. 2020). In this study, dependability was particularly attained through triangulating data sources, peer-reviewing transcriptions, and providing a thorough description of research methods (Johnson, et al. 2020; Kyngäs, et al. 2020).

3.9.3. Confirmability

According to Kyngäs et al. (2020), confirmability is the degree of objectivity, or how closely the study findings reflected respondents' perspectives and experiences rather than the researchers' biases, motives, or personal interests. In this research, confirmability was achieved by member checking and bracketing of personal bias by suspending personal biases throughout the data collection and analysis phases of the study (Chibaya, Govender, & Naidoo, 2021). This means that experiences were captured from each participant's perspective.

3.9.4. Transferability

The degree to which the outcomes can be applied in various contexts is known as transferability (Kyngäs, et al. 2020). In this context, transferability refers to the idea that knowledge acquired in one context can be applied to other comparable contexts. For this reason, it is used to support the reader's assessment of the credibility of the study findings. In this study, extensive explanations of the methods were provided, highlighting the types of data obtained, the methods used to recruit the sample, the context of the research, sample characteristics, and participant demographics (Tables 4.1. & 4.2.) (Forero et al. 2018). Each of these represented the natural setting in which the data was gathered and analysed.

3.9.5. Authenticity

According to Konggäs et al. (2020), authenticity pertains to the researchers' ability to accurately depict the diverse realities found in the data collected from participants. All perspectives of the participants were considered during the analysis phase of this study to fully capture the phenomenon being studied. This included the direct quotes from the participants used as evidence for the findings.

3.10. **Authenticity**

According to Kyngäs et al. (2020), authenticity pertains to the researchers' ability to accurately depict the diverse realities found in the data collected from participants. All perspectives of the participants were considered during the analysis phase of this study to fully capture the phenomenon being studied. This included the direct quotes from the participants used as evidence for the findings.

3.11. **Ethical considerations**

After obtaining approval from MUBAS and the participating organisations' HR executives, verbal consent was obtained from participating EWDs. The participant's right to withdraw from the study at any time without facing consequences was upheld. The interview guide and all data forms were kept in a locked cabinet in the room where only the researcher had access. Furthermore, no names associated with the data will be used during any presentation or publication related to this study.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1. Introduction

This section of chapter four presents the findings of the research. The main aim of the research was to examine the experiences of disability-inclusive employment by employers and employees with disabilities in selected institutions in Malawi to see if the experiences could explain the low number of EWDs in the workplaces. The findings are presented based on the two specific objectives which were 1) to analyse employer experiences regarding disability-inclusive employment in line with their values, knowledge, and skills; 2) to analyse the lived experiences of PWDs regarding disability-inclusive employment in their workplaces. Six themes emerged from each objective and they are presented under the respective objective, supported by relevant quotes. In particular, the HR data yielded 37 codes, nine subthemes, and six themes, and EWDs data yielded 30 codes, 10 subthemes, and six themes. The second section of this chapter discusses, noting similarities and differences between the findings from the two interview groups, along with comparable literature. The findings of the research were delivered utilising the Theoretical Framework of Inclusiveness in the Workplace's elements of inclusive climate, inclusive leadership, and inclusive practices.

4.2. Participant demographics

Of the 12 human resource managers from selected institutions, the researcher interviewed nine. From those nine HR managers who took part in the study, five were male and six were from private sector. Additionally, of the nine employees with disabilities who were invited, seven took part in the current study: four were male, five were from public sector, two from private sector and participants had an age range of 35 to 60. Four of the EWDs had physical disability while three were visually impaired (see tables 1 & 2 in chapter 3).

a) Findings

Specific objective one: To analyse employer experiences regarding disability-inclusive employment in line with their values knowledge and skills

4.3. Themes and subthemes

Six themes emerged from analysis of HR data (table 3), these are: unsupportive values and behaviours, unaccommodating workplace structures and behaviours, employer dilemma, employment policy limitations, mitigating challenges, and facilitators to disability-inclusive employment.

4.4. Inclusive climate

Under in the inclusive climate, one theme is presented: unsupportive values and behaviours.

4.4.1. Theme one: Unsupportive values and associated behaviours

This theme unpacks different issues held by employers and co-workers that directly drive their behaviours towards EWDs in the workplace. There are four subthemes under this main one: low interest in disability issues, widespread attitudinal challenges, lack of sustained support to EWDs, and lack of knowledge fuelling attitudinal challenges.

4.4.1.1. Low interest in disability issues

Participating HRs showed that they do not specifically target people with disabilities at the recruitment phase. There is a lack of attention to access issues in the workplace, a lack of eagerness towards disability issues and, they generally practice merit-based employment. To start with, most (6) HRs said that they do not work out to target people with disabilities, as their recruitment process is just an open recruitment. They do not look at a person in any different form. "But if there is an opportunity that there is an applicant with a disability, then the opportunities are equal" HR/4. The HRs acknowledged that at the recruitment phase gender balance received more attention than disability. This is evident in the following quote:

> Unfortunately, we do not stress that people with disabilities can apply, no. We just stress on women and other things. We adhere to the 60/40 policy, saying if there are a lot of men, you take 60% of them, and 40% of the women. But I have never had to stress on inclusion of people with disabilities that they can apply, no.HR/9

Therefore, the study showed that if by chance a person with a disability applies and passes the interview, the decision to hire is arrived at after further check on their physical state so that, "Maybe they may not be able to, you know, you know aggressively you know to handle this type of a role because of, you know, who they are as I said, HR/7.

In a show of lack of eagerness, some participants responded to question of disability in a way that showed that issues of disability are not applicable in their role as HR. for example this researcher wanted to understand participants knowledge about disability, but the participant did not feel it relevant or of interest to her; my knowledge of disability, how relevant is that to the issue you have stated? I think its an unfair question for me because I do not go out there and try to understand disabilities, so am just saying

that I haven't been confronted by any disability situations for the four years that I have been here, HR/5.

4.4.1.2. Widespread attitudinal and perceptual challenges

This subtheme explained the potential cause or result of limited interest in disability issues. This research showed that HRs were aware of the attitudinal challenges that employees with disabilities face. Here, the areas of challenge included employer definition of disability, which could be a potential root cause of discrimination; attitudinal challenge from clientele; negative attitudes from the national culture; lack of unified views on disability affecting promotion of EWDs and the perception that disability affects productivity of co-workers.

Firstly, one HR understood disability as a feature of a person, that the person with a disability is not "normal", "(person with) disability, is a person who is not normal compared with the normal person. There are other things which are not working properly, yes, yes", HR/2. This researcher feels that this understanding could impact employer-level trust in the abilities of EWDs, hence, a potential attitude challenge for workplace inclusion. Counter to that definition, the Malawi Disability Act 2012, defines disability as a 'long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairment, which in interaction with various barriers may hinder the full and effective participation of a person on an equal basis with other persons' (Malawi Government, 2012, p. 3). This definition makes a case for employers to acknowledge the contextual issues impeding work performance by EWDs. In this way, a drive to remove workplace barriers can be ensured.

Secondly, the HRs think their clients, people using their services, may find it challenging to comprehend how EWDs can better serve them.

> …if we have employed a disabled plumber or meter reader, the communities may not understand, they may think, these people, why are they doing this? This person has got problems with movement, so why are they employing this one? So, the communities may not be prepared to see such people, to see them when they visit them. HR/1.

This is also supported by the views of one HR from health care institution,

> …sometimes when you tell the clients that you're going to be helped by this one, they show a negative attitude about how is the person going to help us…(as a result) if we see that their counselling requires a person that can visually see their

facial expressions, then we refer them to another social worker who doesn't have a visual problem. HR/9.

Thirdly, HRs observed that attitudinal challenges are also from the national culture. People with disabilities are treated harshly and are not expected to get educated and be productive so that any employer who can employ them,

> There is a perception by many, that maybe that someone who is disabled, are not going to be effective at work, they are not going to be productive at work, therefore that's why you may find that there are issues of discrimination in that regard. This ultimately affects their image and confidence to apply for the job. HR/6.

Lastly, this study projected HRs perception that disability affects the productivity of co-workers. They highlighted that people with visual impairments will need the support of another employee most of the time, when the other colleague has his/her own assignments.

> Likewise, for those who are visually impaired, it means they need someone to accompany them to almost every place that they need to visit. So, it means that affects the work of another employee who was supposed to be doing something at the time when she or he was assisting this other disabled person. That's what I feel could be the feeling of some co-workers.HR/8.

4.5. Inclusive leadership

Two themes have been presented under this contextual element that ultimately humper the exercise of inclusive leadership. They are employer policy limitations and employer dilemmas.

4.5.1. Theme two: Employment policy limitation

This theme is used to highlight loopholes regarding employment policies, that hinder tackling disability-inclusive employment challenges. Two subthemes support this theme: 1) organisational policies often neglect disability issues; and 2) employers' lack of awareness of disability-inclusive national policies. These affect the degree to which one can work towards inclusive workplace environment.

4.5.1.1. Organisational policies often neglect disability issues

This study shows that disability issues are not specifically represented in the organisational policies that regulate how employment issues are generally handled. In particular most HRs

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reported a lack of policy on disability inclusion or just that disability issues are simply sketchy in the workplace policies as evidenced in this quote:

> Okay, up to now, I should confess we didn't have any policy or anything to do with the disability and inclusion, so we were just looking at the employees as employees. So, there's no special arrangements made for disabled employees, or any effort being made in terms of inclusion. So, if we advertise, for instance, we are employing people will just employ the person without looking at whether the person is disabled or not. So, there was no effort being made to differentiate between able people and disabled people. So, that's how we have been operating all these days up to now". HR/1.

This is supported by another participant, "in terms of policy I think it doesn't say much about disability, but it just says about the gender, yeah but about disability I think it's a bit silent. HR/9.

4.5.1.2.   Employers' lack of awareness of disability-inclusive national policies

Interestingly, while there are some national policies such as the Malawi National Disability Act 2012, that specifically talk about disability-inclusion in different settings including workplace, employers seemed ignorant of their existence. They, therefore, did not know the specific requirement of such national policies as far as issues of disabilities are concerned. This is evidenced in the quote, "Maybe there are there, but we are not aware of anything to that side because if there was something like that, would definitely have acted on that. So, we have not been made aware in terms of anything to do with the disability from the government, yeah. HR/1.

The findings under the theme of employment policy limitation show that HRs are not guided by pertinent National disability policies and are helpless in the area of disability-inclusive human resource management. According to previous research findings, the majority of employers are aware that there are laws and provisions that protect people with disabilities from discrimination, but very few are familiar with the specifics of such policies as the Disability Act in countries such as Uganda (Griffiths et al. 2020). Just like Uganda, Malawi has a key national policy on disability issues, the Malawi Disability Act 2012, that provides a roadmap to tackling issues that affect people with disabilities including employment. However, the findings of this study show a glaring lack of knowledge, awareness, and reference to such policy. It is probably because of this level of knowledge about national

policies that there are implementation challenges such as having organisational policies that do not tell exactly how issues affecting EWDs should be handled.

