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People with disabilities' perspectives on how participation in a supported employment programme facilitates access to work.

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ABSTRACT

Despite extensive literature highlighting the role of supported employment in ensuring access to work for people with disabilities, there is limited research on their perspectives of supported employment. This thesis presents a research study conducted in two different supported employment programmes in South Africa. The aim of the study was to explore and describe people with disabilities' perspectives on how participation in a supported employment programme facilitates access to work. The research objectives sought to explore the barriers to, and facilitators of, inclusion and access for people with disabilities to work; describe key elements of a supported employment programme that influences access and inclusion for people with disabilities to work; and finally, to explore people with disabilities' perspectives regarding the value of participating in a supported employment programme. An exploratory descriptive research design within a qualitative research approach was utilized. Purposive sampling was used to select participants affiliated with the two supported programmes. Semi-structured interviews with six participants and four key informants were conducted as the means of data collection. Four themes emerged from the findings of this study: 1) Work: an occupation for all? 2) Enablers to supported employment, 3) Barriers to supported employment and 4) Support: a foundation to inclusion. The findings identify programme enablers such as personal factors, which included individual motivation to access and engage in work; programme barriers such as participants' experiences of the lack of disability awareness in South African workplaces, as well as the support participants received that promoted their engagement in their work. The findings provide evidence that advocacy and the promotion of disability-inclusive supported employment initiatives are needed.

Such initiatives would help to ensure that inclusive working environments are created by employers and that the necessary supportive frameworks, when employing people with disabilities, are increased. Underpinning this, contextually relevant policy with sufficient, multi-sectoral governmental involvement is vital to ensure implementation of supported employment programmes in South Africa. The study contributes to the generation of valuable knowledge to inform targeted advocacy for disability inclusion in the open labour market. It further provides the supporting evidence for such advocacy, which is able to facilitate the development and provision of supported employment programmes that can guarantee the full inclusion of people with disabilities in society. Lastly, the findings provide instructive direction on how supported employment programmes can be improved and thus ensure they meet the needs of people with disabilities who want to gain employment or who are employed.

Key words

Disability; Occupation; Occupational injustice; Occupational therapy; Qualitative research; Social inclusion; Supported employment; Work.
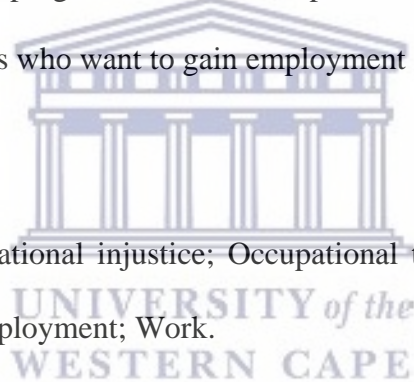
DECLARATION

I declare that *People with disabilities' perspectives on how participation in a supported employment programme facilitates access to work* is my own work, that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

Name: Michaela Ellen Otty

Date: 11 November 2021

Signed: *M.Otty*

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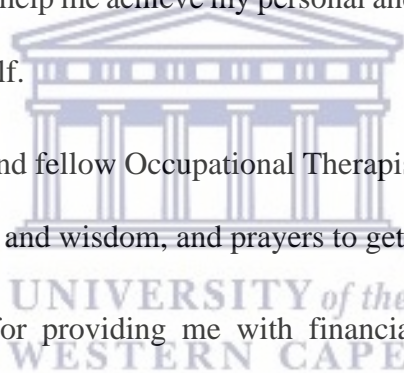
ABBREVIATIONS AND ACCRONYMS

UN   United Nations

WHO   World Health Organization

ICF   International Classification of Function, Disability and Health

UNCRPD   United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

WPRPD   White Paper on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

ILO   International Labour Organization

EEA   Employment Equity Act

OT   Occupational Therapist

WFOT   World Federation of Occupational Therapists

DSD   Department of Social Development

SDA   Skills Development Act

PEPUDA   Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act

SDG   Sustainable Development Goals

LIST OF DEFINITIONS

Disability: Dynamic interaction between health conditions and contextual factors, both personal and environmental (World Health Organization, 2001).

Occupation: Activities that make up an individual's life experience and can be named in the culture (Larson et al., 2003).

Occupational injustice: The presence of social, economic, environmental, geographic, historic, cultural, or political factors external to the individual which prevents their engagement in needed and desired occupations (Townsend & Wilcock, 2004a).

Occupational Therapy: A client-centered health profession concerned with promoting health and well-bring through occupation with the goal of enabling persons to participate in the activities of everyday life (World Federation of Occupational Therapy, 2010).

Qualitative Research: A research approach utilized to explore and understand a social or human problem (Creswell, 2003).

Social inclusion: The process of improving access to participation in society, more specifically aimed at those who are and have been disadvantaged, through enhancing opportunities, improving access to resources, voicing, and respecting of rights (United Nations [UN], 2016).

Supported employment: A model of employment that provides people with disabilities the appropriate, ongoing support that is necessary for success in the open labour market (Wehman et al., 2012).

Work: A purposeful driven activity, aimed at improving physical and intellectual assets, and the creation of goods and/or the provision of services for the fulfillment of personal and social needs (Zhang, 2006).

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

The focus of this study was on the perspectives of people with disabilities regarding how participating in a supported employment programme facilitates access to work. The research setting was two organizations in South Africa who implement supported employment programmes for people with disabilities. Accentuating the voices of people with disabilities is critical in the development of programmes aimed at addressing exclusion and ensuring fulfilment of their human rights.

The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) states that disability can be described as the dynamic interaction between health conditions and contextual factors, both personal and environmental (World Health Organization [WHO], 2001). The United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (UNCRPD) emphasizes that disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and the attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinder their full participation in society (United Nations [UN], 2006). Consequently, disability inclusion, as defined by Swart and Pettipher (2011) addresses how society includes people with disabilities by reducing the barriers that are imposed on them thus suggesting it is based on the social model of disability. The White Paper on the Rights of People with Disabilities (WPRPD) furthermore emphasizes that inclusion is a universal human right. The White Paper is therefore aimed at guaranteeing non-discrimination of people regardless of race, gender, disability, or any other differences (Department of Social Development [DSD], 2016).

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In order to fulfil the prescriptions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights while also addressing other inclusionary policies and conventions, The World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT), formalised its position on human rights in relation to human occupation and participation and the duty of occupational therapists to work towards having these rights met (World Federation of Occupational Therapists [WFOT], 2019). This position paper asserts the link between access to occupation and human rights. Additionally, it highlights the role and responsibility occupational therapists have to develop and create knowledge to support participation, identify and raise issues of occupational barriers and injustices and also to work in society to address equal access to occupation for all persons (WFOT, 2019).

Focusing on employment access, WFOT (2012) affirms the rights of all people to engage productively in all occupations, including work, and asserts that occupational therapists have the expertise in vocational rehabilitation to enable individuals' participation in work. As stated by King and Olson (2014), occupational therapists can develop appropriate evaluation, treatment, and prevention programmes within a vocational rehabilitation setting. According to WFOT (2012) the provision of vocational rehabilitation services can enable individuals to enter, re-enter, and return to or remain in work. Vocational rehabilitation services describe a wide range of supportive services responsible for the implementation of vocational preparation and training, transitional employment, supported employment and job coaching (Stuckley, 1997). Supported employment is an effective service approach to promote the inclusion of people with disabilities in work and integrating people with disabilities in the open labour market (Crowther et al., 2001). The supported employment model provides people with disabilities with appropriate ongoing support that is necessary for success in the open labour market (Wehman et al., 2012).

1.2 Problem Statement

The ability to work is considered one of the major human occupational performance areas (King & Olson, 2014). Westmorland et al. (2002) state that one's ability to work contributes to the development of self-esteem, volition, sense of belonging, and competence. An interruption and inability to work creates a significant impact on health (King & Olson, 2014). According to Frank (2016), the ability to work is important to one's social standing, and to community participation, as well as the advantages it brings to one's quality of life in terms of material needs. However, there is evidence that suggests that people with disabilities lack access to work, as indicated by the low representation of this segment of the population within the South African workforce (Maja et al., 2011; de Guimarães, 2015). Despite the adoption of various policies by the South African Government relating to the employment of people with disabilities, their representation in the workplace remains stubbornly low, thus contradicting the ideal of an all-encompassing society envisaged by the South African Constitution (Maja et al., 2011). People with disabilities constitute only 1.2% of the total South African workforce (Department of Labour, 2015). Barriers to employment experienced by people with disabilities, as highlighted by Maja et al. (2011) include discrimination, inaccessible physical infrastructure, cost of accommodations, and a lack of legislative implementation guiding the employment of people with disabilities. These barriers pose a risk to the inclusion and fulfilment of human rights of people with disabilities.

Despite extensive literature highlighting the role of supported employment in ensuring access to work for people with disabilities as well the utility of occupational therapy as an implementation strategy for supported employment (WFOT, 2012; King & Olson, 2014; Priest & Bones, 2012), there is limited research that focuses on the perspectives of those with mental

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health conditions or intellectual disabilities on engaging in supported employment programmes and its contribution to inclusion and access to work. This dearth of research may be contributing to the perpetuated lack of inclusion people with disabilities experience in the open labour market in South Africa. It is important for the voices of people with disabilities to be heard about issues that affect them and to ensure their participation in the development of supported employment services in South Africa. Generating an understanding of the perspectives of people with disabilities about supported employment can ensure that interventions that are implemented are relevant and effective and help ensure that people with disabilities have access to work and are included in the open labour market.

1.3 Research question

The research question addressed in this study is: What are people with disabilities' perspectives on how participation in a supported employment programme facilitates access to work?

1.4 Aim and Objectives

1.4.1 Aim

The aim of the study was to explore and describe people with disabilities' perspectives on how participation in a supported employment programme facilitates inclusion and access to work.

1.4.2 Objectives

The objectives were:

I.   To explore barriers to inclusion and access of people with disabilities in work

II.   To explore facilitators of inclusion and access of people with disabilities in work.

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III. To describe key elements in a supported employment programme that influences people with disabilities' access and inclusion in work.

IV. To explore people with disabilities' perspectives regarding the value of participating in a supported employment programme for accessing work.

1.5 Study Purpose and Significance

The purpose of this study was to explore and describe people with disabilities' perspectives of supported employment in facilitating inclusion and access to work in the open labour market. The significance of the study lies in the generation of valuable knowledge to inform targeted advocacy for disability inclusion in the open labour market. It further provides the supporting evidence for advocacy for the development and provision of supported employment programmes to ensure the full inclusion of people with disabilities in society. Lastly, the findings of the study are useful in providing direction for the improvement of supported employment programmes so that they meet the needs of people with disabilities who want to gain employment or who are employed.

1.6 Outline of the thesis

This thesis comprises of the following chapters:

Chapter 1: Background; problem statement; research question; aims and objectives of the study; and the purpose and significance of the study.

Chapter 2: The literature review in reference to the study's conceptual and theoretical framework.

Chapter 3: Description of the research methodology utilized in the study.

Chapter 4: Report of the findings of the study

Chapter 5: Presents a discussion of the findings in reference to the research aim, objectives and existing literature as highlighted in Chapter 2.

Chapter 6: Provides the main conclusions derived from the study, lists the limitations of the study, and offers recommendations as informed by the key findings.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to highlight literature that contextualises disability, the development of society's understanding of disability, and the impact thereof on disability inclusion. The literature reviewed considers how disability is addressed in the South African context and the various policies pertaining to disability that have been introduced. Importance is given to literature able to describe and give recognition to people with disabilities and their access to employment in South Africa. Literature pertaining to work as a meaningful occupation, supported employment and the role of the Occupational Therapist within this field is also examined. Finally, a synthesis of the theoretical framework that underpins the study, namely, the theory of occupational justice, is presented.
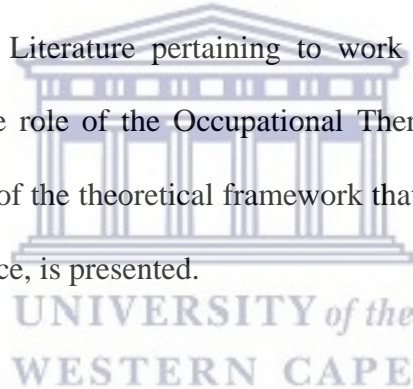
2.2 Disability inclusion in South Africa

The South African Government is committed to working towards, and achieving the goals set out by the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), as outlined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. As a developing country, the goals are strongly considered, and the evaluation of their attainment is critical. The goals recognize strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and stimulate economic growth in order to alleviate poverty and other deprivations (United Nations General Assembly, 2015). The deprivation that results from inaccessibility and exclusion in workplaces is a crucial issue and forms the foundation of Goal 8 of the SDG-decent work and economic growth.