Building from the same, this study reveals weaknesses in government especially the Ministry of Labour which is an implementing arm for government policies and ratifications. As is evident from this study employers are awakened towards addressing disability-inclusive employment issues by sponsors setting disability issues as a condition for donation or funding. Indeed, donor conditions and regulatory requirements are the forces that are shown by the current study to enable HRs to introspect and seriously consider specific inclusion strategies for disability issues as evidenced in the quote:

> Okay. The main stimulus was, that we got the World Bank project where these things are part of the project itself, issues of disability inclusion, and issues of gender. So, it's like we're being told to make sure these things are main-streamed into our activities. So, it's the World Bank project which we are calling Malawi water and sanitation projects. So, the stimulus is that particular project. HR/9.

This is supported by the experience of another HR:

> So, the other thing is that we also registered for accreditation. So, it's also one of the requirements that we cannot be accredited if we do not take into consideration those people, yeah, so it is very important, very, very important. And another way, we show it is also by putting people with disability in our minds. HR/8

There is a need for improvement in the HR training curriculum to include extensive national employment policy analyses, knowledge, and skills. The government of Malawi should also be aggressive in the area of policy implementation so that employers buy-in policy requirements towards the creation of conducive workplaces for all.

4.5.2. Theme three: Employer dilemma

Employer dilemma is another important theme that came out of this study. Employer dilemma is a theme that captures latent issues that could explain reservations by employers to recruit and retain EWDs, but also create an inclusive environment through inclusive leadership. Much as the HRs were positive, this study unearthed some underlying causes of reservations on decisions to employ persons with disabilities. This theme has three subthemes, lower performance of EWDs, higher disability-inclusive employment cost, and unsupportive personal factors.

4.5.2.1.　　Lower performance by EWDs

This study has demonstrated that EWDs may not be able to take on challenging tasks due to their disabilities. This would therefore call for HRs to constantly check the abilities of individual PWDs to determine what type of work is suitable for them, "…I think the only determining factor would be the nature of the work". HR/8. Management may be dissatisfied with EWDs job performance. The study showed that sometimes some members of management might overlook people with disabilities in terms of capabilities.

> Because they seem like the way this one is with the levels of contribution that we are getting, from this person may not be as high as compared to those that the company might get from somebody with no disabilities. So, yes sometimes these issues can impede attention to issues affecting disabled employees, that is from the management side, yes. HR/6.

Unfortunately, this fear is common among those in management whose focus is job outcome who, for the same reason, question why EWDs were employed in the first place as highlighted by HR/9: "even with management, they also complained that why did we accept her, meaning that among us there are people, that still feel that she was not supposed to come and work here"

Thirdly, the unsatisfactory amount of work by EWDs makes some members of the organisation whine regarding their fight for equal pay with EWDs. HRs reported the potential challenge related to how other employers think they are doing much more than their colleague who is living with a disability, yet receiving the same pay-check. "Sometimes in the course of doing their duties, some people may feel like they are doing more compared to what this co-worker is doing". HR/6. In the eyes of other employees, EWDs are not working hard and, therefore, they should not receive extra support and compensation as they do, as highlighted by HR/7: "Considering people who are just receiving money and maybe they are not working hard and the other you know in quote normal people maybe that's one of the challenges".

4.5.2.2.　　High disability-inclusive employment cost

This subtheme highlighted some prohibitive-cost elements towards the employment of people with disabilities. They included the high cost of employing persons with disabilities; the huge demand associated with the employment of people with disabilities. Accommodation for EWDs is therefore with a pinch of salt.

The HRs observed that it is more expensive to employ a person with a disability than one without. They said as an employer, they have to spend a lot because some places are difficult to access for somebody who has mobility problems. They further said it is costly too because there are also specific resources such as brail for the blind, that person may require to do their job, "… so like I said for example for somebody who is blind and using brail, you have to find all the resources that are required for that person to be able to communicate and do their work". HR/5. Additionally, the HRs said the issue of training also adds to the cost, and as part of accommodation the blind employee, for example, requires a person to guide them. This is an extra cost, "so, it will have to take a lot of adjusting, distorting the way of doing things, so those would be some of the challenges".HR/5.

In line with the high cost, the HRs observed that there is a huge demand associated with the employment of people with disabilities. For example, they said it requires the employing organisation to be equipped in terms of knowledge, experience, and skill. Employing a blind person will not only require brail material for that person to be able to work but also the rest of the staff members would need the ability to understand brail for effective communication with the EWDs: "it means others must study brail, must study all these other things to be able to communicate with that person. So do not know how other organisations would deal with those issues, really. I cannot say I am aware of how those issues can be dealt with, I would be lying". HR/5.

4.5.2.3.   Unsupportive personal factors

First, the HRs agreed that there is a general lack of self-belief among people with disabilities, so much so that even if the appropriate policies on disability-inclusive employment are in place, there will be a need to find ways of encouraging them. There is a lack of self-efficacy. "…if we put these policies in place, it means we may still have to find ways of encouraging people with a disability to apply. For instance, if we say we are looking for a plumber, usually even the disabled persons themselves may not apply because they think, no, no we cannot do this".HR/1.

The HRs are aware that qualified people with disabilities are out there. They lack that push to say they can do it and that they should know that they have equal rights like any other person in society as highlighted by HR/5: "They are not out there, but they should be taught to see themselves as someone with equal rights, just like a person who is not disabled. They must have that courage to understand that if my parents have sent me to school even though I am disabled, they want me to be absorbed into society".

However, they also acknowledged that behaviours of colleagues and management hugely contribute to EWDs' inferiority complex, and that needs to be checked.

> I think based on... now they are reacting to how other colleagues treat that person, you know, they look down on that person. They think that they do not deserve it, hey think that they are not equal. They are discriminated against. So that's what can take a time to make someone have that inferiority complex, yeah. HR/7.

> Secondly the current study shows that there is tendency among people with disability to take issues more personally. HRs observed that EWDs sometimes feel sidelined on their own not that they are really being sidelined. In their experience, if they implement something on the employees, the same thing implemented on EWDs would trigger a different reaction. This sometimes puts management at the corner regarding how best to handle them as indicated by HR/8: "That automatically push them more like.... disadvantaged. So, they take themselves behind the thing, okay. So sometimes as management, you may fail to do something like you thought you could do considering that the thing may not be interpreted correctly by that other end"

4.6. Inclusive practices

Under this element, two themes are presented, unaccommodating workplace structures and behaviours, and organisational challenges.

4.6.1. Theme four: Unaccommodating workplace structures and behaviours

This theme has four subthemes; unaccommodating behaviours and attitudes, structural inaccessibility, less-inclusive organisational communication, and lack of a disability-friendly transport system. Findings under this theme negate the contextual element of inclusive practices that facilitate disability-inclusive employment according to the Framework of Inclusiveness at the Workplace.

Table 3. Themes from HR Managers

Themes	1 employment policy limitations	2 Unsupportive values and behaviours	3 unaccommodating workplace structures and behaviours	4 Employer Dilemma	5 mitigating challenges	6 facilitators to disability-inclusive employment
Subtheme 1	organisational policies often neglect disability issues	Low interest on disability issues		Lower performance	create better working environment for EWDs	
Codes	• Lack of policy on disability inclusion in the workplace • Donor conditions as a catalyst of policy change towards disability-inclusive employment • Work place improvement as condition for accreditation with regulatory bodies	• Non-specific targeting at recruitment phase • Lack of attention to access issues in the work place • Lack of eagerness towards disability issues by employers • Merit-based employment of EWDs	• Failure to fit in the workplace • Inter-relationship challenge with co-workers • Discrimination by co-workers • Supply of working materials	• Inability to take challenging tasks • Management dissatisfaction on EWDs job performance • Unsatisfactory amount of work by EWDs for equal pay • Some jobs are not disability-friendly	• Mitigating potential employment challenges • Workplace modification for easy accessibility • Strategies to accommodation EWDs • Protection of EWDs from bullying • Practice of non-discrimination against	resence of supportive policy and regulations onor conditions

Table 3. Themes from HR Managers

Themes	1 employment policy limitations	2 Unsupportive values and behaviours	3 unaccommodating workplace structures and behaviours	4 Employer Dilemma	5 mitigating challenges	6 facilitators to disability-inclusive employment
Subtheme 2	Lack of awareness of disability-inclusive National policies by employers	Widespread attitudinal challenges		high disability-inclusive employment cost	Research	
Codes	• Lack of awareness of specific requirement of national policies • Lack of knowledge on disability specific national policies • Lack of enforcement of national policies	• Employer definition of disability, potential root-cause of discrimination. • Attitudinal challenge from clientele • Negative attitude from national culture • Lack of unified views on disability affecting promotion of EWDs • Disability affect productivity of co-workers		• High cost of employing person with disability • Huge demand associated with employment of people with disabilities • Accommodation with a pinch of salt	• Evidence based information could support better employment conditions for EWDs	•

Table 3. Themes from HR Managers

Themes	1 employment policy limitations	2 Unsupportive values and behaviours	3 unaccom modating workplace structures and behaviours	4 Employer Dilemma	5 mitigating challenges	6 facilitators to disability-inclusive employme nt
Subthem e3				Unsupportive personal factors		
Codes				• Lack of self-efficacy • Personaliz ation of issues by EWDs • Nature of disability affect decision to employ		

4.6.1.1. Unaccommodating behaviour and attitudes

This subtheme highlighted several workplace behaviours, processes, and relationship challenges that affect disability-inclusive employment. They include inter-relationship challenges with co-workers; discrimination by co-workers, and, ultimately, the failure of EWDs to fit into the workplace.

The HRs felt for EWDs that they may not survive inter-relationship battles. As a result, they may not perform to their maximum capacity. "No, I do not think so because what I have actually explained to you, the interrelationship of that person in the institution, for that person to be able to interact with others in the institution in the course of performing their duties, that can be a very big challenge". HR/5. Most respondents highlighted that EWDs may experience discrimination and be looked down upon by their able-bodied colleagues. "Yeah, from what I'm thinking, one of the challenges can be discrimination, as I have said, being looked down upon by other people in the same organisation". HR/7. Ultimately EWDs may fail to fit into the workplace as they do not feel accepted. "We may find that they may not fit in into the organisation, they may not be accepted by their fellow employees". HR/1.

4.7. Additional Themes

4.7.1. Theme Six: Mitigating Disability-inclusive employment challenges

Unexpected mitigating challenges is another important theme that came up in this research. It has two subthemes which are creating a better working environment for EWDs and research.

4.7.1.1. Create a better working environment for EWDs

HRs recommended different strategies for achieving this subtheme. The first is to mitigate potential employment challenges. They highlighted that employers must ensure that there is a policy in place and that it is upheld by everyone in the organisation at all times. To ensure all employees' compliance, HRs agree that they are key to sensitizing staff on issues of equality and non-discrimination, with measures put in place to carb malpractices, "… that if someone should be caught that's they are discriminating against another person, they are going to be disciplined. So, if you have those tools in place, I strongly believe that those issues can be reduced in an organisation". HR/7.

Of interest was a suggestion on extending the policy requirement to include a percentage so that people with disabilities are proportionally represented in the workplace. They said this requirement would reduce the rejection rate for employable people with disabilities.

> They should also include the percentage; it can be very helpful. I feel these people are out there with their qualifications, but they met with rejection. And also, because the policy is not there.... if the policy is there and you have the qualifications and you are stationed there and you are rejected because of unknown reasons, they can go somewhere to be helped with such an issue. HR/9.