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By 2030, in order to achieve Goal 8, South Africa should achieve full and productive employment, decent work for all women and men, and equal pay for work of equal value, inclusive of young people and people with disabilities (United Nations General Assembly, 2015).

According to Kidd et al. (2018), around 3.5% of South Africa's population experience severe functional limitations while 12.2% can be regarded as having at least a moderate disability. As people with disabilities make up a significant portion of the South African population, it is critical to observe more specific statistics relating to the access and engagement of this population. According to Statistics South Africa (2011), 40% of people with disabilities are not active in any labour market, whilst the majority are employed in protective and sheltered workshops. The 20th Commission for Employment Equity Annual Report 2019—20, reported that in 2019 only 1.5% of top management positions were fulfilled by people with disabilities in South Africa while 1.3% of people with disabilities were in senior management positions (Department of Employment and Labour, 2020). Additionally, 1.2% of people with disabilities were in skilled employment positions, 1% in semi-skilled positions and 1% in unskilled positions (Department of Employment and Labour, 2020). These statistics clearly reflect the underrepresentation of people with disabilities in the South African labour market, indicating a lack of access and inclusion, contributing to the marginalization of this significant population group. People with disabilities are therefore deprived of the opportunity to engage in work, perpetuating a vicious cycle of social disadvantage underpinned by discrimination and paternalism.

2.3 Models of disability

Society's understanding and conceptualization of disability has evolved. How disability is defined and theorized in society greatly influences how matters surrounding it are approached (Clements & Read, 2008). According to Buntinx and Schalock (2010), the concept of disability has changed from primarily focussing on pathology or the defect in an individual, to a focus of human functioning based on the interaction between a person and their environment. This is a position shared by Clements and Read (2008), who state that in published work until the late 1970s and early 1980s, the Western Biomedical paradigm was used as the primary and most influential way of defining disability. However, over the last three decades, the biomedical understanding of disability has been challenged and shaped by the social theory of disability (Clements & Read, 2008). The social theory of disability informed by social science and the law, frames the human rights of people with disabilities (Clements & Read, 2008). Hence, there are obvious contradictions in these two dominant models of disability, namely the medical model of disability and the social model of disability.

2.3.1 The medical model of disability

The medical model of disability began gaining momentum in the mid-1800s, replacing the moral/or religious model in lieu of the advances in the field of medical sciences (Retief & Letšosa, 2018). The rate at which the medical model increased momentum is described by Kruse and Hale (2003), who note that as the industrial revolution brought an increased demand for production and levels of education, it exacerbated unfavourable views of disability in society. The medical model of disability places a strong emphasis on impairment regarding a person with a disability having an impairment that needs to be cured (Shakespeare, 2017). This is substantiated by Sullivan (2011) who notes that the medical model of disability emphasizes

the individual's deficit and that it is up to the person to change to engage in society. This model is strongly opposed by disability activists because of its inability to voice the lived experience of people with disabilities (Brisenden, 1986). According to Retief and Letšosa (2018), the Medical Model highlights the deviation from the norm and creates the understanding that people with disabilities are not comparable to able-bodied individuals. Kasser and Lytle (2013) highlight the medical model's exclusive focus on the limitation (s) posed by a person's impairment, disregarding contextual factors that may adversely affect a person's functioning. Macintyre (1984) notes a link between people with disabilities, their employment and the medical model of disability and asserts that if one cannot engage in labour practices, you are excluded from society. Beckett (2006) reiterates this position and states that the segregation of those with impairments diminishes their opportunity to earn an income and results in dependency for care and charity.

2.3.2 The social model of disability

Fundamental to the social model of disability is the understanding that disability is a socially constructed phenomenon (Retief & Letšosa, 2018). From this position, it is society that disables people with impairments, and to solve the problem of disablement, society needs to change rather than requiring the individual to adjust or undergo rehabilitation (Barnes, 2018). These fundaments of the social model of disability provided momentum for the establishment of The Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS) who held the core belief that people with physical impairments were victims of oppression (Finkelstein, 2007; UPIAS, 1976).

When considering the concept of oppression against people with disabilities, the UPIAS noted that disability was the limitation of active participation which resulted from society's failure to

account for the physical impairments of people (UPIAS, 1976). In subsequent years, this definition was refined and placed a strong focus on society's role in the oppression of people with disabilities. Consequently, disability is deemed a social issue and a form of societal oppression (Oliver & Barnes, 2006). It is in this social orientation to disability that interventions to address disability inclusion took on a critical, politically driven approach.

2.4 Disability Policy Context in South Africa

In the post-apartheid era, in efforts to offset the inequalities and discrimination of the past, various policies aimed at creating a fair and equal society for all within South Africa were adopted. This includes specific policies to address the rights of people with disabilities. The policies consider the equal engagement and treatment of people with disabilities in all aspects of life. Furthermore, these policies form the basis of advocacy for the inclusion of people with disabilities with the aim of advancing systemic change. The following legislation and policies were explored to provide the researcher with an understanding of the political environment in which access and inclusion are founded.

The *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa* represents the supreme law of the land, and highlights equality and promotes the ability of every citizen to full and equal enjoyment of all rights and freedoms (South African Government, 1996). The corresponding *South African Bill of Rights,* as stated in Chapter 2 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, has a strong focus on equality, as shown in Section 9.

It is this strong focus on equality and rights that underpins the foundation of all South African laws. South African citizens are therefore legally protected from discrimination and granted opportunities to benefit from the rights and freedoms enshrined in the constitution. Any attempt

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to diminish such rights are thus regarded as unlawful and unfair (South African Government, 1996)

According to Sing (2012) the South African constitution provided the basis of a legal and moral obligation to ensure equality and to remedy the ills of the past by elevating all citizens' rights to dignity. McGregor (1999) argues that the role of the constitution, through its role in the development of policies, has ensured the rights of people with disabilities specifically, their rightful access to work.

The South African government has adopted the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities* (UNCRPD). This has meant that the South African government has integrated the convention into its national policies and in so doing, ensured a legislative framework that aims to protect and safeguard the rights of people with disabilities. Article 27 of the UNCRPD states that the government recognizes the right of people with disabilities to work on an equal basis with others; this includes the right to the opportunity to earn an income through engaging in work that is freely chosen or being accepted in a labour market and work environments that are characterised by their openness, inclusivity, and accessibility to people with disabilities (United Nations [UN], 2006). The convention highlights that parties should safeguard and promote the right to work, including creating access for those who acquire a disability during employment, by taking appropriate steps to ensure inclusion and adopting appropriate legislation (UN, 2006). This convention is based on the social model of disability as it addresses full inclusion and participation in the environment.

The *White Paper on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (WPRPD)* was implemented by the Department of Social Development (DSD) in 2016 and aims to develop a free and just society inclusive of all people with disabilities (DSD, 2016). The white paper highlights the

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fact that all governmental sectors need to consider the barriers that impact the lives of people with disabilities and put in place all the necessary procedures to guarantee that people with disabilities have the exact same opportunities as people without disabilities (DSD, 2016). These rights include the right to health care, transport, housing, recreation, employment sport, food security, family life and the right to education (DSD, 2016). Pillar 5 of the WPRPD, entitled *Reducing Economic Vulnerability and Realising Human Capital,* pays special attention to the employment of people with disabilities in South Africa. The WPRPD states that people with disabilities should be treated as an asset and every effort should be taken, whether formally or informally, to develop skills and abilities that provide people with disabilities with opportunities to maximise their contribution to society (DSD, 2016). Pillar 5 further highlights the important role of work for an individual's economic security and allowing them to achieve social inclusion, alongside developing their sense of personal well-being and identity (DSD, 2016). This white paper acknowledges that income from employment allows for financial independence and improves living standards (DSD,2016).

South Africa's ratification of the *Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 (EEA),* provided a prominent turning point in the South African disability landscape, by clearly promoting the rights of people with disabilities and their constitutional right to access to the South African labour market. Thomas (2003) confirms that the EEA intends to guarantee diversity and equality in the South African labour force, and to challenge employers to employ disadvantaged citizens.

The *Skills Development Act no. 97 of 1998 (SDA)* provides a framework in which national, sector-level and workplaces strategies that develop and improve the skills of the South African workforce can be implemented (South African Government, 1998). Steyn (2004) highlights the focus of this act in putting in place local and national workplace strategies to stimulate

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economic growth, expand employment, increase educational opportunities, and promote the betterment of social circumstances.

The ***Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act 2000 (PEPUDA)*** was passed by the South African Government in 2000. PEPUDA was introduced to stop any unfair discrimination based on race, gender, and disability. It promotes accessibility to employment opportunities for all citizens, especially those marginalized, i.e., people with disabilities (South African Government, 2002)

The above overview provides a summary on the legislative foundations that form the basis of the South African disability context. Despite South Africa's well-documented legislative framework, numerous authors highlight the lack of practical implementation and enforcement. They suggest that a 'mere' guideline approach has been adopted towards such legislation which poses a challenge to people with disabilities and their access to the South African open labour market (Maja et al., 2011; Wiggett-Barnard & Swartz; 2012).

2.5 The occupation of work

The ability to work is one of the major human occupational performance areas (King & Olson, 2014). Kielhofner and Barret (1998) state that one of the core beliefs of the occupational therapy profession is that humans are occupational beings, meaning that an individual's occupational identity is developed through their occupational engagement; a critical aspect when addressing inclusion of persons who are deprived of engagement. The centrality of personal development and identity formation is highlighted by Westmorland et al. (2002) who correlates the development of self-esteem, volition, sense of belonging, and competence with one's ability to work. Waddell and Burton (2006) note that work is healthy as it provides financial independence, psycho-social well-being, and is a source of identity, social status, and

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roles. Confirming this link with health, Frank (2016) notes that the ability to work is important to one's self-esteem, social standing, and community participation, as well as quality of life in relation to the material needs it satisfy. An interruption and inability to work creates a significant impact on health (King & Olson, 2014).

Whilst recognising the strong relationship between access to work and a sense of health, as highlighted in the above literature, it remains crucial that matters of exclusion be explored and addressed within society. Engelbrecht and Lorenzo (2010), in a qualitative study, examined the factors which cause people with disabilities to remain in or leave employment in the open labour market. The study was conducted at a company in the Cape Metropole of the Western Cape Province in South Africa. Their findings showed that when people with disabilities were employed, they could generate an income, and this contributed significantly to a sense of independence and satisfaction as they were able to maintain their own livelihoods. People with disabilities without employment did not achieve such experiences or positive feelings (Engelbrecht & Lorenzo, 2010). Additionally, their findings also pointed to the need for revision of the social security system, including the provision of disability grants, which they determined were heavily imbedded and formulated within a medical approach to disability (Engelbrecht & Lorenzo, 2010). Engelbrecht and Lorenzo (2010) conclude that in order to advance the economic empowerment of people with disabilities, through the implementation of relevant legislation and guidelines, the social security grant system requires review and revision (Engelbrecht & Lorenzo, 2010).

2.6 Disability and Employment- Access to work for people with disabilities in South Africa

Booth and Ainscow (2002) note that despite a firm commitment by the South African government to reintegrate those with disabilities into their communities, many barriers still exist to full workforce participation. According to Maja et al. (2011), these include a lack of knowledge and awareness of disabilities, employer and fellow employee discriminatory attitudes, physical and infrastructural barriers, cost of accommodations required, and lack of legislation guiding the employment of people with disabilities. Engelbrecht et al. (2017) also highlight that programmes in the public sector in South Africa continue to fall short on positive employment outcomes for youth with disabilities. This research further confirms that the lack of policy implementation, which results in the marginalization of youth with disabilities and their exclusion in the open labour market.

In a qualitative study conducted by Maja et al. (2011), the knowledge, attitude and perceptions of employers when hiring people with disabilities were explored. Participants in the study included two human resource managers and two supervisors who supervised an employee with a disability. Participants were drawn from two organizations in the manufacturing and finance sectors and were based in the Durban central business district (Maja et al. 2011). The study concluded that employers still lack adequate knowledge, awareness and understanding of disability, which contributed to the ineffective integration of people with disabilities in the workplace. Findings further reflected that despite extensive legislation compelling businesses to employ people with disabilities and meet equity targets, they struggle to find suitably qualified and skilled people with disabilities (Maja et al., 2011). In relation to skilled and

qualified persons seeking employment, Booth and Ainscow (2002) also highlight the low educational levels of youth with disabilities, which impacts on their ability to gain employment.

The exclusionary nature of society towards people with disabilities is evidenced throughout the education system which perpetuates limited education opportunities and skills training which in turn affects their access to employment. Gustafson et al. (2018) examined how people with disabilities in Sweden engaged in supported employment methods to establish themselves in the labour market, experience social inclusion at their workplaces, and how their working conditions influence their experiences with social inclusion. The study demonstrated that open communication between the employer and the employee with the disability is important. This helped ensure that discussions can take place and that possible accommodations to tasks or workplace practices are negotiated between all stakeholders. However, such levels of openness are not always possible due to the consequence of disclosing their disability which in turn increased the likelihood of workplace discrimination. The history of discrimination has additionally had an impact on the stereotyping of people with disabilities by able-bodied individuals (Maja et al., 2011). Physical barriers also remain a major hindrance to the employment of people with disabilities (Maja et al. 2011).

2.7 Supported employment

Robinson (2000) and Smits (2004) identified the following as central factors that support employment inclusion for people with disabilities; engagement between agencies that have employment for people with disabilities as a mutual priority, public awareness, and the involvement of employers. An important strategy to address employment inclusion is supported employment.

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2.7.1 Defining supported employment

When considering attempts made in the past to include people with disabilities in workplaces, a clear understanding of the major paradigm shift between supported employment and previous vocational pursuits, such as sheltered employment, is evident. Supported employment assumes that when the right type and intensity of support is provided to people with disabilities, they can be (and should be) integrated into and work in the competitive employment market (Hoekstra et al.,2004). The purpose of these programmes, as defined by Wehman et al. (2014), is therefore to support individuals with the most significant disabilities in achieving competitive employment outcomes in integrated work settings.

Supported employment, as described by Wehman et al. (2003b), has at its foundation five principles that encompass inclusive practices: 1) all individuals regardless of disability have access to work; 2) persons must be employed in competitive work environments; 3) self-determination of job seekers needs to be honoured, allowing them to make the primary decision around placement and services; 4) wages and benefits offered are equal to that of other employees; and 5) the individual with the disability should be viewed in terms of positive attributes (Wehman et al., 2003b).

Employment under the supportive employment framework not only benefits the person employed but various other parties as identified by Wehman et al. (2012). Furthermore, Wehman et al. (2012) asserts that gainful employment has multiple benefits. For the employer they gain a good employee with the necessary specialised support to enable job acquisition and enhanced retention. Benefits are also derived by the employee's family through observing a family member who is a competent worker. King and Olson (2014) state that there are three

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main characteristics of supported employment: 1) the employee receives payment for work, 2) employment takes place in an integrated work setting, and 3) ongoing support services are available to meet the continuous or periodic training needs of the employee. These three characteristics concur with the value-set defined by Wehman et al. (2003). Gustafsson et al., (2018) note that the supported employment method can contribute to social inclusion by ensuring that the job matching process is well thought out and by utilizing inclusion strategies, such as the encouragement of natural support, to create greater opportunities for social inclusion.

Key stages of supported employment programme are summarized and described by Beyer (1997) as: receipt of referral to supported employment; creating a vocational profile including description of ideal job characteristics; seeking employers in accordance with applicants interests, abilities and needs; analysis of job tasks and work culture, confirmation of worker match and placement, and support faded until the person is stable and performing to employer expectation. The worker is monitored with possibilities for career development being explored. The depth of this process is important to consider in the establishment and development of supported employment, especially in terms of costs associated with the continual support and monitoring that is required.

2.7.2 The job coach

Processes for implementing supported employment are theorized by Schall et al. (2015) and Wehman et al. (2012) and comprises four phases. They are summarized as follows: 1) getting to know the person seeking employment; 2) job development and matching; 3) training and support offered to the job seeker; 4) services provided to the new employee to promote job retention. An important element of most supported employment programmes is the ongoing support from a qualified job coach. A job coach assists the person with the disability to acquire

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and master the job skills needed to carry out a job in an open, competitive work environment (Melchiori & Church, 1997). A study conducted by Yun-Tung (2010) explored what factors, specific to the realm of job coaching, provided employment outcomes for people with disabilities in Taiwan.

Yun-Tung (2010) highlights that the job coaches in supported employment services in Taiwan provide the following functions: conducting an intake interview with the person; conducting consultations with the employer/director of human resources; accompanying clients to interviews by employer/director of human resources; providing intensive guidance and; and offer follow-up guidance and referrals. This level of support resulted in better employment outcomes for the people with disabilities who participated in the Yun-Tung (2010) study.

A descriptive qualitative study conducted by Van Niekerk et al. (2011) explored the role of supported employment as a potential strategy to facilitate the employment of people with disabilities in the South African open labour market. The study described the essential components of supported employment in the South Africa context, while noting areas of similarity to and increased demand when compared with those in developed countries (Van Niekerk et al., 2011). Job coaches, in this study, were found to be involved in creating infrastructure and marketing their services to employers to secure employment (Van Niekerk et al., 2011). Key components of supported employment programmes in South Africa were characterised by the provision of assistance with sourcing of job opportunities for people with disabilities and the process of making decisions about disclosure; education of employers and co-workers in preparation for a work placement; and practical assistance required by the employee seeking work, including financial support (Van Niekerk et al., 2011).
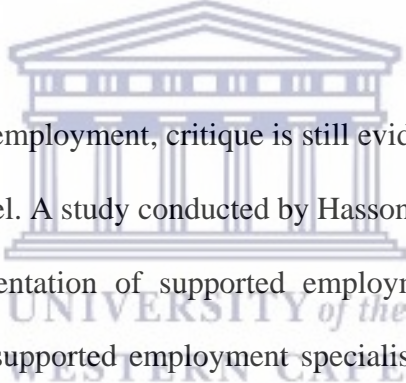
2.7.3 The value of supported employment

According to Bond (2004) supported employment for people with severe mental illnesses is an evidence-based practice. Evidence of the effectiveness of supported employment was found through the evaluation of thirteen studies conducted by different researchers in North America. The evaluation included four studies on the transition from day treatment to supported employment programmes and nine randomized controlled trials comparing supported employment to alternative vocational rehabilitation approaches (Bond, 2004). Results of these studies suggested that 40% to 60% of consumers who were enrolled in supported employment programmes obtained competitive employment (Bond, 2004). In contrast, less than 20% of consumers not enrolled in supported employment were able to find employment (Bond, 2004). These findings correspond with the views of Dowler and Walls (2014) and Wehman et al. (2014) who note that supported employment has established itself as a superior alternative compared to other vocational rehabilitation approaches that focus on therapeutic work and sheltered or protective employment.
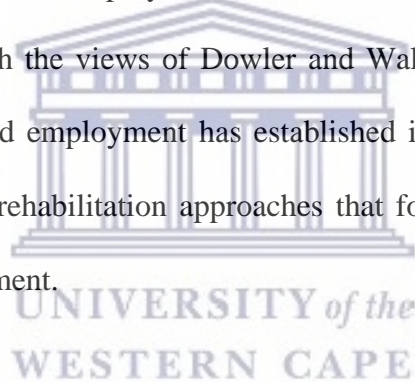
The statistics that indicate positive outcomes around engagement in supported employment programmes are also highlighted in a quantitative study by Wehman et al. (2012). This study examined the effects of supported employment in securing and maintaining competitive employment for people with autism spectrum disorder. The study followed and collected data on 33 individuals with autism spectrum disorder as they progressed through a supported employment model, working one-on-one with an employment specialist. Out of the 33 individuals included in the study, 27 successfully obtained competitive employment, with a total of 29 positions secured. These positive results were achieved through the use of a supported employment model and skilled employment specialists who were able to provide a high level of social supports and compensatory training strategies for skill acquisition.

Kamp and Lynch (2007) in their *Supported Employment Handbook* outline the benefits of supported employment with reference to four separate parties namely: 1) the person with a disability, 2) the parents/family of the person with the disability, 3) the employer, and 4) the public sector. The person with a disability who successfully engages in a supported employment programme is able to earn an income, share ordinary places, make choices, get treated with respect, and have a valued social role while growing relationships, improving financial self-reliance, and experiencing increased self-esteem (Kamp & Lynch, 2007). When considering these benefits, a correlation between accessing supported employment and the fulfillment of human rights as outlined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, can be noted.

Despite the value of supported employment, critique is still evident in literature that examines the implementation of this model. A study conducted by Hasson et al. (2011) shed light on the barriers to successful implementation of supported employment in Sweden. This study evaluated data collected from supported employment specialists, process heads, clients and representatives from mental health care units and vocational services and used interviews, non-participant observations, and document analysis. In summary, the study's findings identified the following barriers to the successful implementation of supported employment: the regulations of social insurance and employment; scepticism of employers towards persons with mental illness; subsidy expectations; as well as supported employment participants who expressing fears of losing their social benefits when engaged in supported employment (Hasson et al., 2011). Considering the implementation barriers faced by supported employment services in South Africa, Van Niekerk et al. (2011) highlighted that government subsidies tend to cover vocational services until the point of placement in employment occurs. Thus, pointing to

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possible fragmentation in the current funding sources available in the South African context, suggesting a serious barrier hindering the development of supported employment services.

When one considers the on-going process of support that is provided within the supported employment model it remains critical to evaluate the costs associated and how this may pose as a potential barrier to the successful implementation of these programmes especially in developing and under-resourced countries. This is supported by Bond et al. (2001) who note that a common barrier to implementing evidence-based supported employment practice, is the finances that is required to start up programmes and continue the support needed by participants to ensure their successful integration into the workplace. Van Niekerk et al. (2011) note that South Africa's legislative and policy environment does have the potential to support the development of services that facilitate access to employment for people with disabilities. However limited available funding has been placed in more traditional models of vocational rehabilitation for example in work (re-)integration services being directed towards hospitals, rehabilitation and/or protective work contexts (Van Niekerk et al., 2011). Engelbrecht et al. (2017) therefore highlights that the ongoing nature of support in the open labour market as prescribed by the supported employment model is currently not funded. In consideration of literature relating to the costs associated with implementation of supported employment, Engelbrech et al. (2017), in a descriptive study, provided evidence that reflects the cost of supported employment services to people with mental disability as substantially lower than the current government investment in disability grants and protective workshops subsidies.

2.7.4 Occupational Therapy and supported employment

The WFOT provides a clear description of the role of occupational therapy (OT) in addressing vocational rehabilitation. It further affirms the approach that promotes the rights of all people to participate in productive occupations, including work (WFOT, 2019; WFOT, 2012). Capo (2001) highlights that the role of OT is essential in supported employment because of their expertise in job analysis, holistic commitment to persons, and placing primary focus on functional activities. The WFOT (2012) regards occupational therapists as experts in the field of vocational rehabilitation. They offer the following reasons for this position, stating that occupational therapists have a primary concern about the promotion of performance in occupations; give attention to performance skills, the mental and physical health of their clients and body functions and structure alongside considering the contexts and environments that influence engagement; place focus on the compatibility between the assessment of function and demands of the work (i.e. activity analysis) ;and finally adopt an holistic approach when considering the needs of the client and the employer (WFOT, 2012)

The Coakley and Bryze (2018) study used a case study with embedded qualitative and quantitative data and explored the value of OT in supported employment of adults with intellectual disabilities. The study offered preliminary findings of the unique contributions and distinct value that OT can bring to the implementation of supported employment programmes for people with intellectual disabilities. The study reported that skills in observation, critical reasoning, and targeted intervention towards the improvement of specific motor and process performance skills were the most significant contribution that OT made to the implementation of supported employment programmes (Coaxley & Bryze, 2018). Similar findings were evident in a study completed by Machingura and Lloyd (2017). They examined the unintended

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impacts of implementing an individual placement and support (IPS) model on occupational therapy practice. A narrative literature review on the IPS model, employment and occupational therapy was conducted by these researchers. Their conclusions assert the need for occupational therapists to re-affirm the rights of people, irrespective of their ability, to participate in productive occupations such as paid work. They also affirm the proficiency of occupational therapists in the area of employment services to enable engagement within work (Machingura & Lloyd, 2017).

2.8 Limitations in research

Nothing about us, without us is described by Franits (2005) as a mantra likely originating in South Africa's disability rights movement. This quote and the meaning implied remain critical in addressing the dearth of research that explores the perspectives of people with disabilities in matters that directly affect them, for example, their engagement in supported employment programmes.

Kielhofner (2005) notes that historically, people with disabilities are often disenfranchised by societal systems, including the systems of medicine and rehabilitation. The relevance and the importance of this study therefore lies in the lack of literature exploring people with disabilities' perspectives of supported employment. According to Kielhofner et al. (2004) these perspectives are highly regarded in disabilities studies, as decisions relating to services, accessibility and rights should have at its foundation the perspectives of people with disabilities.

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2.9 Theoretical Framework

Occupational justice was utilized as a guiding theoretical framework in this study. Wilcock and Townsend (2000) define occupational justice as actions directed to having the occupational needs of individuals, groups, and communities met as part of a fair and empowering society. It was a valuable framework to guide this study because of the strong link between access and inclusion to work as a matter of creating occupationally just societies, as embedded within a human rights-based approach.