In support of this subtheme, the participating EWDs said that in an attempt to create a better working environment for everyone, employers should be proactive in handling matters affecting EWDs. EWDs reasoned that not all employees are free and confident enough to report what they are going through. Human resource managers should, therefore, include disability issues and how to handle them in their training curriculum, besides the need for workshops for the managers on disability-inclusive issues. "It could be a training or something, a session for the disabled should be present. EWD/2. EWDs also recommended that there should be increased chances of meeting and interacting with HR and top management where all employees are encouraged to speak, besides making a deliberate effort to have EWDs at the management level as highlighted by EWD/2, "There should have been a way so that maybe when they go there, they appoint a person with a disability so that this

person can talk on behalf of his fellow disabled persons, telling them about the problems that we are facing. We do not know what they say there".

Secondly, HRs recommended workplace-wide modification for easy accessibility by all employees. This would include putting ramps for wheelchair maneuvering; giving them appropriate and manageable tasks so that they have a sense of achievement and feeling of inclusion in the productive workforce of the organisation. The HRs also reported that there is a need to supply them with resources that they need for their work, as highlighted by HR/6, "…if the person needs something special like a chair to work comfortably, or if they need glasses, hearing aids things like those, we do provide at the bank's expense". According to them, all the managers, supervisors must be made aware that if they are trusted with an employee with a disability, they must ensure that they are provided with everything they need to work comfortably.

Thirdly, the practice of non-discrimination and protecting EWDs from bullying was also considered. The HRs observed that some employees take advantage of EWDs by harassing them. There is therefore a need for disciplinary measures against such conduct, "…those with a disability should be safe from people who work here, not that people should mock or take advantage of them, the bank doesn't allow that. If such an act is found, proper discipline measures are taken to correct the situation". HR/6

4.7.1.2.   More research on disability-inclusive employment

HRs shared the view that the current research is important and relevant and there is a need for more such research to support promotive HR practices to create workplaces for all. They opined that there is no need to deny the fact that in any country, we have people with disabilities who need to enjoy life including work-life, just like any other person. More research could open up societies including workplaces, as highlighted by HR/8,

> Because it will also be more like an eye-opener. Because some of these things we just do out of the past experience, maybe the past 15 years, and even the current situation without really looking at the very same things with a broader perspective. And it's my prayer that whatever will come out of this survey, will also help us now to... more or less like say, improve further, and even change some of the perceptions that maybe employers have towards people who have disabilities, sure.

4.7.2. Theme six: Facilitators to disability-inclusive employment

While the current research has shown that there is a less-inclusive climate, leadership, and processes in the workplaces, that ultimately challenge disability-inclusive employment for EWDs, the participants had indicated some facilitators to the same.

4.7.2.1.   Presence of supportive policy and regulations

Few HRs (3) were able to highlight specific content of their policies, particularly on non-discrimination and access issues, "Now we have a specific section, section 16.1 says persons with disabilities shall be accorded equal employment opportunities, provided they have the necessary qualifications for such employment. 16.2 states the hospital shall be under the obligation to provide suitable facilities and effect such modification whether physical, administrative, or otherwise in the workplace, as may be reasonably required. HR/5. This is supported by another HR who said, "Regulations, in terms of acts, internal acts is clear about discrimination, it does not allow discrimination, so I think the guiding principle in all our dealings is employment acts", HR/4.

4.7.2.2.   Donor conditions

This study shows that some employers do well on disability issues due to conditions they attach for their support or funding to the employing organisation. For example, the World Bank has conditions for donor-recipient organisations, some of which are disability-inclusive issues as evident in this quote,

External organisation Okay. The main stimulus was, that we got the World Bank project where these things are part of the project itself, issues of disability inclusion, and issues of gender. So, it's like we're being told to make sure these things now we may stream them into our activities. So, it's the World Bank project which we are calling Malawi water and sanitation projects, So, the stimulus is that particular project. HR/1.

Additionally, the presence of regulatory bodies forces organisations to comply with minimum standards including those that hinge on disability-inclusive employment.

> So, the other thing is that we also registered for accreditation. So, it's also one of the requirements that we cannot be accredited if we do not take into consideration those people, yeah, so it is very important, very, very important. And another way, we show it's also by putting disability people in our minds. HR/8.

Specific objective two: To analyse the lived experiences of PWDs regarding disability-inclusive employment in their workplaces

4.8. Themes and subthemes

The six themes that emerged from EWDs (table 4) include unsupportive values and behaviours, unaccommodating workplace structures and behaviours, organisational challenges, impact of experiences on EWDs, mitigating challenges, and facilitators to disability-inclusive employment.

4.9. Inclusive climate

Under the inclusive climate one theme is presented, unsupportive values and behaviours,

4.9.1. Theme one: Unsupportive values and associated behaviours

This theme unpacks different issues held by employers and co-workers that directly drive their behaviours toward EWDs in the workplace. There are four subthemes under this main one: low interest in disability issues, widespread attitudinal challenges, lack of sustained support to EWDs, and lack of knowledge fuelling attitudinal challenges.

4.9.1.1. Lack of knowledge and negative attitudes

Almost all the EWDs reported stereotyping and discrimination of varying magnitude. In particular, EWDs said they experience stereotyping by colleagues and employers. They feel doubted in their abilities to do the work. Sometimes they are handled in a less human way which affects the way they can work, "But they treat you as if you are a nobody. So, in such an environment how can you work to your level best? It's impossible" EWD/2. By extension, EWDs feel discriminated against as they feel that there are still some leaders who think that persons with disabilities are a problem. This affects the way they get assisted at the end of the day as observed by EWD/3. "So sometimes you fail to be assisted properly because of the mindset that is there even if you are bringing out issues that are perfectly for help".

EWDs seem to have an explanation for the behaviour of employers and co-workers. To start with EWDs were emphatic and most of them agreed in their observation that employers generally do not know what disability is. Lack of knowledge is shown by haphazard implementation of their ideas with no regard to EWD. "They just impose decisions, saying this is what needs to be done without consulting to hear what her views would be. So that also is a challenge in terms of leadership", EWD/2. According to EWDs, the ignorance by members of management is fuelled by a lack of interaction with EWDs. They emphasized their observation that employers do not initiate meetings with individual EWDs, which would

help solve some of their problems. Consequently, employers do not have a clear idea on how best they can help EWDs. As highlighted by EWD/5, because of low level of awareness they do not know what it means when someone wants to be helped by them, "I already explained that it's about attitude, lacking knowledge to understand what it means to have such a disability", EWD/5 added.

Secondly, EWDs associate some of the attitudinal challenges they face in the workplace with the wrong impression about disability in the national culture. They said that most of the people in Malawi, both educated and non-educated, have a wrong attitude against people with disability. The wrong view about disability gets generalized and entrenched in the work environment. They, for example, associate disability with begging and non-performance. "They apply to any disability person, yeah. So, it is what I encountered most. Which was… they actually play it hard against those with a disability" EWD/2.

4.9.1.2. Lack of sustained Support to EWDs

EWDs observed that support from management and leaders of the organisation is in most cases erratic. Firstly, their perception is that there is often a lack of interest by employers to check on the work situation of EWDs. They said that in most cases management just acknowledges that there are EWDs in the organisation but does not know how they work. otherwise, if they had taken interest in the work situation of EWDs, if they would be taking time to meet and discuss with EWDs, they would have known, and a lot would have been changed for the better. "I strongly believe that in some aspect if they know how I work, they can add a little effort or find other means on how I can be helped to keep on working. EWD/4. Consequently, the widespread show of lack of attention by employers, make EWDs think they are maintained purely as an organisation's PR duty. Here EWDs reason that the way they are handled sometimes makes them think they were recruited out of sympathy and with a thought that if they are not picked, that would reflect badly on their organisation. The employers are therefore not necessarily committed to working with a person with a disability, "but (maintained) because of fear of the public outside", EWD/2.

Lastly, EWDs experience is that sometimes co-workers mind their own business. It just is not easy to depend on others in the workplace although their support is crucial for achieving day-to-day activities. It, therefore, sometimes makes it difficult for EWDs to meet deadlines on their assignments as highlighted by EWD/4. "For example, there is a need for adverts, and

almost done with my program and I will ask someone to help with the advert and they give an excuse saying that they are busy, the news that should be ready at 1 pm".

4.10. Inclusive practices

Under this element, two themes are presented, unaccommodating workplace structures and behaviours, and organisational challenges.

4.10.1. Theme four: Unaccommodating workplace structures and behaviours

This theme has four subthemes; unaccommodating behaviours and attitudes, structural inaccessibility, less-inclusive organisational communication, and lack of a disability-friendly transport system. Findings under this theme negate the contextual element of inclusive practices that facilitate disability-inclusive employment according to the Framework of Inclusiveness at the Workplace.

4.10.1.1. Structural inaccessibility

Inaccessible workplaces and less structured public places were themes that emanated from the EWDs group of participants. The themes highlight EWDs lived experiences in negotiating workplaces and public places to and from workplaces. This study shows that EWDs feel limited in their ability to work if the workplace is inaccessible. Inaccessibility impedes their ability to attend important organisational meetings, for example. This is typically the case if there are no ramps to ease walking or rails for support. EWDs therefore opt to be represented by able-bodied colleagues which is often the best option. "Sometimes it is meetings that we need to go into the board room, I abscond from those, I am not able to walk to it because there are steps there, so I avoid the steps, so I usually send someone to go there in my place, I write mutes by myself". EWD/1.

Additionally, EWDs especially those with visual impairment, experience extra challenges when passing through the public place on their way to and from workplaces. Members of the general public park use certain strategic places that the visually impaired person may have used for passing. This state confuses them and it disturbs their independent mobility. The study further shows that it is even more complicated when people who are aware of the strategic importance of such places to someone with a disability do not take it upon themselves to alert the other members of the general public. "…for a person with vision impairment, it's mostly that they are familiar with the place, so if there is any obstruction, it becomes a little difficult, and they get confused.

Table 4. Themes from employees with disabilities

Themes	1 unsupportive values and behaviours	2 unaccommodating workplace structures and behaviours,	3 organisational challenges	4 Impact of experiences on EWDs	5 Mitigating challenges	6 Facilitators to disability-inclusive employment
Subtheme 1	Lack of knowledge and negative Attitude	Inaccessible workplace and less structured public places	Procedural obstacles	• Self-exclusion because of unsupportive practices		
Codes	• Employers do notknow what disability is • Wrong attitude about disability in the national culture • Stereotyping by colleagues and employers • Discrimination	• Inaccessible structures • Lack of structure in the general environment	• Recruitment challenges, • Challenge with disability acceptance at local workstation	• NO choice, working because there are no other employers for PWDs • EWDs not involved in decision making • Lack of chance for self-advocacy • No promotion for EWDs • EWDs are at the mercy of few Enlighten people	• What employer should do to support EWD • Government should formulate and reinforce policies supporting EWDs	• Having and understanding boss • Availability of transport and workplace accessibility

Table 4. Themes from employees with disabilities

Themes	1 unsupportive values and behaviours	2 unaccommodating workplace structures and behaviours,	3 organisational challenges	4 Impact of experiences on EWDs	5 Mitigating challenges	6 Facilitators to disability-inclusive employment
Subtheme 2	Lack of sustained support to EWDs	Inefficient organisational communication	unrepresentative organisational structure			
Codes	• Lack of interest by employers to check on work situation of EWDs • Employers maintain EWDs purely as a PR duty • Sometimes colleagues mind their own business	• Inaccessible information and communication	• Absence of employees in decision making positions			
Subtheme 3		Lack of friendly transport facility	Challenges of resource allocation and accommodation			
Codes		• Transport Vehicles not disability-friendly • Transport not provided	• No consideration for housing EWDs close to work place • No flexible schedule to accommodate EWDs who leave in far places • Lack of resources for day to day work • Cost related to accommodation and modification • Needs of PWD not often met			

There are a few people that know, and for the little that know, they do not want to let other people know that if we see such a person, they may need our assistance", EWD/2. Additionally, in the absence of a guide, employees with visual impairment find it difficult to walk alone because of serious terrain issues such as drainages and galleys. "I can't walk alone as I have already told you that there are a lot of drainages and they are deep, so I am afraid to walk alone". EWD/7.