Occupational justice, as described within the occupational therapy profession, has at its foundation the concept of social justice, which defines disadvantage as a result of multiple inequalities within society (Blakeney & Marshall, 2009). Whiteford (2010), argues that some people are socially included and privileged to have a choice in decisions about occupational engagement, while others are socially excluded and unable to engage in their occupations of choice. The main position taken by this theory is that occupational injustice results from social structures, and the power exerted through theses structural mechanisms which act to restrict occupational participation.

Occupational injustice is thus understood as a phenomenon experienced by individuals when social, economic, environmental, geographic, historic, cultural, or political factors external to the individual prevent their engagement in an occupation (Townsend & Wilcock, 2004a). The outcomes of occupational injustice are described as occupational deprivation, occupational alienation, and occupational imbalance (Townsend & Wilcock, 2004a). Furthermore, occupational deprivation is described by Townsend and Wilcock (2004b) as the result of people being denied the resources and opportunities to engage in occupations because of cultural, institution, physical, political or social restrictions. Occupational alienation is regarded as the

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sense of isolation, powerlessness, frustration, loss of control and estrangement from society because of undesired and/or meaningless engagement in occupations (Wilcock, 2006). Finally, occupational imbalance is defined as an experience of having too much or too little to do, resulting in occupational performance that does not meet social, mental or rest needs (Wilcock, 2006).

The occupational justice framework offers the researcher the necessary guidance to interrogate the multiple barriers people with disabilities encounter and have to overcome when seeking participation in work. It also allows for the resultant occupational injustices to be described and presented. The framework is also generative in allowing for the critique of the supportive and inclusive nature of supported employment programmes by drawing attention to which occupational injustices are most prevalent in the implementation of such programmes.

2.10 Summary

This chapter presented a literature review that contextualised disability and discussed the development of a societal understanding of disability while offering commentary on the impact of disability inclusion. The literature review included a presentation of how disability is viewed and understood within the South African context and examined the corresponding policies and legislative frameworks aimed at promoting inclusion and access to employment for people with disabilities. Supported employment programmes and the role of the occupational therapist were also examined. Finally, a synthesis of the theoretical framework that underpins the study, namely, the theory of occupational justice was provided. In the next chapter the methodology utilised in this study will be presented.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter the research methodology will be discussed. This will include a full description of the research setting, approach, design, sampling, and recruitment of participants, as well as the data collection and analysis thereof. Lastly, the measures established to ensure trustworthiness and ethical standards are described.

3.2 Research setting

The study was conducted at two different supported employment organizations in South Africa. The two organizations provide supported employment services to companies and their employees with disabilities, and unemployed people with disabilities seeking employment in the open labour market. Both organizations are guided by the commitment to ensuring the integration of people with disabilities into the open labour market. One organization is based in the Western Cape and the other in the Gauteng Province of South Africa. Both organizations run facilities that employ a team of individuals, which may include job coaches and/or occupational therapists. These professionals provide programmes and services that ensure the skills development and inclusion of people with disabilities in the working environment. Due to the nature of the supported employment model, services can be provided at the facilities on a consultation basis, in the workplace environment or in workplace training venues.

The first non-governmental organization based in Cape Town, provides a wide range of disability employment equity services. This includes supported employment services, disability insurance assessments, return to work services, employee assistance programmes and services, and occupation-based services to employees with disabilities and impairments. People with disabilities who are seeking employment are required to complete a referral form providing extensive background information. A process is then followed to ensure that the person is appropriately assessed, placed on the facility's data base, before the assignment of work placement can occur. This company works with a wide range of individuals with different impairments and provides private services to its individual and business clients.

The second non-governmental organization, based in Johannesburg provides supported employment services to individuals diagnosed with intellectual disabilities and/or learning challenges. Stage one of their supports comprises a training centre which focuses on equipping individuals with the necessary skills to be integrated in the open labour market. Phase two of their support involves the sourcing and creation of employment for persons with the intellectual and/or learning challenges in the open labour market, to create beneficence to both the individual and the employer.

3.3 Research approach

The study was positioned within the interpretivist paradigm, and it utilised a qualitative research approach. Interpretive researchers believe that reality is socially constructed and informed by subjective experiences (Creswell, 2003). When research is located within the interpretive paradigm, the researcher endeavours to understand the meanings behind actions as they take place in specific social contexts (Carr & Kemmis, 1986). Through the use of a qualitative research approach, the researcher can develop an in-depth understanding of the

subjective experiences and perspectives of research participants (Creswell, 2003). By engaging in this form of inquiry, the researcher supports a way of looking at the research problem in an inductive style that emphasizes individual meaning and the significance of interpreting the complexity of a situation (Creswell, 2014). According to Creswell (2014) this research approach is advantageous because it gives a detailed view of the research issues at hand.

In this study, the researcher aimed to explore people with disabilities' perspectives of supported employment. The qualitative research approach was deemed applicable to this study, because through utilising this approach, the researcher gained an in-depth understanding of the phenomena being investigated (Creswell, 2014). The study did not seek to gather numerical values as this would not have presented a true reflection of the perspectives of people with disabilities regarding how their participation in supported employment programmes helped to facilitate their access to work. Additionally, the qualitative approach within the interpretive paradigm was appropriate as the participants in this study were regarded as marginalized because of their disabilities and thus their position in society regarding their access to work.

3.4 Research Design

An explorative descriptive design was utilized in the study. According to Babbie (2007) exploratory studies are conducted to ensure that a researcher can get a better understanding of a phenomenon. Hair et al. (2003) highlight that exploratory research aims to seek new insights and to ask questions that shed new light on an existing phenomenon.

Olesen and Andersen (2009) state that the purpose of a qualitative descriptive design is to provide a rich description of an experience, in this case, people with disabilities' perspectives on how supported employment facilitates access to work. Descriptive research intends to

provide a snapshot of a situation as it occurs naturally and may be used to make judgements about or develop current practice (Sandelowski, 2000). The explorative descriptive design allowed the researcher to explore the participants' personal perspectives and the descriptions that characterise the participants' experiences of the research topic without any manipulation or alteration by the researcher (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

3.5 Sampling and participant recruitment

The study population comprised all people with disabilities participating in the supported employment programmes offered at the two supported employment organizations. Purposive sampling was utilized by the researcher in this study. Babbie and Mouton (2001) define purpose sampling as a type of sampling in which settings, persons or events are purposefully selected for the critical information they can contribute to the study. Babbie and Mouton (2001) indicate that when using purposive sampling, the research question can guide the researcher about what knowledge needs to be generated and therefore a sample can be selected.

Cormack (2000) states that inclusion and exclusion criteria should be used because of the in-depth nature of the study and the analysis of the data criteria. Considering this, a sample of six (6) participants was employed within the study. They were selected according to the following criteria:

Inclusion Criteria:

- People with disabilities who were male or female;

- People with disabilities who were currently enrolled in a supported employment programme and have not yet returned to work;

- People with disabilities, who were currently enrolled in a supported employment programme and employed in the open labour market, receiving direct support, and

- People with disabilities, who were discharged from a supportive employment programme after completing the programme.

Exclusion criteria:

- People with disabilities who had been discharged from the programme due to non-compliance.

- People with disabilities with limited expressive and receptive communication abilities. As semi-structured interviews were utilized it was important that the participants understood what was asked and could respond appropriately. The researcher initially made contact with supported employment agencies and was guided in terms of participant selection in accordance with this criterion. This also ensured that the participants were able to provide informed consent to their participation, as agencies approached were aware of the nature of their participants' disabilities and also assisted participants in understanding the procedure of informed consent to participate in the study.

From each facility, two key informants were selected according to the following criteria:

Inclusion Criteria

- Occupational therapists, with a minimum of two years' experience in the facilitation of the supported employment programme. This ensured that the key informants had experience in the field of supported employment and direct involvement in programme implementation.

- Supervisors of people with disabilities in places of work with a minimum of three months' experience supervising the individual enrolled in the open labour market.

- Job coaches directly involved with supporting participants entry into the open labour market.

Exclusion criteria

- Individuals with less than two years' experience in the facilitation of the supported employment programmes and supervisors with less than three months of supervising experience of individuals enrolled in a supported employment programme.

The researcher initially contacted both organizations via email. At the first organization, the initial communication placed the researcher in direct contact with the director of the organization. The director, after receiving the Key Informant Information Sheet (see Appendix 1), agreed to participate in the study as a key informant and signed the Consent Form (see Appendix 3). This key informant then referred the researcher to the second key informant, the supervisor of three people with disabilities engaging in a supported employment programme. The second key informant was contacted via email and also provided with the Key Informant Information sheet which outlined the full description of the study. They were also given the consent to sign. The first key informant indicated her requirement to complete the interview by audio recording her answers to the questions outlined in the key informant interview guideline (see Appendix 4). The second key informant engaged in a virtual interview conducted over the Microsoft Teams communication platform. Using virtual platforms to complete these interviews was crucial as the COVID-19 pandemic placed limitations on face-to-face contact and the national lockdown Level-5 regulations introduced by the South African government strongly enforced social distancing requirements.

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Upon discussion with the first key informant, the researcher was provided with the email and telephonic details of three research participants who met the inclusion criteria. Two of the participants were emailed the Participant Information sheet (see Appendix 2) and consent form. The other participant provided initial consent and requested to view the documentation on the day of the interview before signing the written informed consent form. Two of the participants agreed to telephonic interviews and the other participant consented to a face-to-face interview at his workplace.

After sending an initial email to the second organization, the researcher was able to have a face-to-face meeting with the director at the organization's premises. On the same day of this meeting, the researcher was referred to two key informants and three research participants at the organization who met the inclusion criteria and agreed to participate. They were provided with an information sheet and all their questions regarding taking part in the study were answered. As COVID-19 lock down regulations had eased at the beginning of January 2021, face-to-face interviews were possible, and the researcher completed the key informant interviews and research participant interviews at the organization's premises.

3.6 Data Collection methods

3.6.1 Semi-structured interviews

Individual semi-structured interviews with the six participants and four key informants were used as data collection methods for the study. Creswell (2003) states that semi-structured interviews are a useful data collection tool. It allows the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of research participants' views, feelings, perceptions, and experiences about the

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research phenomena. In this way, interviews, as the data collection tool correlates well with the qualitative research approach selected for the study. According to Polit and Beck (2008) semi-structured interviews can be structured around several pre-determined questions which are prepared ahead of time and allow for flexibility during the interview. The development of the participant interview guideline (see Appendix 5) was based on the aim and objectives of the study and was a useful tool for guiding the discussion with the research participants. The interview questions were also structured in such a manner to facilitate asking multiple participants the same questions.

The interviews with the participants were between 30-45 minutes long and conducted in English. The researcher was not required to translate as the participants expressed comfort in answering the questions in English. Four of the research participants were willing to engage in face-to-face interviews with the researcher, while the other two research participants opted for telephonic interviews because of COVID-19 lock down restrictions. The face-to-face interviews were conducted in familiar environments for all the participants. Three of the participant interviews took place at the supported employment organizations premises in Johannesburg and one occurred at the participant's workplace. An apparent language barrier became evident between the researcher and research Participant 3. As a result, the researcher had to reconstruct the questions in the interview guideline and re-integrate and/or explain certain questions in more detailed and simplistic terms to enable the participant to respond to the questions being asked. The nature of Participant 4 and 5 disabilities, i.e., moderate intellectual disability, meant that the research questions also had to be rephrased and simplified while retaining their meaning.

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The researcher's prior experiences of working with people with intellectual disabilities enable her to adjust how questions were phrased and provide necessary prompts as required. The researcher was also able to appropriately respond to non-verbal and verbal feedback provided by participants that indicated potential areas of confusion. The progression of the interview was characterized by initial close-ended questions that helped to ensure these participants felt comfortable as the responses required were not of an in-depth nature and sought to provide context to the interviews. More open-ended and reflective type questions were then used by the researcher. The researcher observed that the three participants with intellectual impairments would occasionally go off topic, and this influenced on the duration of their interviews. The interview guideline served as a successful tool as it allowed the researcher to redirect the participants back to matters relevant to the research objectives. All interviews, including those done telephonically, were audio-recorded, and then transcribed verbatim for the purpose of data analysis.

3.6.2 Key informant interviews

Krefting (1991) explains that key informant interviews can allow the researcher to collect background information and particular understandings into a subject; in the case of this research study, the supported employment programme offered at the identified facilities. The purpose of these interviews was to collect information from those who have first-hand information and experience about a community or programme (Fink, 2003).