4.10.1.2.   Less-inclusive organisational communication

EWDs find it hard with inefficient organisational communication. This is particularly true among those with visual impairments. They find that they are disadvantaged as they cannot read ordinary written communications. This is particularly acute even when the rules and regulations are just pasted on the notice board without consideration of the visually impaired. They consider this a recipe for negative attitudes from employers as they may be seen as not following organisational rules. Consequently, one can be punished for the reason that could be avoided if communication was accessible.

Some things happen unexpectedly that need your action {I: Yes} but you were not told about it, the information was not provided in a form for you to access. It is painful that you get punished for things that if you were informed about it, you would have taken a certain step. So mostly its issues like such. EWD/2.

4.10.1.3.   Lack of disability-friendly transport system

This study shows that most EWDs are not provided with transport, although they live far from workplaces. For those who are provided with means of transport, they find the vehicles not disability-friendly. Institutions face difficulties acquiring appropriate vehicles, "so myself and even other colleagues we always have tough times getting into these high vehicles like the land cruisers that the institution prefers to have. So, we have issues with even transport side as well in terms of accessibility. Inaccessible cars". EWD/3.

4.10.2. Theme five: Organisational challenges

This theme covers some organisational challenges with the potential to raise levels of dissatisfaction and eventual exclusion of people with disabilities in the workplace. The theme has three subthemes, procedural obstacles, unrepresentative organisational structure, and challenges of resource allocation and accommodation

4.10.2.1.   Procedural obstacles

The EWDs highlighted that recruitment of people with disabilities is in most cases unexpected. Employers "unexpectedly" meet people with disabilities in the interview room. For a centralized organisation like a government ministry, the department that hosts EWDs who are already recruited become confused and sometimes rejects them. As a result, the EDWs are moved from department to department. Literally, EWDs experience challenges with disability acceptance at local workstations as reported by EWD/2,

> My boss, like at (employer name), the acceptance was very tough, they were not ready to work with me. Looking at actual… they did not know more about, first with my profession as well as how they will be working with me in their environment. So, it was very tough for them to accept me to work with them.

4.10.2.2.   Unrepresentative organisational structure

This subtheme captures the general observation that EWDs view as a source of challenges to their work life in an organisation. They said that structurally there are no EWDs in decision-making positions. This leads to veiled exclusion and a recipe for organisation-grown discrimination against EWDs. This is highlighted by EWD/3,

Why I am saying so is that if you look at the whole structure of the organisation, the disability quantum is there, but you will see that the levels where these persons are engaged are quite very low levels of the hierarchy, in so doing you will see that the institution's main positions are not held by any of the persons with disability, that in itself exclude them from decision making and it also promotes some home-grown discrimination even if they are qualified you will see that they are not well catered in those angles.

As a result, EWDs feel they are not able to self-advocate or have their voice "out there". They feel that if those in authority were people with disabilities, they would easily be engaging the government or other institutions with first-hand experiences as evidenced in this quote, "If it were that there was someone to represent us, let's say the director is abled like that, but the vice should be a person with a disability so that they can explain the problems of disability as it should and what he would want to happen". EWD/4.

4.10.2.3.   Challenge of resource allocation and accommodation

This subtheme highlighted that employment for EWD is strained due to a lack of supply of needed working materials and costs related to accommodation and modifications for people with disabilities. First, EWDs expressed frustration due to the constant lack of supply of materials that support day-to-day work. For example, in government schools, teachers' guides and learners' books in brail form are not available. That makes it hard for visually impaired teachers to execute their tasks. "It is very challenging because I do not have a teacher guide or learners' book in brail. I am using those used by those without visual problems. EWD/6. The needs of the EWDs are therefore not prioritised. For example, they highlighted that whenever they are not satisfied with their work, they are not comfortable that they can speak and get listened to and have their need addressed timely.

Secondly, EWDs were concerned that there is no consideration for housing close to the workplace and there is no flexible schedule to accommodate EWDs who live in far places. EWDs observed that because rentals are expensive, they travel long distances from where rentals are a bit cheaper. To them, the unfortunate part is that there is no flexible scheduling, taking into account travelling challenges from far locations. "It would have been better if the starting time was 8 o'clock. That would be better for one to be able to walk to work because some people come from far".

Of interest is that EWDs are aware of the cost related to their accommodation and modification of workplaces to effectively integrate them. However, they were quick to say that employers should not take advantage of that subtle observation.

> The truth of the matter is if we follow through with what it's in the books it can be more expensive to employ someone who has disabilities. To look at the fact, there are only a few courageous people who can employ such people as myself, but this doesn't mean we are miserable people so that people who do not have disabilities should take advantage of us no, and as they please, no. EWD/3.

4.11. Additional themes

4.11.1. Theme Five: Impact of employment experiences on Employees with disabilities

Employees with disabilities feel that they are generally at the mercy of few enlightened people in managerial positions. "It was the passion of the MD then {I; Okey} was looking at a person with disability like any other person, knowing that most people with disabilities are not being employed, so he was trying to give them a job", EWD/9. Otherwise they mostly feel not

thought about. This is evident in EWDs common view that it is even difficult for them to be promoted, "For example, where I work, grade 14 is the lowest. Maybe as you go to 12 you would be better off. But I don't know in the government, where better grades start from. But as for us, it starts from 14 going down', EWD/10. This is supported by EWDs/11 who said:

> "challenge that I have had is promotion. It is very difficult to be promoted. I have been working since 1997 without promotion but the past president when he was promoting each and every teacher without going through interviews is when I get my promotion. But since then, I wasn't. so, that is a big challenge".

This study shows that state of EWDs could be worsened by the observations that they Lack of chance for self-advocacy.This is so because they have no representation along the organisational hierarchy as evidenced in the following quote by EWD/10:

> If it were the disabled persons themselves to go and talk to the government, maybe the government could have understood. But because it's the abled that go there, since they are the ones that run the factory. For example, The executive director and all others that run the Council, they are all abled people. So, even if they were to explain, they wouldn't be understood properly. But if it were the disabled to speak for themselves, because maybe they are told that our welfare is in good shape when it's not like that…Because to say the truth, even the working conditions for us and the abled are very different. They we are people that everything should be done for us, but we are not people that can hold top potions like grade 2 and the like.

As a result EWDs only maintain employers because they have no choice as very few employers are willing to employ PWDs,"The problem is that we have nowhere to go. So, for a person to quit, they would have nowhere to go. There are so little organisations that can employ a disabled person. So, you end up staying though facing difficulties because what else can you do". EWD/6. Otherwise negative emotions such as self-exclusion often results, "So sometimes I choose to be quiet to avoid some other people especially those who have never helped me or those who helped me unwillingly so I just see that I should not involve them". EWD/5

4.11.2. Theme Five: Mitigating Disability-inclusive employment challenges
EWDs spoke on the need for the government to actively engage in disability-inclusive issues. Most EWDs (5) highlighted that the government should not only formulate but reinforce policies supporting EWDs. EWDs are aware of the existence of some policies such as the

disability act. To address some of the challenges by EWDs in the workplace they recommended that disability act should be a compulsory subject, by HRs for it to be known and applied.

Additionally, EWDs believe that government itself should reinforce policies that protect people with disabilities by among other things introducing a quota so that there is a specific percentage allocated to people with disabilities by every employer, with government machinery checking on its implementation

4.11.3. Theme six: Facilitators to disability-inclusive employment

EWDs highlighted areas they felt good about. This theme, therefore highlights some of the experiences that, when available, EWDs work life will be better. According to EWDs having an understanding boss was a key facilitator besides the availability of transport facilities.

4.11.3.1.   Having an understanding boss

The current research shows that having an understanding boss ensures that the workplace including the office is well adjusted to suit the limitations of EWDs. For example, one visually impaired EWD had her workplace provided with all her work requirements including installation of tools for communication.

> They provided me a space, a conducive space to accommodate me at physiotherapy to work as a professional social worker. And they provided me with equipment like a laptop, I can't use brail for the sake of my fellow employees even my boss. They can't read brail. Instead, I must use the computer for writing reports and other issues for them to read. So, the management gave me a laptop in my office which I use when it comes to typing the cases of the clients that I meet. EWD/1.

Understanding bosses was also lauded for the positive adjustment of work routines to suit the various needs of EWDs. Some routines were modified for convenience as evident in this quote, "most of the time at the office am tasked with tasks that do not involve having to travel to suppliers. I just call suppliers to come and collect their quotation or I send it through email. If it involves travelling, they assign it to someone else" EWD/1. This is in line with what one participating HR said regarding the reduction of certain aspects of work so that EWD is still able to work. Maybe they can function at full capacity so what we do with these people is to give them some light duties, that they should be still included in our workforce. We can't exclude them so that they do feel that they are part of our workforce, HR/6. In addition to

giving them space for different appointments related to their condition, "so, we do consider them by giving them off duties or the appointments that they are having". HR/6.

Having understanding bosses also engendered EWD's recognition and involvement. An employee who is recognized feels good and encouraged. There are a lot of employees at (workplace), but I received an award in 2022 as the best radio personality of the year. So, that means people know that I work hard". EWD/4. Am always with them, am always involved. He was also feeling more involved, "They have always involved me. If there is an activity that is supposed to take place somewhere, people always consider if he is going, then the team should see first if the place is disability friendly. If not, no". EWD/4

4.11.3.2. Availability of transport and workplace accessibility

Few (2) EWDs were privileged to have transport provided for at their workplace, although it was mostly less disability-friendly. "And they provide me transport to and from home since I started. And in those... since I started, including those that went, there was transport provision to and from workplace" EWD/5. Additionally, some employees said employers made sure that the workplace is accessible for EWDs, "Yes, we always accommodate them. Let's say those who are using wheelchairs, we are supposed to prepare an area where they can move without any problems. If we have steps, we always put that area where they can use the wheelchair to move into the offices". HR/2. Having a guide allocated by the employer was also a powerful facilitator for mobility and access in the workplace by visually impaired EWDs, "Then they also organized, provided me with a personal like assistant, a guider who leads me when I disembark at Queens stage to the campus and wherever I want to go up to the knockoff hour" EWD/2.

This finding is consistent with results from a scoping review conducted by Morwane, Dada, and Bornman (2021) who investigated barriers to and facilitators of employment for persons with disabilities in the Low and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs). The review had shown that in addition to the existence of negative attitudes, a lack of services, primarily in the areas of health and transportation, was found to be a major environmental factor impeding PWDs' ability to find employment. It is therefore evident that, the transportation issue is crucial, and that the findings of this study are justified for indicating transport availability as a facilitator for disability-inclusive employment.

b) Discussion

4.2.1. Introduction

The current study that aimed to examine the experiences of disability-inclusive employment by employers and employees with disabilities in selected institutions in Malawi to see if the experiences could explain low number of EWDs in the work places. It responded to two specific objectives which were 1) to analyse employer experiences regarding disability-inclusive employment in line with their values knowledge and skills; 2) to analyse the lived experiences of PWDs regarding disability-inclusive employment in their workplaces. While each objective yielded six themes the results are discussed eight themes as only four themes were common between the two groups of participants and each group had two unique themes. In particular discussion is along four common themes which are 1) unsupportive values and behaviours; 2) unaccommodating workplace structures and behaviours 3) mitigating challenges; and 4) facilitators to disability-inclusive employment. Employer dilemma and employment policy limitations from HRs and organisational challenges and impact of experiences on EWDs from EWDs group are also discussed. The discussion is shaped by the Theoretical Framework of Inclusiveness in the Workplace's elements of inclusive climate, inclusive leadership, and inclusive practices.

4.2.2. Inclusive climate

Smith's (2020) framework, indicates that an inclusive climate is one in which organisational agents' policies, practices, and actions support the fair treatment of all social groups, with a focus on those that have traditionally experienced stigma and discrimination in their communities. Since everyone feels appreciated and has a sense of belonging; resistance and conflict are therefore reduced in inclusive environments. According to the framework, in an inclusive work environment, employees are more inclined to speak up and engage fully and that harassment and discrimination are less prevalent. Under this contextual element to disability inclusive employment one theme emerged from both HRs and EWDs albeit from different viewpoints.

4.2.2.1.   Theme one: Unsupportive values and associated behaviours

On the HR side, unsupportive values and associated behaviours as a theme is shown through 1) low interest in disability issues, with HRs not specifically targeting people with disabilities during recruitment; 2) lack of enthusiasm on issues affecting EWDs such as inattention to access issues; 3) prevalent attitudinal and perceptual challenges that impact employees with disabilities, probably emanating from employer definition of disability, perception that disability affects productivity, and perceived high cost associated with employing PWDs such

as visual impairments as often needing the support of another employee. EWDs on the other hand experienced low interest in disability issues, widespread attitudinal challenges, lack of sustained support to EWDs, and perceived lack of disability knowledge among HRs as fuelling attitudinal challenges. In particular EWDs often experience stereotyping and discrimination from colleagues and employers, leading to doubt in their abilities and feelings of discrimination. They also believe that employers generally lack knowledge about disability and do not initiate meetings with individual EWDs, resulting in a lack of understanding of how to help them. Of particular interest, EWDs associate attitudinal challenges in the workplace with the wrong impression of disability in Malawi's national culture, which associates disability with begging and non-performance.

The low interest in disability issues, widespread attitudinal challenges, and lack of sustained support to EWDs observed by participating EWDs clearly stands evident to lack of interest and enthusiasm in disability issues, and prevalent attitudinal and perceptual challenges among the HRs in this study. these findings relate to Glade, et al. (2020) observation on the prevalence of unsupportive states and values that are a recipe for different challenges that EWDs face. In particular, according to Glade, et al. (2020) HRs exhibit 1) low interest in disability issues as they do not target people with disabilities at the recruitment phase, 2) lack of attention to access issues in the workplace; 3) lack of eagerness towards disability issues, and; 4) practice of merit-based employment with potential to exclude people with disabilities if public perception of disability is anything to go by. Interestingly, in a show of agreement with these findings among HRs, EWDs observed that employers and co-workers stick to unsupportive values due to insufficient knowledge as they do not know what disability is. This led to the haphazard implementation of their ideas with no regard for EWD. These unsupportive values and behaviours create a less inclusive climate in the workplace, affecting the inclusion of EWDs as highlighted in Smith's (2020) Theoretical Framework of Inclusiveness. There is a need for organisational leadership to decisively work towards inclusive cultural values and practices that readily provides EWDs with necessary job accommodations, and ensures they are treated with dignity and respect.

4.2.3. Inclusive leadership

According to the Theoretical Framework of Inclusiveness at Workplace, there is growing evidence emphasizing the significance of top management principles and philosophy with regard to diversity and equal employment opportunities. A leader can exhibit inclusion by expressing gratitude to others for their contributions and embracing input from group

members. These points of view could have a direct impact on the rules and regulations that are implemented in that organisation, which could facilitate or hinder inclusion. According to the author,Smith's (2020) employees' sense of inclusion in the workplace has been enhanced by open communication, procedural fairness, leaders' acknowledgement of members' contributions, transparent hiring and promotion strategies. Two themes are discussed under this contextual element that evidently affects the exercise of inclusive leadership. They are employer policy limitations and employer dilemmas.

4.2.3.1. Theme two: Employment Policy limitation

This theme came from the group of HRs. The study highlights two main issues in employment policies: 1) organisational policies often neglect disability issues, and 2) employers' lack of awareness of disability-inclusive national policies. In particular, organisational policies often lack specific representation of disability issues, while national policies like the Malawi National Disability Act 2012 are often ignored by employers. These issues hinder the development of an inclusive workplace environment.

In this respect the study reveals that HRs in Malawi are not adequately guided by national disability policies, leading to challenges in disability-inclusive human resource management. Employers are aware of laws protecting people with disabilities, but few are familiar with the specifics of policies like the Disability Act in countries like Uganda and Malawi Griffiths et al. 2020). This lack of knowledge and awareness could contribute to policy implementation challenges, which is a notable weakness on the government side, particularly the Ministry of Labour, which is responsible for implementing these policies according to the The Committee of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2017 report. Improvements in HR training curriculum and aggressive policy implementation are needed to create inclusive workplaces.

4.2.3.2. Theme three: Employer dilemma

The HR group of study participants highlighted the employer dilemma in hiring and retaining employees with disabilities, based on three subthemes: lower performance by EWDs, higher disability-inclusive employment cost, and unsupportive personal factors. According to this study, lower performance can lead to dissatisfaction with job performance and equal pay. High disability-inclusive employment cost is expensive, and accommodations for EWDs are costly. Unsupportive personal factors, such as lack of self-belief, contribute to the inferiority complex among EWDs.

Literature shows a growing understanding that human resource managers have mixed attitudes and beliefs, which could lead to difficulties when it comes to hiring people with physical disabilities (Shahid & Zahid, 2021). In the same line, and as presented, this research has unearthed some attitudinal issues and beliefs among HRs that might substantially lead to reservations about their decisions to hire and retain employees with disabilities. There is 1) perceived lower performance among EWDs who may not take challenging tasks due to their disability; 2) higher disability-inclusive cost associated with the actual cost of settling a person with disability in the workplace and; 3) huge demand associated with employment of people with disabilities who necessitates employer to be equipped in terms of knowledge, experience and skill; 4) observation that EWDs generally exhibit unsupportive personal factors such as general lack of self-belief among people with disabilities; tendency among people with disability to take issues more personal so that it twist their perception regarding their relationship with employer and colleagues and; the actual disability that may limit the amount of work they can do. These perceptions by HRs are not new in disability and management literature. These study findings are in line with a recent systematic review that included 47 articles intended to understand why employers fail to hire people with disabilities. The reviews similarly found that employers failed to employ EWDs because of (1) expectations that people with disabilities are unproductive, (2) expectations that people with disabilities cost a lot of money, and (3) employers' lack of knowledge about disabilities (Nagtegaal et.al. 2023). While the HRs were not explicit about them lack of knowledge about disability issues elsewhere in the current study, EWDs highlighted this gap as existing among employers and HRs. Research into HRs level of knowledge and skills could help determine intervention strategy at the employers' level. It is interesting to note that the HRs pointed out unsupportive personal factors. This author believes that this is pertinent, and a shift from a purely social model that doesn't recognize limitations inherent in individual EWDs, and hence appropriate consideration for inclusive intervention.

It is interesting to note that under that inclusive leadership and in particular employment policy limitation and employer dilemma come out strong among HRs and not EWDs. This study results show realness of the finding as it is similar to other highlighted studies as highlighted. It shows deep-sitted feelings and emotions on employer side, which may not be directly seen by employees, except consequent negative workplaces experiences they may be exposed to.

4.2.4. Inclusive practices

The theoretical Framework of Inclusiveness at the Workplace highlights several new techniques, that have the potential to improve inclusivity, have surfaced. Information availability, decision-making involvement, dispute-resolution strategies, communication facilitation, and refraining from stereotyping are some of these practices. Under this element, two themes are presented, unaccommodating workplace structures and behaviours, and organisational challenges.

4.2.4.1.   Theme four: Unaccommodating workplace structures and behaviours

This emerged from both HRs and EWDs. The study identifies four subthemes under this theme: unaccommodating behaviours and attitudes, structural inaccessibility, less-inclusive organisational communication, and lack of a disability-friendly transport system. These themes highlight the challenges faced by EWDs in navigating workplaces and public places, such as inaccessible workplaces and less structured public places. EWDs often opt for able-bodied colleagues, as they feel limited in their ability to work and attend important meetings. Inefficient organisational communication, particularly for those with visual impairments, can lead to negative attitudes from employers towards them. The lack of a disability-friendly transport system further hinders their mobility and access to workplaces. These findings undermine the framework of Inclusiveness at the Workplace and provide evidence that there are less inclusive in workplaces.

In line with what Calvert (2021), the current study shows agreement between HRs and EWDs that there are prevailing workplace artefacts and behaviours that impede disability-inclusive employment. HRs observed that there is an inter-relationship challenge with co-workers; discrimination by co-workers, and, ultimately, failure of EWDs to fit in the workplace. According to PWDs, these challenges affect productivity among EWDs which may erode employer confidence. Extending the observation by HRs, EWDs expressed mobility and access challenges as being key to dissatisfaction with workplace accommodation. Inaccessibility of the workplace, inaccessible organisational communication, and lack of friendly transport facilities amounted to challenge with workplace accommodation among EWDs. This study by default included EWDs who have physical and visual disabilities only. The dichotomy of disability is wide. There is a need to expand the study to include people of other disabilities such as the deaf and mental ones.

4.2.4.2.   Theme five: Organisational challenges

This theme emerged from EWDs group of participants. The theme discusses organisational challenges that may lead to dissatisfaction and eventual exclusion of people with disabilities in the workplace. It consists of three subthemes: procedural obstacles, unrepresentative organisational structure, and challenges of resource allocation and accommodation. According to this study, procedural obstacles involve unexpected recruitment of people with disabilities, which can cause confusion and rejection in centralized organisations. Unrepresentative organisational structures, such as the absence of EWDs in decision-making positions, lead to veiled exclusion and discrimination. Resource allocation and accommodation challenges are strained due to the lack of necessary materials and costs related to accommodation and modifications. EWDs express frustration with the lack of resources and accommodations, and they are concerned about the lack of consideration for housing close to the workplace and flexible scheduling. While EWDs are aware of the costs associated with accommodation and workplace modifications, they argue that employers should not take advantage of this subtle observation.