In this study, two key informant interviews at each facility were conducted to assist the researcher in obtaining a better understanding of the supported employment programme. The following key informants were therefore interviewed: an occupational therapist directly involved in implementing the supported employment programme (Facility 1), a human

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resource manager at the company were three of the research participants were employed (Facility 2) and two job coaches assisting in implementing supported employment programmes (Facility 1 & 2). An interview guide (Appendix 4) was employed in a flexible manner.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, one interview had to be conducted over a virtual platform. One key informant requested to complete the interview by recording her answers to questions in the key informant interview guideline. This was due to lockdown restrictions limiting face to face contact. Two face-to-face key informant interviews were conducted when lock-down restrictions were eased in the country and took place at a time and location regarded as convenient to the research participants. All precautions relating to transmission of the virus were put in place. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim, with permission from the informant. Interviews were conducted until data saturation occurred. According to Guest et al. (2006), data saturation occurs when there is no new data, no new themes, and no new codes emerging.
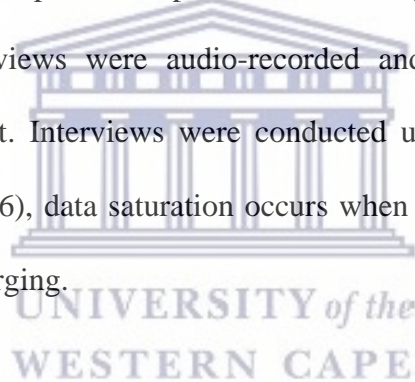
3.7 Data Analysis

Polit and Beck (2008) state the purpose of data analysis is to organize and elicit meaning from the data collected through structure. As interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed, the process of data analysis could commence. Thematic analysis of data, as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), was conducted. According to Braun and Clarke (2006) thematic analysis is a qualitative method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns and themes in the data obtained by researchers. They further highlight that thematic analysis can provide trustworthy and insightful findings. Another advantage of thematic analysis described by Braun and Clarke (2006) and King (2004) is the highly flexible nature of this form of analysis. This suggests the analysis approach is modified according to the needs of different studies, while still providing

a rich and detailed account of data. The utilisation of the inductive approach to thematic analysis allowed for the interpretation of various aspects related to the research topic that emerged (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The process of thematic analysis as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) which entails six steps, was employed. Firstly, the researcher familiarised herself with the data collected in order to gain a good perspective of the content. The independent transcription of the interviews by the researcher allowed her to listen to the recordings multiple times. This contributed to her strong familiarisation with the data. Then, the researcher went through all the typed transcriptions and identified initial data codes that formed the foundation for the categories that were grouped together based on similar meanings. Themes established from these similar categories were then established with clear distinction provided through naming the themes. Finally, the researcher produced a report outlining the data across all themes.
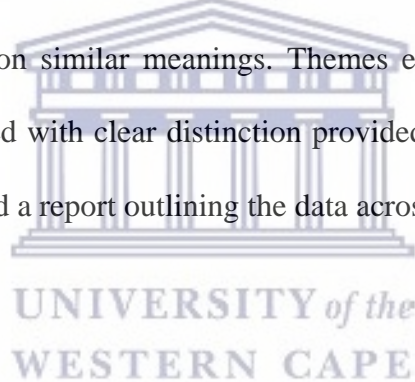
3.8 Trustworthiness

Norris et al. (2017) state that trustworthiness is a way in which researchers can persuade themselves and readers that the findings of their research are worthy of attention. The researcher ensured trustworthiness using the Lincoln and Guba (1985) framework, namely credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility refers to the truth value in the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). According to Babbie (2020) methods of triangulation are the best ways to ensure credibility within a qualitative research study. In this study, the researcher used theoretical triangulation. Theoretical triangulation occurred as the researcher used various theories and literature sources to examine the research phenomenon (Denzin, 2012). Member checking is a technique used to test the

accuracy of the data collected with participants and it contributes to credibility by decreasing the chance of misinterpretation (Babbie, 2020). The transcripts of interviews were presented to participants in the study via email. They were discussed to verify the data collected, provided an accurate reflection of participant experiences, and allowed participants to volunteer any additional information. All the participants indicated they were happy with the information provided. As participants from the second organisation did not have access to email, they consented to having the transcriptions sent to the director. Peer examination of the data also occurred to ensure credibility, as noted by Krefting (1991). The researcher discussed the research process and presented the preliminary findings with her research supervisor, an experienced qualitative researcher. The researcher also had the opportunity to virtually present her preliminary research findings to other research supervisors and researchers and receive valuable feedback.
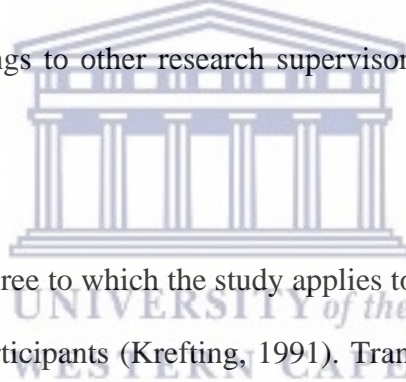
Transferability refers to the degree to which the study applies to new contexts and if the study can be generalized to other participants (Krefting, 1991). Transferability was established, as the researcher clearly explained the research methods, contexts, study population and research processes in this thesis, allowing for these methods could be employed in other contexts (Krefting, 1991).

Dependability is described as the criterion that examines whether the findings would be consistent if the study was replicated with the same subjects or in similar contexts (Krefting, 1991). To ensure dependability, the same methods applied in the credibility criterion were utilised.

Babbie (2020) reports that confirmability refers to the extent to which the researchers ensure findings are a product of the focus of the enquiry. An audit trail provides a key means to strengthen both the dependability and confirmability of the research. This was established through the maintenance of a record of all data collection and analysis procedures throughout the study.

3.9 Ethics statement

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the University of the Western Cape's Biomedical Research Ethics Committee - Ethics reference number BM 19/10/14. (see Appendix 6). All participants and key informants were informed of the purpose and procedures involved in the study through separate information sheets (see Appendix 1 and 2). Participants of the study were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time without fear of repercussion. Participants and key informants provided the researcher with informed consent through the signing of consent forms (see Appendix 3). Personal information was safeguarded through adherence to the Protection of Personal Information Act (2020). The confidentiality of the participants was maintained by ensuring that all data gathered, including audiotapes and transcriptions, were secured in password protected electronic folders. These folders were handed to the researcher's supervisor for safekeeping on the University of the Western Cape's database. These will be kept for five years after which it will be deleted. Anonymity was ensured by maintaining that this thesis or any future reports and publications produced will not contain any information that might identify the participants. Different opinions were encouraged during the interviews; however, all human interactions can pose a risk, therefore the researcher took care when facilitating more reflective type questions and ensured that, if needed, the participants could be referred to a professional employed by the facility for counselling.

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3.10 Summary

In this chapter, the methodological paradigm and research approach adopted in this study, namely, a qualitative approach within an interpretivist paradigm was described. The methods used for data collection and analysis were also presented. A discussion of the conceptual issues guiding the research process, the process of participant selection and the use of semi-structured interviews for participant and key informants was then provided. Lastly, the data analysis approach, strategies employed to strengthen trustworthiness, and the ethical standards adhered to by the study were described. In the subsequent chapter, the findings of the study are presented.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the findings of the study are presented. Firstly, a description of the participants and key informants are provided that includes summarized participant profiles (see Table 2). Secondly, the presentation of the themes and categories that emerged through the analysis of the data are provided.

4.2 Description of participants and key informants

Descriptions of the participants are provided below, along with summarized participant profiles that are presented in Table 1.

Key Informant 1 (Rose): Rose is a director of a private supported employment facility in Cape Town, Western Cape. She is a qualified occupational therapist and has practiced for over 10 years of practicing. She provides supported employment services to people with disabilities in the Western Cape and has an in-depth knowledge and understanding of disability.

Key Informant 2 (Heidi): Heidi works as a human resource manager for national engineering and construction company and is based that their Cape Town offices. She manages the employment of people with disabilities within the workplace with the support from a supported employment agency. She creates, manages, and coordinates strategies, policies, programmes, and systems that ensure ongoing sustainability within an organization, as well as ensuring staff well-being.

Key Informant 3 (Kath): Kath works at the Johannesburg branch of a non-governmental organization that provides supported employment services to people with disabilities and

specifically intellectual disabilities. This organization has branches in both Johannesburg and Cape Town. She has a multi-facetted role in the organization. She was an employment manager for graduates of the supported employment programme and responsible for facilitating their employment in the open-labour market. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the resultant loss of employment opportunities for the graduates, her role was extended to include the facilitation of the theoretical components of the training programme and to act as a job coach facilitating the job sampling component.

Key Informant 4 (Claire): Claire works at the Johannesburg branch of a non-governmental organization that provides supported employment services to people with disabilities and intellectual disabilities. She is a facilitator on the supported employment training programme and is responsible for the theoretical components and acts as a job coach for the job sampling component of this programme.

Participant 1 (Inga): Inga is employed in an administrative role as a site clerk at an engineering and construction company in Cape Town. She has worked at this company for over five years and received support in securing this position as well as maintaining her employment from a supported employment organization. Inga was diagnosed with Bipolar Mood Disorder and experiences panic attacks. She describes her condition as "well managed". Inga recalls receiving support from the supported employment organization for an extended period, whilst working at three different places over this period. She notes that she is still in regular contact with her job coach.

Participant 2 (Tammy): Tammy is employed as a receptionist at an engineering and construction company in Cape Town. She has five years of service at the company and received support in obtaining and maintaining her employment position. Her duties include managing in-coming phone calls, data capturing, photocopying, and ordering and managing office

supplies. She was diagnosed with Bipolar Mood disorder which is managed well. She reported that she was still in regular contact with her job coach.

Participant 3 (David): David describes himself as a 'general worker' involved in maintenance at an engineering and construction company in Cape Town. He does general maintenance work such as cleaning, sweeping, gardening, and fixing in the workplace. David sustained a spinal cord injury. He is ambulant, however, mentioned struggles with balance and weakness in his legs. Before working at his current place of employment, David was working in a protected workshop environment. He transitioned into the open labour market with support from the company and a supported employment organization. He noted he received a lot of support at the beginning stages of his open labour market employment. However, this has decreased over time as he has become more familiar with his role. He describes his contact with his job coach as infrequent.

Participant 4 (Zack): Zack is a young adult diagnosed with intellectual disability. Zack attended a special needs school until he was 18. He is now in a supported employment programme offered by a non-governmental organization in Johannesburg. Zack is currently in the job sampling phase of the supported employment programme offered by the organization. He describes his current job sample as that of general work, maintenance, and cleaning.

Participant 5 (Abby): Abby is a middle-aged woman working as an admin assistant and bus supervisor at a special needs school in Johannesburg. She has been employed at the school for 20 years. Abby has been diagnosed with intellectual disability and cerebral palsy. Abby has previously engaged in the training programme offered by a supported employment facility in Johannesburg. She is now permanently employed and living independently on the property from which the supported employment organization operates. She explained that she no longer receives direct external support in her work.

Participant 6 (Fred): Fred is a young adult diagnosed with intellectual disability. Fred attended a special needs school until he was 18. He is now in a supported employment programme offered by a non-governmental organization in Johannesburg. Fred is currently in the job sampling phase of the supported employment programme offered by the organization. He describes his current job sample as that of painting and vacuuming.

Table 1: Summarized participant profiles

Name	Age Group	Diagnosis	Employment status
Inga	35-45	Bipolar Mood Disorder; Generalized Anxiety Disorder	Employed
Tammy	35-45	Bipolar Mood Disorder	Employed
David	35-45	Spinal Cord Injury	Employed
Zack	18-25	Intellectual Disability	Job sampling
Abby	35-35	Intellectual Disability	Employed
Fred	18-25	Intellectual Disability	Job sampling

4.3 Themes and Categories

Four themes, underpinned by related categories, emerged from the findings: (1) Work: An occupational for all? (2) Enablers to supported employment; (3) Barriers to supported employment; and (4) Support, a foundation to inclusion. Table 2 outlines the themes and related categories that emerged from the analysis of the data.

Table 2: Themes and categories

Themes	Categories
1. Work: An occupation for all?	*"I want to be able to make money, and be proud of myself"*
	"right at the back of the queue"
2. Enablers to supported employment	Personal factors
	Societal factors
3. Barriers to supported employment	*In society "little is known"*
	Policy development and implementation
4. Support, a foundation to inclusion	Support from the job coach
	Training and education

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4.4 Theme 1: Work an occupation for all?

Theme one captures the participants' perspectives of work. The theme describes the meaning they derive from having access to work and the barriers they face in accessing work. Two categories underpin the theme: "*I want to be able to make money, and be proud of myself*", and "*right at the back of the queue*" (see Table 3).