Individuals with disabilities encounter some difficulties throughout their careers. Employers, for instance, are known to have misguided beliefs during the hiring process, such as the belief that employees with disabilities cannot contribute to the achievement of organisational objectives and may not even wish to work (Bonaccio et al., 2020). Additionally, it has been noted that EWDs do not participate in higher decision-making levels within organisations. Morgan (2023) suggested that in light of this, nations like the United Arab Emirates should establish institutional frameworks that guarantee the rights of individuals with disabilities and provide them with equal opportunities for employment and higher education.

The author argued that this would gradually address what the EWDs who participated in his study perceived as the absence of "our own" in positions of decision-making. Similarly, this study found that organisational issues impact employment that is inclusive of people with disabilities. These include unrepresentative organisational structures that lack EWDs in managerial positions, procedural barriers that impede the recruitment of EWDs, difficulties allocating resources and providing accommodations due to a shortage of essential tools like brail, and the alleged high cost of providing accommodations and modifications for individuals with disabilities. Morgan (2023), argued that it is important that local organisations make deliberate efforts to advance strategies that promote diversity and

inclusivity in the workplace, in Malawi, a country that ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and related treaties.

4.2.5. Additional themes

4.2.5.1.　　　Theme Six: Impact of employment experiences on Employees with disabilities

This theme emerged from EWDs. Under this theme the study shows that EWDs frequently experience marginalization and lack of appreciation from managers, as well as clear barriers to promotion and little opportunities for self-advocacy. They believe they only work for the employer since there aren't many opportunities for employment for PWDs and that they are under-represented in the organisational structure. In the end, they feel bad, which makes them withdraw from day-to-day life in the workplace.

The findings of the study under this theme links to the finding of the study by Marques, et.al. (2020), that set out to explore managers' perceptions of disability and the relationships that existed between these concepts and their assessment of the performance, bonds, hiring benefits and training requirements of people with disabilities. The study find that managers who view disability as a matter of normalcy believe that people with disabilities perform worse than people without disabilities, meaning that people with disabilities should be kept segregated. On the other hand, managers who view disability as a social issue are more likely to assign people with disabilities to jobs based on their abilities. Based on this finding the feeling of marginalization and lack of appreciation from managers, as well as clear barriers to promotion and little opportunities for self-advocacy could point to the former nature of managers. It is important for managers to acknowledge the social view which is principally based on the social model of disability to create a workplace for all.

4.2.5.2.　　　Theme Seven: Mitigating disability-inclusive employment challenges

This theme target strategies that can be used to improve disability-inclusive employment by promoting equality, non-discrimination, and proportional representation. HRs recommend policies, training, and modifications for accessibility; that the government should support policies and quotas for employers. Additionally HRs believe more research is needed to support promotive HR practices and creation of workplaces for all, ensuring people with disabilities enjoy life, including work-life, like any other person. EWDs on the other hand advocate for government involvement in disability-inclusive issues, recommending the inclusion of the disability act in workplace policies. They suggest making it compulsory for

HRs to understand and apply it and introducing a quota for employers to allocate specific percentages to EWDs, with government machinery monitoring its implementation.

Significantly, the current study sheds more light on the persistent employment difficulties that EWDs experience, including feelings of injustice and being stuck in their jobs because they have few options for other employment. Thus, to lessen the difficulties faced by EWDs at work, both HRs and EWDs recommended a few strategies that should be put into practice as highlighted.

4.2.5.3. Theme Eight: Facilitators to disability-inclusive employment

This theme emerged from both groups. The research highlights challenges in disability-inclusive employment for EWDs in workplaces. However, some facilitators include supportive policies and regulations, donor conditions, and regulatory bodies. In particular, HRs highlight non-discrimination and access issues in their policies; and the World Bank having conditions for donor-recipient organisations, some of which are disability-inclusive. EWDs on the other hand, feel better about their work life when they have an understanding boss, which ensures the workplace is well-adapted to their limitations. This includes providing necessary work tools, modifying work routines for convenience, and allowing them to function at full capacity. Understanding bosses also encourage recognition and involvement of EWDs. While some workplaces are less disability-friendly, employers ensure accessibility and provide guides for mobility and access. Overall, understanding bosses play a crucial role in improving EWDs' work life.

Availability of transport as a facilitator is consistent with results from a scoping review conducted by Morwane, Dada, and Bornman (2021) who investigated barriers to and facilitators of employment for persons with disabilities in the Low and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs). The review had shown that in addition to the existence of negative attitudes, a lack of services, primarily in the areas of health and transportation, was found to be a major environmental factor impeding PWDs' ability to find employment. It is therefore evident that, the transportation issue is crucial, and that the findings of this study are justified for indicating transport availability as a facilitator for disability-inclusive employment.

Presence of supportive regulations as a facilitator in the current study contrasts what is on the ground as found in the results of a Ugandan policy analysis that reviewed the current legislation and policies on the economic empowerment of people with disabilities (Griffiths et.al., 2020). The analysis showed that although a significant progressive legal and policy

framework to support the participation of people with disabilities in the labour market is in place in Uganda, the implementation of the framework remains a challenge. In line with the same, it is also evident that different policies and regulations do not have an impact on PWDs' employment situation in Malawi (Committee of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2017, p.8). There is a need for aggressive compliance strategies so that employers "walk the talk" on employment policies and regulations.

Lastly, the role of international organisations in fostering and implementing of disability right is known. For example, Italian Cooperation's initiatives support the recognition of rights and access to infrastructure, healthcare services, education, training, jobs and new technologies through its aid to countries such as Sudan, South Sudan, Burkina Faso, Guinea Bissau, Tanzania, Ethiopia (O'Driscoll, 2019). This study is therefore agreeable to the observation that Donor conditions are an important facilitator for disability-inclusive employment.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Introduction

This chapter provides summary of findings, conclusions, and recommendations including study limitations and research direction.

5.2. Summary of findings

The call for research into workplace challenges impeding disability-inclusive employment among employers and employees with disabilities motivated this work. The overall aim of the study was to examine the experiences of disability-inclusive employment by employers and employees with disabilities in selected institutions in Malawi to see if the experiences could explain low number of EWDs in the work places. Under the three contextual factors of inclusive climate, inclusive leadership, and inclusive processes outlined in the Framework of Inclusiveness at Workplace, the findings are presented findings and discussed. The study's findings are summarised in six themes that were drawn from each participant group and correspond to its two specific objectives. Though six themes were obtained for each objective, the results are discussed in terms of eight themes because only four of them were common between the two participant groups, and each group had two additional but distinct themes. In particular discussion was along four common themes which are 1) unsupportive values and behaviours; 2) unaccommodating workplace structures and behaviours 3) mitigating challenges; and 4) facilitators to disability-inclusive employment. Employer dilemma and employment policy limitations from HRs and organisational challenges and impact of experiences on EWDs from EWDs group were also discussed.

5.3. Conclusion

Conclusion of this study is given along two specific objectives but the findings generally show that disability-inclusive employment is challenged by less-inclusive climate, leadership, and processes in the workplace

5.3.1. Objective One: To analyse employer experiences regarding disability-inclusive employment in line with their values knowledge and skills.

Nine (9) human resource managers were interviewed to understand their views and experiences of disability-inclusive employment. Six themes emerged from analysis including unsupportive values and behaviours, unaccommodating workplace structures and behaviours,

employer dilemma, employment policy limitations, mitigating challenges, and facilitators to disability-inclusive employment. In particular, employers exhibited values that excluded people with disabilities at the recruitment phase, a lack of awareness of relevant policies that led to widespread attitudinal challenges that impact on work experiences of EWDs. According to the research, employer dilemma results from doubts about EWDs' work performance abilities, and perceived high cost associated with accommodation and retention of EWDs.

5.3.2. Objective Two: to analyse the lived experiences of PWDs regarding disability-inclusive employment in their workplaces.

Seven (7) employees with disabilities were also interviewed. The six themes that emerged from EWDs include unsupportive values and behaviours, unaccommodating workplace structures and behaviours, organisational challenges, impact of experiences on EWDs, mitigating challenges, and facilitators to disability-inclusive employment. Under this objective, the findings show prevalence of less-inclusive climate and practices in the workplaces. In particular, EWDs face discrimination, difficulty accessing portable communication, and inaccessible workplace structures. They lack representation in higher levels and lack assistive technology. However, having an understanding boss helps them stay employed.

This study on disability-inclusive employment from the viewpoints of two important stakeholders, HRs and EWDs, has generated groundbreaking theory, with important HR implications. The study helped to understand disability-inclusive employment challenges in the context of Malawi. It fills the gap in local literature with paucity on experiences of HR and EWDs on disability-inclusive employment.

5.4.   Recommendations

The study's findings demonstrate that workplaces lack inclusivity in terms of climate, leadership, and processes. As a result, workplace inclusion of PWDs is still far from being realized. As is postulated, attaining disability inclusivity would greatly aid in the realization of PWD's job rights and have a positive impact on policies and regulations, the current study highlight the urgent need for initiatives that transform organisational culture to support the development of more diverse and inclusive workplaces. The following strategies in particular are advised.

5.4.1. Management and practice

In the line of management and practice, there is a need to enhance HR management with a focus on disability inclusion. Restructuring and redesigning corporate culture to match the organisation's new goal is one of the recognised drastic adjustments that HR management and practices are known to promote and harness diversity. Locally relevant indigenous HR practices would be necessary to bring about this shift. Hence, this study recommend as the first step, to close the knowledge gap on policies among HR professionals, and gradually equip them with disability-inclusion skills.

5.4.2. Policy formulation and implementation

Secondly, there is a need for the development of domestic disability-inclusive policies against claims that Western understandings of disability prevalent in most policies in Africa are colonial and ableist, and they position poverty and disability in sub-Saharan Africa as problems that require ongoing intervention through charity and philanthropy. This recommendation, therefore aims to ensure the majority of people with disabilities are employed, stay in the workforce, live actively, and do not depend on passive support. However, since it is evident from this research that there are issues with government policy implementation and reinforcement, there is a need for rigorous policy implementation driven by the relevant government ministry.

5.4.3. Methodology

Since this research also revealed that EWDs pose issues for the field of disability-inclusive employment due to their lack of confidence and unhelpful attitude, which can be difficult for HR professionals to manage, it is necessary to develop strategies that support EWDs' development of self-determination as well as confidence in the workplace. In the light of the self-determination theory, it is necessary to design and implement a peer mentoring program to support the natural process of fostering intrinsic motivation and personal development by giving people without disabilities the chance to interact socially with employees who have disabilities.

5.4.4. Affirmative action

This research highlighted issues that unlike the 40/60 ratio that HRs acknowledged from gender main-streaming policy, there is no similar requirement they know of, targeting PWDs. There is a need to factor in related requirement in the disability inclusive policy. Additionally deliberated measures must be put in place to ensure more people with disabilities are

employed, such as policy and implementation strategies that lead to increased outreach, recruitment, mentoring, training, management development, and other initiatives are in order to support employers in selecting, hiring, and promoting competent employees from a variety of backgrounds, including those with disabilities.