Table 3: Theme 1: Work an occupation for all?

Theme	Categories
Work: An occupation for all?	"*I want to be able to make money, and be proud of myself*"
	"*right at the back of the queue*"

4.4.1 "I want to be able to make money, and be proud of myself"

Work is an occupation that people engage in during adulthood. The findings demonstrate that, when individuals have access to work, they can derive both material and personal value. When a participant was asked why he was engaging in the supported employment programme at the facility, he alluded to the benefit that being able to work would have on him.

"Because I want to work. Because it is going to benefit myself." (P6/Fred)

Participants expressed how work can provide an income for themselves and their families. They saw income generation as a tangible and material benefit of being able to work.

"I want to be able to make money, and be proud of myself" (P5/Abby)

"Because it's how you save money." (P6/Fred)

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Considering the monetary value of being able to work, participants expressed how work contributes to their fulfilment of roles as adults and providers to their families.

"Yes, obviously money, because if you got pikininis (small children)*, yeah, you have to pay the school… I afford now to buy everything at home"* (P3/David)

Access to work provided a sense of meaning to the participants, which extended above and beyond that gained from the money they receive. A participant expressed the psycho-social benefit she derived from gaining access to work. She reflected on the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and how being isolated and not able to work affected her.

She explained that during the times of isolation she realised the social benefits derived from access to work and how this contributed to a more positive mindset. A sense of motivation and need to engage in tasks was developed through accessing a work environment.

"I want to be in that environment, it brightens my day, it gives me motivation to get on with things. I love to be around my colleagues. I don't want to be here sitting looking at my four walls." (P5/Abby)
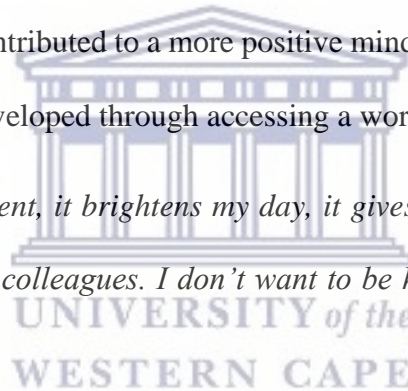
Another participant revealed how being able to access work contributed towards his independence. He reflected on his role of now being a man and the contribution played by work in transitioning from a child to an adult; which he identified as being more serious.

"You must be ready. You must be serious about yourself. Then you will be independent, be a man for yourself. Be a man." (P4/Zack)

"Yes, I enjoy working, I help people good. I help, when they need my help., I help them at home. I help my parents. I help my mom." (P4/Zack)

This sense of purpose and independence gained from employment, as articulated by the participants, was also highlighted by the key informants.

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*"A sense of meaning, and above all, it boosts their self-confidence. Because you know, when you can't do things for yourself, you always have to ask, you're always at the mercy of someone else. They like being independent, I tell you, they, enjoy being independent."* (K4/Claire).

Participants were also found to have gained a more positive outlook on living with a disability and expressed that it showed that they are able to gain the same level of perceived achievement as those living without a diagnosis.

"I feel that it is an achievement for me to be employed amongst people that have been living a normal life, that I can also live a normal life, with you know, not being in a hospital, being out like other people, doing things that other people does that disabled people don't normally do or can do." (P2/Tammy)
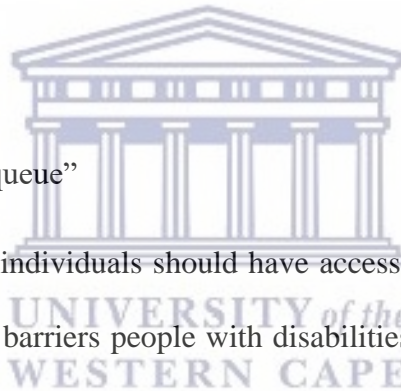
4.1.2 "Right at the back of the queue"

Work is an occupation that all individuals should have access to. However, participants and key informants highlighted the barriers people with disabilities face regarding accessing and maintaining employment in the South African open labour market.

The perceived impact of impairment on their ability to work was highlighted by a participant who alluded to how her colleagues respond to her behaviour because of the diagnosis.

"Well, I have challenges with my panic attacks and I'm Bipolar, so you know the moods fluctuate, and then sometimes the challenge is, what I have actually learnt along the road is that sometimes you don't think, and if my moods flare up. It's very challenging because sometime I might say something bluntly, and maybe you will take offense, you will feel hurt or whatever, and I wouldn't give a damn (sic). So, I have come a long road of having to deal with watching my words, even in an email, I would be sarcastic, and I would say it like it is, so that

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is a challenging part for me. But if I say something that is wrong or unethical or whatever I'm not going to keep quiet about it, but the way I bring it across is sometimes an issue." (P1/Inga)

Impairment also appeared to affect available opportunities for work. This impact is, however, generally encountered by South Africans because of the country's high unemployment rate, as explained by a key informant.

"Another major barrier, and again its tied to economics, is the availability of work, and the number of job seekers in South Africa…In South Africa, the person with a disability, whether he or she comes with the strategy of supported employment, or not, competes with the unemployed masses, the rest of the unemployed masses who are looking for work, of course find themselves right at the back of the queue as far as this is concerned. (K1/Rose)

One reason for the lack of employment opportunities for people with disabilities, from the perspectives of the key informants, is the inefficiency of policy implementation in South Africa, thus preventing people with disabilities from accessing the open labour market.

"I know South Africa is progressive in their policies, it's just the implementation that is the biggest stumbling block or issue to actually gaining work." (K3/Kath)

Stigma was highlighted by the key informants as one of the major obstacles that people with disabilities face in gaining and upholding employment. One example of stigma provided was employers' negative perceptions about people with disabilities.

"Stigma, of course, you hear that all the time" (K3/Kath)

"Employers I think …feel that sometimes person with disabilities may not (be able to) *perform, and they are basically going to have to replace them again soon."* (K2/Heidi)

This stigma, in turn, influences how people with disabilities view their own impairment and their ability to engage in the work environment.

"What I find most challenging is the fact that I walk around, I've got a diagnosis, Bipolar Mood Disorder, people around me, they don't have a disability. Uhm. We are not on the same level." (P2/Tammy)

One participant, when describing why he needed a special-needs education and went to the school he did, provided insight into the apparent stigma and negative ways in which society views people with disabilities.

"The school was for a person who is lazy, you can't read you can't write, they help you, they see what is the problem" (P4/Zack)

4.5 Theme 2: Enablers to supported employment

This theme captures the participants' perspectives regarding enablers of supported employment. The theme exemplifies the factors that contribute to the supported employment process and how it helps participants establish their roles as workers in society. The theme is supported by two categories: personal factors and societal factors. In Table 4 below, an overview of the theme and its categories is presented.

Table 4: Theme 2: Enablers to supported employment

Theme	Categories
Enablers to Supported Employment	Personal factors
	Societal factors

4.5.1 Personal factors

Participants were able to identify some of the personal attributes that aided their engagement in a supported employment programme and their overall ability to engage with the occupation

of work. When a participant was asked about factors that may contribute to her eagerness to work, she mentioned her personality as a positive influence on her ability to work.

"I suppose my personality... I like to work." (P4/Abby)

Motivation was deemed to be a positive factor that influenced engagement in the programme. Abby suggested that as she was employed in the open labour market, she felt she set an example for participants engaging in the supported employment programme and provided encouragement to them.

"...they see us, and they want to become independent themselves. They are young adults, they probably don't want to be living with their mom and dad for the rest of their lives, and you know they want to, they see the motivation coming from us" (P4/Abby)

Factors such as participants' level of education and the support they received to achieve academically facilitated their engagement in supported employment. Some participants commented that there were increased opportunities for them to gain employment because of their tertiary education background.

"some of the things that I feel complimented or led to me gaining employment, is basically my education, the fact that I studied, as well as my family support." (P2/Tammy)

"To be quite honest with you, I was not even thinking, because of my disability that I wouldn't get the job, because, its tied to a tertiary background." (P1/Inga)

A participant's willingness to engage in further training was also identified as facilitating their ability to effectively engage in their workplace.

"I even went on a course. I even went on a telephone ...all kind of ethics, how to address or respond to an email, you know improve your grammar and your vocabulary, you know." (P1/Inga)

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Family involvement and support that people with disabilities receive, was described as another factor that had a positive effect on the supported employment process.

"as well as my family support. You know my family have been supporting me all the time, so ya, they have been supporting me all along." (P2/Tammy)

Also highlighted by a participant was the encouragement he received from a family member, his aunt, to engage in a supported employment programme.

"I sat there and then I think for myself… what I must do. And then my aunt gave me an idea to see what I must do, she said I must come here (supported employment programme). *So, they can help, me to move forward."* (P4/Zack)

4.5.2 Societal factors

This category illustrates the societal factors highlighted as enablers of the supported employment programmes that people with disabilities had access to. An accommodating work environment was identified as contributing to the positive experiences of people with disabilities active in the open labour market. When issues arose, fellow colleagues were supportive.

"… everything is good, because if I am working there is maybe someone that just help me, so you can make quick quick for me." (P3/David)

"They understand how I feel and then we work together and then we see what was the problem..." (P4/Zack)

The development and implementation of broader disability inclusive policies was identified as a beneficial factor in implementing supported employment. A key informant highlighted that a

scorecard, facilitated through policy implementation, was a motivating factor for companies who wanted to employ people with disabilities.

"I am not sure if you are familiar with the score card, but it's good for a company to employ... males and females with disabilities in the workplace... any person that is disabled. So, it is good for your score card, but not only your score card, I think it's good for your company to have employees and give them an opportunity." (K2/Heidi)

Heidi then provided a more in-depth explanation about why it is good for a company to have a positive scorecard. She reported that when a company is compliant in their approach to the scorecard, they can receive government tenders.

"We can't tender if we don't have a score card in place at a certain level, and that means that we must have people with disabilities... In certain sectors there are score cards, that you get bonus points, if you have someone with a disability" (K2/Heidi)

Another key informant noted that the willingness for employers to participate in supported employment stems not only from the need to comply with government legislation.

"Yes, you never know true intensions, but I also feel there is a sense of, giving back, and learning something that is a bit foreign to you, and giving someone an opportunity. That would usually not be possible. So, I think those people do exist for sure, and that there is something more than just the tax rebates and the triple B EE" (K3/Kath)

An individual's positive and more inclusive mind-set was also regarded as a key mechanism to facilitate the adoption of a supported employment model.

In my experience, there is always, also this initial positivity, to the idea of having a knowledgeable person available in the process of employing someone with a disability. And

employers are very much able to come up with ideas and initiatives, to take people with disabilities on in their businesses. (K1: Rose)

4.6 Theme 3: Barriers to supported employment

This theme captures participants' perspectives about implementation barriers of supported employment programmes. This theme is supported by two categories: In society "*little is known*" and Policy development and implementation (see Table 5).

Table 5: Theme 3: Barriers to supported employment

Theme	Categories
Barriers to supported employment	In society *"little is known"*
	Policy development and implementation

*4.6.1 In society "*little is known*"*

The use of a supported employment model within the South African labour market is not well documented in research. This was affirmed by a key informant.

"Little is known about the application of the model locally because little research has been done and published about supported employment." (K1/Rose)

This limited understanding of the model was also highlighted by another key informant who emphasises her company's concern with regards to the associated costs.

"...it's additional funds, it's additional, it's not part of our company, but when we started with our supported employment organization, we saw it first, I think from management side it was an additional cost to the business and why do we have to do it, ...So, there was resistance in the beginning." (K2/Heidi)

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The business model mind-set that promotes the constant assessment of risk and expenditure also acts as an implementation barrier. Due to the nature of work in the construction industry and the requirement to adhere to safety compliance, one of the participants believed it was not always possible for people with disabilities to take on roles on a construction.

"At first there is a lot of resistance because you know construction safety is very important to the company, so to have someone that is disabled on the construction site, it depends on their disability, it might not always be possible." (K2/Heidi)

This risk aversion and concerns about costs implications and duration required of implementing supported employment services is also described by another key informant.

"...So, it is more difficult for people to envisage such a long-term process, maybe partly because it's just in our nature to want quick fixes and instant resolve. So that certainly, I think, well in our experience, is that people revert to the better-known medical model approaches to vocational rehabilitation. (K1/Rose)
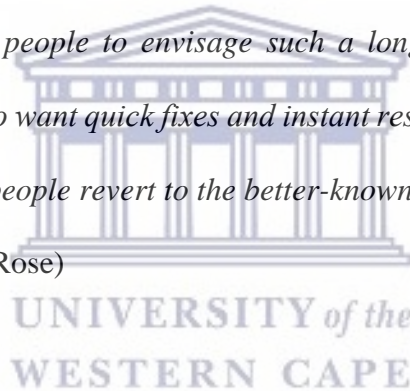
4.6.2 Policy development and implementation

Labour law policy in South Africa has resulted in businesses needing to ensure risks are reduced drastically. Key informants described how labour laws, particularly that focused on employee safety, created apprehension about the risk involved in employing a person with a disability as their needs and safety requirements may differ.

"...construction safety is very important to the company, so to have someone that is disabled on the construction site, it depends on their disability, it might not always be possible." (K2/Heidi)

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"…, you also have to remember, that businesses are bound, or feel extremely bound by labour law, and trying something out, and taking risks is something that they typically will try to avoid. "(K1: Rose)

The lack of policy development and implementation relating specifically to the implementation of supported employment remains a barrier. A key informant comments on this, noting the lack of implementation in various governmental sectors.

There aren't policies, whether in health, or in labour, or in social development, that support the use of supported employment, or the implementation (K1: Rose)

Broader policy directives highlights the obligations for businesses to employ people with disabilities, however, this is often overlooked as companies continue to orientate themselves to a risk aversion approach.

"I think risk aversion from the companies, so not wanting to get into anything that could cause any kind of risk or problem to their company." (K3/Kath)

The consequences of working without policies or guidelines relating to supported employment was also commented on. This gap in policy needs to be addressed through collaborative input from all parties concerned.

"…I think it was just a bit challenging dealing with all of it in the absence of a policy. I think when you have a policy and guidelines and that is something that we fail to put in place." (K2/Heidi)

One of the key informants suggested how companies have responded to the absence of policy. She explained how her company was in the process of developing policy to address matters and ensure there is structure when employing people with disabilities under a supported employment model.

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"...So, we are in the process of developing a policy that's applicable to our company and the program, and I just feel you can operate better and more efficiently and effectively if you have a policy in place. Yes, so that is something we are working on so it is a challenge for us, where we are doing everything that we should, but we don't have that policy and guidelines in place. Everybody knows people can say, no but this is what I understand from it. If you have that policy and guideline, it just makes things so much easier." (K2/Heidi)

The need for policy specifically relating to supported employment processes was also identified by a research participant who is actively involved in the development of policy at her workplace.

"Also, the company is also now going into the venture of employing more people with disabilities, but this company doesn't have much staff that have disabilities, and so on another level the company has now called her in to assist him with a policy, which I am also helping them with, to put the policy in place" (P1/Inga)
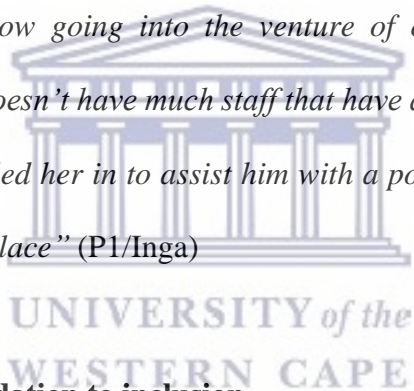
4.7 Theme 4: Support, a foundation to inclusion

This theme highlights the support-based strategies that are provided to people with disabilities as well as their employers during the supported employment process. The theme includes three categories: Support from the job coach and training and education.

Table 6: Theme 4 Support, a foundation to inclusion

Theme	Categories
Support, a foundation to inclusion	Support from the job coach
	Training and education

4.7.1 Support from the job coach

The role of the job coach was identified as a beneficial aspect of the supported employment (programmes/training/services) organizations provided to people with disabilities when accessing the open labour market. A participant described how his job coach accompanied him when he started working in the open labour market.

"...she came with me here, and then she used to visit me, and they put me permanent."
(P3/David)

This type of visitation support ensures that clients can develop independence in the workplace yet still feel supported. A key informant and job coach at the organization that provides job training and job sampling, expressed the following regarding workplace interventions.

"You wouldn't want to go there every day, because then you you're now stealing that independency that you've learnt them you know. So, it's now them they need to know that, okay, I can do this. I was prepared for six months. I was coached and supported. So now I'm going to be seeing maybe once or twice a month or so." (K4/Claire)

Supported employed programmes ensure that if guidance is needed when employing people with disabilities it can be provided through a job coach.

"The gap that was always, or the chasm, major chasm, that was always between the individual looking for work and the employer, suddenly becomes filled by a knowledgeable and skilled person, that eventually then brings the employer and the employee together" (K1/Rose)

One of the participants noted that in the beginning stages of her employment she would receive support but no longer required it.

"When we were still starting out, that is the main support that we got." (P5/Abby)

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The participant appeared to adapt well to the working environment. This may be because she was employed at the school she attended. This is an important factor to consider when considering the options that were made available to her as she transitioned from the training to the open labour market.

"I never did the job sampling to be honest, I never did that. Ya, but one of my very very exes, one of the ex-principles of ___ College, phoned me and asked if I would like to become one of the basics class assistants. And that was in 2001. "(P5/Abby)

Another participant indicated that a key person who they shared their workplace issues with was their job coach (an occupational therapist).

"I will get advice from her, and in that way, I would work things out and you know she will suggest what I must do, and I will feel much better. She assists me in that way. (P2/Tammy)

Another participant, who was still in the job sampling process, mentioned that there were individuals at the organization that they could speak to.

"If we have problems we talk to Stan." (P6/Fred)

Job coaches appear to play a crucial role in the counselling process as the employee could discuss matters with them.

"She goes the extra mile, and she makes you feel comfortable, she makes you feel, nothing out of place, she has the ability to allow you to actually speak freely, it doesn't matter how deep it is, or how personal it is, and you really trust her, she gives the surety that you really trust her, in her confidence, with whatever you tell her. So how can I say, she is like my go-to person, she has really become my go-to person" (P1/Inga)

"...if there are issues that I feel, anything that's on my mind that I am unhappy about, or uncertain about, that I feel, that is bothering me in other words, maybe colleagues; the

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approaches of colleagues; anything that's bothering me, then I will speak to Rose about it and I will get advice from her…" (P2/Tammy)

In the following extract one of the participants explained the mediation role played by her job coach.

"I got sick, I think it was twice, I had two panic attacks, spontaneous attacks. She handled it, she was awesome, she was with me, she did inform my previous boss, about my disability, she also informed them about how to go about handling if it comes to the point where I had, I had to work in an attack etc. and the days when I am off. We had a nice sit down, so they were quite clued about how to handle me." (P1/Inga)

The role of the job coach-as-mediator was deemed crucial in ensuring that issues are resolved between employer and employee. By having someone directly involved in integrating people with disabilities in the workplace, issues can be resolved.

".. we will go and spend an hour with the student, or the graduate, as well as a person in the company, and just mediate and sort through the potential challenges. Obviously, we like to get in there before there are actual challenges. So really don't be reactive but be sort of pro-active". (K3/Kath)

4.7.2 Training and education

At one organization, training was a crucial aspect of support provided to people with disabilities. A key informant expressed their belief that training aided the ability to access and maintain employment in the open labour market.

"The theory training is everything to do with being able to work independently, and live independently, because that is our main aim at the end of the program." (K3/Kath)

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The benefits to gaining independence as a result of the theoretical training was also noted by another participant.

"So, you had to learn, it's like modules, you had to learn different modules throughout the course, and that is where the independence came in." (P5/Abby)

Having access to training to further develop skills was also seen as beneficial. For one of the participants, she commented that a training course helped her to overcome her perceived barriers when interacting with her colleagues.

"I even went on a course girl. Ya, I even went on a telephone, and I don't know what and all in all kind ethics, how to address or respond to an email, you know improve your grammar and your vocabulary, you know" (P1/Inga)

Job sampling is another training strategy utilized by one of the organizations to assist participants gain experience in different jobs.

"Because they training how to do some jobs." (P6/Fred)

Through job sampling the participants gained exposure to a wide variety of jobs whilst establishing or further developing their work skills.

"Job Sampling, and that is where they gain work experience, at certain companies that we have relationships with." (K3/Kath)

Education and training was not only provided to the employee in a supported employment programme, but also to the employer. Here the focus is on providing employers with the necessary skills and knowledge to successfully accommodate their employees with disabilities. A participant explained the transparent manner in which her prospective employer was educated about her diagnosis.

"...because with my interview she made it very clear, Ok, Inga has a disability, are you guys up for it? because if not then there is no need to obviously continue." (P1/Inga)

"...well she had to explain to them as to some issues about my disability" (P1/Inga)

Workplace sensitization takes place to educate employers and colleagues about disability.

"Once they have found the position in the job, we typically offer disability sensitization to their colleagues to be. So, what can you expect from this individual? So, managers, as well as co-workers and colleagues, as many people as we can sensitize." (K3/Kath)

A participant expressed how her workplace was educated about her disability through discussions between her employer and the job coach.

" They did hold meetings, with regard to that with the HR department and Rose gathering, and discussing how mental illness must be- how must it be worked with around the workplace, these sorts of things" (P2/Tammy)

4.8 Summary

This chapter described the findings of the study, which reflects the participants' perspectives of how their participation in a supported employment programme facilitated their access to work. Four themes emerged from the findings of this study: The first theme captures the meaning people with disabilities derive from having access to work, as well as the barriers they face in accessing work. In theme two participants' perspectives regarding the enablers of supported employment were presented. The third theme takes account of participants' perspectives regarding barriers to the implementation of supported employment programmes. Finally, theme four; highlights the support-based strategies provided to people with disabilities and their employers during the supported employment process.

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CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, a discussion of the findings as it relates to the objectives of this research study will be presented. The study objectives sought to explore barriers to inclusion and access of people with disabilities in work; explore facilitators of inclusion and access of people with disabilities in work; describe key elements of a supported employment programme that influences people with disabilities' access and inclusion in work; and to explore people with disabilities perspectives regarding the value of participating in a supported employment programme for accessing work. The findings of the study will then be discussed in relation to the occupational justice framework.
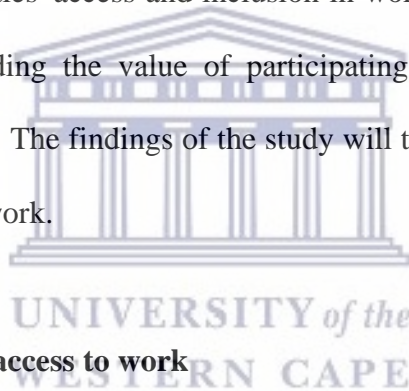
5.2 Barriers to inclusion and access to work

Heymann et al. (2014) state that throughout the world a person with a disability is less likely to be employed than someone without a disability. In South Africa this issue is compounded by the fact that the country is one of the most unequal societies in the word. Additionally, its labour market generally suffers from a history of lack of access to jobs and labour discrimination for the majority of its citizens (Leibrandt et al., 2010). The current unemployment rate, in the country as determined by Stats South Africa (2021) is 34.4%. The limited availability of work in South Africa was also confirmed in a study by Van Niekerk et al. (2011). The study by Van Niekerk et al. (2011) confirmed the limited availability of work in South Africa and noted the need to explore alternative sources of work.

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However, work is not necessarily available within the formal sector in South Africa, which makes the role of the job coach more challenging as informal work is not legislated and defined (Van Niekerk et al., 2011). It is thus not surprising that the findings of this study showed that participants found themselves in a difficult position, not simply in respect of accessing employment as a person with a disability or dealing with the barriers inflicted, but simultaneously competing with a large unemployed population also trying to gain access to the South African open labour market. These findings confirm figures reported in the Annual Report of the Commission for Employment Equity 2010-2011 which indicates that only 1,8% of people with disabilities in South Africa are employed (Maja et al., 2011).

While creating jobs and reducing unemployment are key economic and social challenges that the South Africa government has attempted to address (Leibrandt et al., 2010), job creation and economic empowerment programmes need to become more inclusive of disability if people with disabilities are to benefit. Kath and Claire (Key Informants 3 and 4) highlighted the extensive role that supported employment needs to play in addressing the poor representation of people with disabilities in the workplace. This in turn, necessitates a programme that is not automatically a quick fix, but one that ensures on-going support for the person with the disability. This would assist with their optimal integration into the workplace and ensure that businesses are assisted in creating more inclusive workplaces.

A common trend in the findings shows that the participants experienced societal stigma. Key informants highlighted that such stigma was characterised by the assumption that people with disabilities are not as capable as those without disabilities. In addressing this stigma, key informants indicated that advocacy efforts within supported employment aim to re-align and

correct society's way of thinking, which is often strongly informed by a medical or charitable framework.