5.5.   Study limitations and future research direction

5.5.1. Study limitations

Limitations to this study are basically methodological.

i)   The first limitation related to the use of interviews that were both physical and online via phone calls. Interviews are known to be compounded by researcher bias. However, the researcher administered the interviews diligently so that leading questions were avoided and views were typically from the participants without altering the responses obtained.

ii) The second limitation of the study relates mainly to the small sample size that was used. In particular, the study involved nine HR managers and seven EWDs. Ofcause for the narrative inquiry such as the present one, Subedi (2021) stated that one to twenty or more participants can be selected with justification. It is a view of this researcher that future studies could include a larger sample size could be better.

iii) The third limitation is that this study did not use the checklist of existing policies to know for a fact what policies are mostly referred to by employers. This study has, however, provided a picture of limited knowledge about national policies by HRs.

iv) Lastly, this study involved a few institutions. The findings may not apply to all organisations in the country. Large-scale research covering a bigger number of institutions is required.

5.5.2. Future research direction

This study covered issues of disability-inclusive employment among key stakeholders in the workplace, HRs, and EWDs in a triangulated manner. However, while the study made an effort to address the need for research concerning workplace obstacles among these important stakeholders, the study only included employees with physical disabilities and those who are visually impaired. People with other forms of disabilities could be experiencing unique challenges not found in this study. For example, a study by Bezyak et.al. (2020) aimed to explore community participation and public transportation barriers experienced by people

with disabilities found that individuals with blindness or low vision, psychiatric disabilities, chronic health conditions, or multiple disabilities experienced more problems using public transportation for community participation. Further studies among people with various disabilities, such as mental and hearing impairments, could be advanced to fully understand the employment experiences in the context of disability-inclusive employment.

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APPENDICES

1. DEPARTMENTAL SUPPORT LETTER

VICE-CHANCELLOR
Nanoy Chitera PhD, Maths Ed., MSc. Maths., BEd (Science)

Our Ref.:

Your Ref:

Date: 4ᵗʰ September, 2023

All correspondence to be addressed to the Vice Chancellor
Malawi University of Business and Applied Sciences
Private Bag 303
Chichiri
Blantyre 3, Malawi

Tel: +265 1 870 411
e-mail: vice-chancellor@mubas.ac.mw

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

ASSISTANCE TO CARRY OUT AN ACADEMIC RESEARCH FOR MBA DISSERTATION: GEORGE CHIMATIRO

I write to certify that **George Chimatiro** is a University of Malawi Postgraduate student who is pursuing a Master of Business Administration Degree course at Malawi University of Business and Applied Science.

One of the important requirements of this degree programme is that students carry out research project known as dissertation in the final semester. This introduces the student to the methodology of research, the systematic analysis of ideas, the problems of data collection and the presentation of ideas in a clear and coherent way. **George** is currently working on his MBA dissertation titled **"Experiences about disability-inclusive employment by employers and employees with disabilities in Blantyre, Malawi"**

I am therefore writing to ask for your kind assistance in allowing **George** access to carry out his research in your organization and help him with any information/literature that your organization may have on the topic of his dissertation.

Your assistance in this matter will be of greatest importance and highly appreciated and any information that may be provided will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

Yours faithfully

A.M. Lipunga PhD
MBA COORDINATOR

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2. CONSENT FORM

CONSENT FORM

Title: Experiences of disability inclusive employment by employers and employees with disabilities in Blantyre, Malawi

Introduction:

I want to thank you for taking the time to meet with me today.

My name is _____ and I would like to talk to you about your experiences regarding Disability-Inclusive employment. The interview should take less than an hour.

I will be recording the session because I do not want to miss any of your comments. All responses will be kept confidential.

Are there any questions about what I have just explained?

Are you willing to participate in this interview?

_____   _____

Interviewee   **Date**

3. INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR HR MANAGERS

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR HR MANAGERS

Title: Experiences of disability inclusive employment by employers and employees with disabilities in Blantyre, Malawi

General Information

The interviews will be conducted among HR managers, current or former employees with disabilities (EWD)

Title	HR M	HRO	Line Manager
Gender	M/F		
organisation			
Sector of organisation			
Time interview started			
Time interview ended			
Name of interviewer			
Interview Code	HR/		
Date			

Experiences of disability inclusive employment by employers and employees with disabilities in Blantyre, Malawi

1. **Values, knowledge and skills**

   a. Values:

   Tell us about your organisation regarding diversity and inclusion

   Probs

   i.   Talk to me on the importance of disability issue in your workplace

   ii.   Tell me about disability inclusion policy if you have in this organisation

   iii. Do you have PWDs in your organisation, any update on their numbers?

   b) Knowledge

   Tell us anything that you know about disability. What comes to you mind when you hear about disabilities

   Probs:

   i.   What services are there for people with disabilities

   ii.   Tell us your experience handling employee with disability as HR/or how would you handle PWDs in your organisation

   iii. Do you feel legally and morally obliged to employ people with disabilities? (what national policies guide your decisions to employee PWDs)

   iv.   How would you describe your readiness as an organisation to handle employee with disabilities.

   Can you tell your experiences handling employees in line with different HR policies and any related employment policies

   Probs:

   i.   Lets talk about anything you know about CRPD: right of employees

   ii.   Malawi disability act 2012: discrimination

   c) Skills

   Tell us about hiring and recruitment

   Probs

   i.   Tell us how you hire employees

   ii.   Explain to me if there are special consideration to attract people with disabilities

   iii. Is there any other issue you would want to tell me

Tell us about accommodation, if any, that you make when you have employee with disability

Probs:

i. adjustments to the job interview process,

ii. schedules (i.e., flexibility, working from home),

iii. modification of responsibilities, job content or working conditions, environment (i.e., lighting, quiet space);

iv. support with communication and social skills; and

v. disability awareness training for their workplace colleagues.

vi. change of workplace policy,

vii. assistive technology.

d) How do your (would you) ensure retention employees with disabilities

Probs:

i. developing and applying individuals' self-determination/self-advocacy skills in discussing accommodations and resolving work-related challenges.

ii. social skills,

iii. receiving natural supports on the job.

iv. providing education and training

v. increasing buy-in from leadership

2. **Inclusive climate, leadership, and practices**

b) Tell us what challenges employees with disability face, or would face in your organisation

Probes

i. From management

ii. From Coworkers

iii. From general environment

3. **Any last word?**

4. INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR EMPLOYEES WITH DISABILITIES

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW FOR EMPLOYEES WITH DISABILITIES

Title: Experiences of disability inclusive employment by employers and employees with disabilities in Blantyre, Malawi

General Information

The interviews will be conducted among HR managers, current or former employees with disabilities (EWD)

Title	Employee with disability (EWD)
Age	
Gender	
Nature of disability	
organisation	
Sector of organisation	
Time interview started	
Time interview ended	
Name of interviewer	
Interviewee Code	EWD/
Date	

Experiences of disability inclusive employment by employers and employees with disabilities in Blantyre, Malawi

1. **Inclusive climate, leadership, and practices**

    a) Inclusive Climate

    Tell us how it feels working for the organisation

    Probes:

    i. Were you clear of its mission as employees
    ii. confidence in self advocacy skills in discussing accommodations and resolving work-related challenges.
    iii. social skills, mingling with other employees and supervisors
    iv. received natural supports on the job.
    v. provided education and training as required
    vi. increasing buy-in from leadership
    vii. What about access issues
    viii. How did you relate with co-workers
    ix. employees are willing to speak up
    x. participate more fully
    xi. any discrimination or harassment

    b) Inclusive leadership

    Tell us about your experiences with leaders of your organisation (supervisors, managers)

    i. Expressing gratitude for your contributions
    ii. Allowing group members to offer feedback.
    iii. Response to needs for support

    c) Inclusive practices

    Tell us about your experience with accommodation, in your work place in line with your disability

    Probs:

    viii. adjustments to the job interview process,
    ix. schedules (i.e., flexibility, working from home),
    x. modification of responsibilities, job content or working conditions, environment (i.e., lighting, quiet space);

xi. support with communication and social skills; and

xii. disability awareness training for their workplace colleagues.

xiii. change of workplace policy,

xiv. assistive technology and information access,

xv. decision-making participation,

xvi. strategies for resolving conflicts,

xvii. facilitation of communication, and

xviii. avoidance of stereotyping.

2. **Tell us of any challenge your may have faced as an employee**

Probs

i. From management

ii. From Coworkers

iii. From general environment

3. **Tell us how the challenges specifically affect/affected you?**

4. **Any last word?**

5.   CODES AND THEMES SCHEME

Acces s Challenges	Inaccessible structures	imes its meetings that we need to go into the board room, I abscond from them those, I am able to walk and go there but I abscond because there are steps there, so I avoid the steps, so I usually sent someone to go there in my place, I write mutes by myself. **EWD/1** se I need someone of course I need someone to escort me but I can't walk alone as I have already told that there are a lot of drainages and they are deep, so I am afraid to walk alone. **EWD/7**
	Lack of structure in the general environment	nd people parking in wrong places when you are you used to using that road. Because for a person with vision impairment, its mostly that they are familiar with the place, so if there is any obstruction, it becomes a little difficult, they get confused. There are a few people that know, and for the little that know, they do not want to let other people know that if we see such a person, **EWD/2**
	Inaccessible information and communication	What do I mean, what I mean is that our fellows have the opportunity to that they can read. Its either they can google, or they can be given hard copies to read. Sometimes rules are displayed on the notice board showing ABCD, ho soever does not adhere to, will face a certain punishment. **EWD/2** There are some things that happen unexpectedly that needs your action {I: Yes} but you were not told about it, the information was

		not provided in a form for you to access, it painful that you get punished for things that if you were informed about it, you have taken a certain step. So mostly its issues like such. **EWD/2**
	Transport Vehicles not disability-friendly	Aaah maybe the other thing is that the other challenge that I normally encounter is the nature of transportation, yeah because it's very difficult for the institution to get disability friendly vehicles, so myself and even other colleagues we always have tough times to get into these high vehicles like the land cruises that the institution prefer to have. So, we have issues with even transport side as well in terms of accessibility. Inaccessible cars. **EWD/3**
	Transport not provided	Ummh the challenges that we face because we are disabled are about our working conditions are not followed properly. For example, we have some people that live far, so when we complain about transport it's a bit of a problem **EWD/6** For example, as I am, I luck means of transportation, if a motor bike would be found, u can find a relative to drive me. **EWD/6**
Unsupportive values	Wrong attitude about disability in the national culture	What I believe, with us is attitude. You know most of the people in Malawi, both educated and non-educated, they have a wrong attitude against people with disability. So that wrong attitude generalizes anybody else with a disability. They feel like, if someone with a disability cannot perform, which they have been seeing the those

		with a disability in the street, maybe begging or doing nasty things around the street or in even in their homes, they are not performers, so they generalize it. They apply to any disability person, yeah.So, it's what I encountered most. Which was… they actually play it hard against those with disability. **EWD/2**
	Stereotyping by colleagues an employers	They have doubts in your abilities, the way they talk to you, you just think to yourself that this is not personal am a civil service of Malawi. If I went for the interviews that qualifies me to be legit to do the job. It's a huge challenge when they see that you are disabled, they just assume that how is this one going to treat us, they do noteven know that I am an employee, so I just let them be, then after asking them that is this how you treat your fellow employees here? {I:Mmh}then they be surprised to learn that I am an employee here, as if they are apologizing. **EWD/2**
		others are just falling in. But it's not easy, with their others when I ask them about documents to do with my work, it's a challenge, but with the same document for someone to ask its, its easy to get it. When they go to their offices, they say things. They even ask the person that I have gone with to their office, the guider, what I want. You can imagine you want the services of that office, you can speak, you can hear, the only disability that you have is only sight. The other things you can do. But they treat you as if you are a nobody. So, in such an environment how can you work to your level best. It's impossible. **EWD/2**

	Discrimination	I would say yes. Because we still have some members of staff at even top level who think that persons with disabilities are a problem. They still believe that whenever you bring issues out to them, they would say no, persons with disabilities are problematic. So sometimes you fail to be assisted properly because of the mindset that is there even if you are bringing out issues that are perfectly for help. **EWD/3**
		They have very good qualifications and if they have…people have got negative attitude towards people with disabilities including the HR. **EWD/5**
	Employers do not know what disability is	Leadership also, because they do not know what disability is, so they do things that they think fits at that moment. Not regarding the disabled person. Sometimes deciding for them without consulting them. They just impose it, saying this is Hendrina's without consulting Hendrina to hear what her views would be. So that also is a challenge in terms of leadership **EWD/2**
		As I have already said, but the interaction is important, I can say some things happen in their lack of knowledge because we do not meet, but still, I cannot initiate the meeting, they are the ones who can do that, they employed me. **EWD/4**
		As I am putting it, it's a level of awareness too, like do they really know what it means when someone want to be helped by you, on the other hand as I already explained that it's about

		attitude, lacking knowledge to understand what it means to have such a disability **EWD/5**
	Lack of interest by employers to check on work situation of EWDs	I can tell you that maybe the top management does not know how I work, they just encourage me that I do well, but they do not know how I actually work. I strongly believe that in some aspect if they know how I work, they can add a little effort or find other means on how I can be helped to keep on working. **EWD/4** I think there have never been such kind of meetings that I am asked, or I choose to sit down with them to discuss because I do not believe in failure, I just do my thing the way I see them to be done for myself, so long as it's not going to distort what was supposed to happen **EWD/4** I believe you understand right, I have never been asked as a person with a disability on how I should be helped in any other way but maybe it can be a meeting on how programming works, how adverts works **EWD/4**
	Sometimes employers are not empathetic on EWD	its going well but to other extent you know humans are all different, we cannot understand properly anybody else we cannot put on somebody's shoes as if it's yours. Sometimes they do tolerate well, the other days you just wonder how something that was agreed on ha gone bad, you know. So, when you try o push things with the leadership, it's like you are putting pressure on them, something like that. **EWD/2**
	Employers maintain EWDs purely as a PR	So, in so doing, there other things that bothers you may have been recruited out of sympathy that

	duty	maybe if they do not pick you, or that if it's heard elsewhere that at queens a certain employee is being treated in a certain way, it may end up a being a shocking news in the media. So that's an issue also, not that they are committed to work with a person with a disability, but because of fear of the public outside, they end up doing what is not necessary but not considering the out, we can exaggerate because the other person has a disability, they shouldn't treat them in a certain way, yet the disabled person is breaking rules. For them to summon that person, it's very challenging **EWD/2**
	Sometimes colleagues mind their own business	I deliver to some extent independent to them, if there is some that need their help, I try to tell someone who can help. Sometimes its not that easy to focus on people. focus on those people who mind their own business it's not easy. So that level of awareness I do not understand it because it is doubtful sometimes. **EWD/4** For example, there is a need for adverts, and almost done with my program and I will ask someone to help with the advert and they give excuse saying that they are busy, the news that should be ready at 1 **EWD/4**
Procedural challenges	Recruitment challenges, challengewith disability acceptance at local workstation	Is unacceptable. My boss, like at Queen's, the acceptance was very tough, they were not ready to work with me. Looking at actual… they did not know more about, first with my profession as well as how they will be working with me in their environment. So, it was very tough for them to accept me to work with them. {I: Yeah} yeah. **EWD/2**

		They had fear for unknown, you know, they didn't come closer to me to discuss. Instead, they were discussing about my issue amongst themselves without approaching me. **EWD/2**
	No consideration for housing EWDs close to work place	Because rentals are expensive, so we travel long distances from where rentals are a bit cheaper. So, walking from work when going home in the evening and walking from to work in the morning it's challenging. **EWD/6**
	No flexible schedule to accommodate EWDs who leave in far places	e starting time that they put there, it's like how it is at the labour office, from 7.30 to 4.30. That's the time they stick to, according to the recommendations of disability organisations who say disability is not inability. So, I think people take these words that we are able to go by rules from any work. **EWD/6** It would have been better if adjusted the starting time, say 8 o'clock. That would be better for one to be able to walk to work, because some people come from far. I will give you an example, qt the weaving factory, we have people that come from Nguludi turn off, drone to arrive... and it's not like they provide for transport allowance that you can you to catch a
	EWDs not involved in decision making	No Iam not involved…. That's inferiority, ummh they do not recognise me, or they do not value me, {I: Mmhu} sure. **EWD/2**
	Lack of chance for self-advocacy	Ifthe thing that troubles me much is that, if it were the disabled persons themselves to go and talk to the government, maybe the government could have understood. But because it's the abled

		that go there, since they are the ones that run the factory. For example, 5he executive director and all others that run the Council, they are all abled people. So, even if they were to explain, they wouldn't be understood properly. But if it were the disabled to speak for themselves, because maybe they are told that our welfare is in good shape when it's not like that. **EWD/6**
		ere that there I someone to represent us, let's say the directive director is abled like that, but the vice should be a person with a disability so that they are able to explain the problems of disability as it should and what he would want to happen. Because to say the truth, even the working conditions for us and the abled are very different. They we are people that everything should be done for us, but we are not people that can hold top potions like grade 2 and the like. **EWD/6**
	No promotion for EWDs	For example, where I work, grade 14 is the lowest. Maybe as you go to 12 you would be better off. But I do not know in the government, where better grades start from. But as for us, it starts from 14 going down **EWD/6**.
	EWDs are at the mercy of few Enlighted people	That happened because ofc my disability, because he could tell me I was doing a good a job. The other thing is when there is a white man, when you are reporting to a white man, they recognise you. But when you are reporting to Malawians, they do not respect a person with disability {17:24} this manager am telling you about, we

		can chart as friends, he is very good. But when it comes to that… the same job I was doing, he changed the post for the office, the one who came to do the job he was given good money and promoted, the same post, the same job I was doing. **EWD/5**
		It was the passion of the MD then {I; Okey} was looking at a person with disability like any other person, knowing that most people with disabilities are not being employed, so he was trying to give them a job. **EWD/5**
organisational challenges	Absence of employees in decision making positions	Why I am saying so is that if you look at the whole structure of the organisation, the disability quantinum is there, but you will see that the levels where these persons are engaged are quiet very low levels of the hierarchy, in so doing you will see that the institutions main positions are not held by any of the persons with disability, that in itself excludes them from decision making and it also promotes some home grown discrimination even if they are qualified you will see that they are not well catered in those angles. **EWD/3**
Resource challenges	Lack of resources for day to day work	Another issue is that if materials are not available, we just loaf. Let me give you an example, in weaving factories we use cotton. So, if David whitehead does not buy cotton from the farmers and do the proper processes for us, then the factory stops production. That's another problem, such that if we do not produce products, people won't come to buy from us **EWD/6**
		It is very challenging because I do not have

		teachers guide, learners' book in brail. I am using the sighted ones. **EWD/6**
	Cost related to accommodation and modification	Because there are some issues that institution when some when some went to a certain forum to engage with some employers to employ some persons with disability, they were actually told point blank that persons with disabilities sometimes they are not engaged in employment because they require a lot of adjustments. So, when they come here, we have a lot of issues with them. We need to pick them for transport, they can't come here on their own. So those issues come out actually in that conference. So, there is a lot that needs to be done. **EWD/3** The truth of the matter is if we follow through what it's in the books it can be more expensive to employ someone who have disabilities. To look at the fact, they are only a few courageous people who can employ such people as myself, but this doesn't mean we are miserable people so that people who do not have disabilities should take an advantage of us no and as they please, no. **EWD/3**
	Needs of PWD not often met	Speaking, yeah, I do speak okey {I: Mmh} whenever I am not feeling good in terms of my work, am not comfortable enough I do speak but for someone to react, to take part or do something out of my concern becomes a challenge. **EWD/2** Yes, for example I myself since I started my 1992, do you know that I get 135. So, it's just a surprise, can you manage to sustain yourself. I have 5 children, all of them I have to educate. With nowhere to get a loan from, we do not even

		get to be offered loans to help ourselves, so yes that is harassment. Because if you ask for a loan, they say that they do not have. **EWD/6**
Impact on EWDs	Self-exclusion because of unsupportive practices	So sometimes I choose to be quiet to avoid some other people especially those who have never helped me or those who helped me unwillingly so I just see that I should not involve them. **EWD/4**
	NO choice, working because there are no other employers for PWDs	The problem is that we have nowhere to go. So, for a person to quit, they would have nowhere to go. There are so little organisations that can employ a disabled person. So, you end up staying though facing difficulties because what else can you do. **EWD/6**
Mitigating	What employer should do to support EWD	Maybe juts that companies shouldn't wait to be told about a problem. They should be able to point it out themselves and see how they can solve problems around their companies if there are certain problems. Just because I do not speak out, they shouldn't take it as everything is normal. **EWD/1**
		So human resource managers should have a course that they should do concerning about people with disabilities. How they are going to work with them and how they are going to treat them, even at interviews. That can be helpful. But also, there are some workshops for the managers, it could bed a training or something, a session for the disabled should be present because whether we like it or not, there are a lot of disabled persons that are educated these days unlike in the past. **EWD/2**
		is that need of interaction, the HR or the top management should have time, a lot of places with people of disabilities, there are a few people that it cannot be hard for them to meet them. **EWD/2**
		are same things that am talking about. Our voices fail to be heard because. There should have been a way so that maybe when they go there, they appoint a disabled person so that this person can

		talk to the government on behalf of his fellow disabled persons, telling them about the problems that we are facing. We do not know what they say there. **EWD/2**
	Government should formulate and reinforce policies supporting EWDs	Here in Malawi, we have a disability act, I would love for the disability act to be a compulsory subject, for it to ne known as we are saying, the human resource should have some knowledge that how can they work with a person with a disability, what capabilities do they have, how can they accommodate such a person if they are the HR, how best can they work with a person with disability. **EWD/2**
		There should also be an enforcement that disability policies should be formulated. So that the are like guidelines that people with disabilities are employees, not that they should be encouraged to lazy, but every one has their rights, the right to belong so that things go in the right direction when we are people, we should treat all equally. **EWD/2**
		And the other problem it's the government itself, there are no policies protect people with disabilities (I: Okey) because if they could say quoter, should be employed. If the government had the mechanism whereby, they could hey could be checking ministry of labour, could be checking the companies with them, why there are not employing disabled people in your companies, that would help. **EWD/5**