Stigma denoting persons with disabilities as less competent creates an immediate barrier and unwillingness for an employer to provide employment to people with disabilities. This assertion is supported by Bonaccio et al. (2020) who indicate that pessimistic views about the work-related abilities of people with disabilities act as a primary reason for the lower participation and underemployment of people with disabilities. Stigma associated with disability consequentially affected the way in which the participants perceived their disability thus they were more likely to internalise these negative perceptions which influenced their social and work interactions. Paterson et al. (2012) explored the influence of perceptions of stigma and social comparisons on the emotional well-being of people with intellectual disabilities in the community and argued that individuals who reported higher perceptions of stigma related more negative feelings and perceptions about themselves. Likewise, Karakas et al. (2016) claimed that mental healthcare user's self-esteem decreased with increasing levels of stigmatization. This concurs with one participant's explanation that the way in which she engaged with her colleagues was influenced by her perceptions of her disability. She felt strongly that she needed to change in order to feel accepted within her workplace. Similarly, another participant expressed that she felt different to her colleagues and experienced a heightened sense of awareness that they did not have a disability and thus did not require the support that she needed. It is, however, significant that despite these challenges, the participants maintained a positive attitude about work, indicating that they were proud that they had gained employment.

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Another participant's feedback, specifically his use of negatively annotated words to describe his special school education, also indicated the impact of societal stigma and the internalization thereof. However, when the participant later described his access to employment, he used more positive examples to describe this process and his subsequent role as a financial contributor to his family. These insights about the impact of stigma on participants in the study confirms the framework proposed by Corrigan and Watson (2002) who categorized stigma as either public stigma or internalized stigma. Public stigma is defined as the way in which the general public stigmatize people with a mental illness. Internalized stigma represents the internalization of the public stigma by the person with the mental illness (Corrigan &Watson, 2002).

Furthermore, Chamberlin (1978) and Deegan (1990) suggest that instead of being diminished by stigma, many people can become righteously angry because of the prejudice they experience. As illustrated by the findings of this study, this kind of reaction can provide momentum to individuals to become more active as participants in their treatment plan (Corrigan, 2000). This was indeed the case for Tammy (Participant 2) who described that whilst gaining employment she became more devoted to the fulfilment of her needs as a person living with a mental illness. This was particularly evident in her adherence to medication regimes and attending follow up appointments. The benefits of employment for people with disabilities, despite the barriers, are this clearly illustrated through these findings.

The findings also highlighted another significant barrier to work access and inclusion, namely, the inefficiency of policy implementation and monitoring to ensure that people with disabilities are employed in the open labour market. It was noted by key informants that general policy implementation as well as policy directly related to supported employment programmes are

minimal. This results in barriers that scupper the successful implementation of supported employment in South Africa.

These findings correspond with the views of Van Niekerk et al. (2011) who state that the development of the South African legislative framework to provide the basis for the development of services, such as supported employment, requires crucial consideration. Fernandez, et al. (2017) note that there is a significant difference between producing a written policy and implementing and enforcing the policy. The findings also align with the position of Engelbrecht et al. (2017) who state that programmes in the South African public domain do not always provide positive employment outcomes for youth with disabilities, primarily due to the lack of policy implementation. When effective support strategies and advocacy around change are put in place, such as those seen with supported employment programmes, there is increased opportunity for people with disabilities to participate in society. However, policy remains a crucial factor guiding the introduction of appropriate supported employment. In the absence of effective policy implementation and monitoring systems, this support cannot be adequately provided.

5.3 The value of participating in a supported employment

The ability to work is considered one of the major human occupational performance areas (King & Olson, 2014). Wilcock (1998) furthermore states that engagement in meaningful occupation, including that of work, promotes good health and occupational balance. The findings of this study demonstrated that one's ability to work was paramount to participants; they raised a series of benefits including achieving financial and sociological gains and positive development of self. These findings confirm the views of Waddell and Burton (2006) as well

as Jakobsen (2004) who conclude that work is healthy as it provides financial independence, psycho-social well-being, and is a source of identity, social status, and roles.

McCausland et al. (2020) assert that work and employment ascribe value to the individual and society, both in a sociological and/or psychological sense and also in the specific economic terms of productivity. Viewing the value of the supported employment programme from the perspectives of participants, the findings identify financial gain as a concrete and tangible outcome. This is indirectly related to sociological and psychological gains, as participants stated that when they work, they can earn an income. According to Kaur (2013), Maslow's Theory of Human Motivation provides a good conceptualization of human need. Maslow (1943) described human motivations as a hierarchically ordered pyramid with the following needs ordered in an ascending fashion: physiological, safety, belonging and love, social needs or esteem, and self-actualization. This means that for motivation to arise at a subsequent stage, each of the needs in the preceding stages must be satisfied within the individual themselves (Maslow, 1943). This theory provides a useful account of the participants' reasoning when they place such a high value on the financial benefit derived from accessing work, as having an income ensures that their physiological and safety needs are met.

Personal motivation emerged in the findings as a key factor that enables participants to access and maintain their participation in supported employment programmes. This supports findings of the Regenold et al. (1999) study that reported factors such as motivation and perceived self-efficacy as stronger predictors of achieving competitive employment than factors such as diagnosis, symptoms, age, and gender. Becker et al. (1998) and Bond et al. (2001) furthermore found that these factors were not strong or consistent predictors of vocational success Participants expressed the need to prove themselves, while competing against a heavily

stigmatized society, which in turn established a sense of motivation to gain and maintain employment.

Participants also highlighted a desire for independence through earning a sustainable financial income and this acted as a source of motivation that promoted their participation in supported employment programmes. According to Ali et al. (2011) people with and without disabilities attach the same significance to work-related outcomes such as job security, income, promotion opportunities, having an interesting job, and having a job that contributes to society. A definitive result from the findings of this study, was the requirement that supported employment programmes consistently advocate for disability inclusive environments to enable access and participation. This helped ensure participants were included in workplace environments. In this way the study observed how the foundation of these advocacy campaigns sought to promote occupational justice as a human right. This observation is supportive of the position advanced by the WFOT (2019) that states that when the occupational rights of a person are not upheld, abuse of human rights is also observed; two well-linked and dependent concepts. A key factor in addressing inclusion is to look at societies engrained ways of thinking that have been predominantly shaped by a medical or charitable approach to disability.

In the South African context, people with disabilities may apply for a disability grant in accordance with specific criteria. The criteria include having a physical or mental disability which makes one unfit to work for longer than six months and/or falling within a particular income bracket (South African Government, 2004). Therefore, individuals who work in a sheltered or protected employment setting may still qualify for a disability grant as the money earned falls within the income bracket that allows them to continue to receive a disability grant. A participant indicated that he had previously been employed within a protected employment

workshop environment and earned a small weekly income which allowed him to qualify for and receive a disability grant. However, he explained that the total income he received from both income sources were insufficient and he thus was unable to meet his need to provide financial security for his family. This participant was therefore motivated to engage in the supported employment programme and subsequently, find employment in the open labour market to sufficiently increase his income. The importance of transitioning from the protective labour environment to supported employment and ultimately the open labour market, is asserted by Strijdom et al. (2016). These researchers note that while the South African disability grant offers some degree of support to facilitate the inclusion of people with disabilities in the open labour market, protective measures need to be complemented with job creation strategies and advocacy campaigns, able to advocate for employment access and to educate employers against discrimination of persons with disabilities.

Participants in the study commented on how their ability to access work through the supported employment programme ensured that they are able to provide for their families and take on the role of a provider. Whereas participants of this study were diverse in respect of cultural backgrounds, they all noted how providing for their family could be achieved through employment. Two of the participants highlighted that making the necessary material provisions for their family ensured compliance with the perceived societal expectations of men, who are meant to make the major financial contribution to the household. These gendered societal expectations of men is reported by Marsiglio and Pleck (2005), who argue that in most societies the achievement of adult male status is reflected in the ability to have and support children. With reference to Maslow's Theory of Human Motivation (1943), being able to fulfill roles and duties within one's family accounts for the fulfillment of social needs as well as gaining a sense of belonging.

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A participant indicated how her ability to work contributed to her integration within a work community and provided an opportunity for socialization and stimulation. This in turn contributed to a positive identity. The findings also describe changes in participants' attitude towards their disability and the development of an increased level of self-worth as a result of their engagement in work. These findings are supportive of the position asserted by Gard and Sandberg (1998) and Van Niekerk (2008) who state that work is regarded as an important resource for providing sustenance and a positive sense of self-worth and identity. Gannon and Nolan (2004) further state that daily participation in society through employment can contribute to the social inclusion of people with disabilities.

5.4 Facilitators of access and inclusion within work: the role of supported employment

5.4.1 The foundations of supported employment

The participants in this study were able to provide descriptions of their participation in supported employment. These provide evidence of the important facilitators of successful supported employment programmes which further show strong alignment with theoretical descriptions and principles highlighted within literature. These enabling factors will be discussed in the following section.

Participants 1, 2 and 3 were employed full-time in the open labour market and engaged in a supported employment programme. Participant 5 indicated that she was no longer in need of support even though she was able to access it if required. Participants 4 and 6 were in the job sampling phase of their supported employment programme. The two research participants who were unemployed and still in the job sampling component of their programme indicated that all the work experience that they gained as part of the programme was in the open labour

market. These accounts resonate with the findings of the study by Van Niekerk et al (2011) that argued that three significant provisions should guide supported employment services in SA. One of these provisions state that competitive employment should always be an outcome of such programmes. Similarly, Hajwani (2008) confirms that supported employment can counteract stereotyping and promote the integration of people with disabilities into the open labour market because realistic expectations are developed through experience.

According to Wehman et al. (2003) establishing relationships with prospective employers are vital for the success of supported employment programmes. Claire (Key informant 4,) overseeing two participants in their job sampling phase, indicated that the programme facilitated the formation of meaningful relationships with the companies that were willing to take on the participants for their job sampling phase of the programme. Supported employment programmes are generally overseen by a job coach who provides ongoing support and helps the person with the disability to acquire and master the job skills needed to carry out a job in an open competitive environment (Melchiori & Church, 1997). According to the principles advanced by the Van Niekerk et al. (2011) study, the utilization of a client-centred approach and support is essential in ensuring long term sustainable employment. The study presented here was able to illustrate the significant role played by job coaches. Participants emphasized the importance of the individualised support they received and the availability of their job coach to mediate work-relation challenges. These factors helped improve their level of participation and engagement at their workplaces.

Regarding the utilisation of a client-centred approach, participants in the job sampling phase indicated that the type of work they were being exposed to was work that they enjoyed. They also felt that they had the necessary skills to complete the tasks associated the type of work.

For example, for Participant 4 and 6 this meant kitchen and gardening skills. Long term sustainable employment was a key factor highlighted by Key informants 3 and 4. They noted that for a supported employment programme to be beneficial, and for people with disabilities to experience success in the programme, required the investment in time by both the employer and the employee.

King and Olson (2014) report on three main foundational characteristics of supported employment programmes: 1) that the employees receive payment for work, 2) that employment takes place in an integrated work setting and 3) that ongoing support services are available to meet continued or periodic training needs of the employees. These characteristics were also identified by participants in this study. Firstly, all four participants in this study who were employed in the open labour market received salaries. One of these participants highlighted her integration at work as a significant accomplishment. Despite the challenges she faced managing her mental health diagnosis she was now able to work alongside colleagues without a diagnosis. Secondly, participants in the job sampling phase of their supported employment programme experienced an integrated work setting. They reported working with various individuals when engaging in the open labour market, for example with other caretakers in the school settings. Thirdly, on-going support services were identified by both the key informants and participants.

Three of the participants indicated that they had gone through the training components offered by the organization. With respect to training components, Claire (Key informant 4) noted that these can be reviewed when the participant enters the open labour market for their job sampling and/or formal employment. Some employed participants indicated that the initial level of support they received was intensive but decreased as they settled into their roles. One

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participant did, however, indicate that when she struggled or experienced increased symptoms relating to her mental health diagnosis, for example panic attacks, her job coach was readily available to consult with her and if required would also liaise with her employer. The foundation of supported employment can ensure that support strategies target both the person with the disability as well as the employer. Participants highlighted the client specific, supportive nature in which their programmes facilitated their entry into and experience of the competitive open labour market.

*5.4.2 Key elements within a supported employment programme*

Key elements utilized in the various supported employment programmes were reported in the findings of this study. These elements were perceived by the participants as facilitators of their eventual engagement in the open labour market. The elements include work preparation and training, availability of a job coach, as well as continued support upon employment.

5.4.2.1 Work preparation and training

Three of the participants underwent work preparation and training as a requirement of their organization's supported employment programme. The training took place for six months before the participants entered the job sampling phase of the supported employment programme. The participants described the training as encompassing life skills related to their independent home and work life. Key informant 3 and 4 explained that training provides the participants with the necessary skills to successfully enter workplaces and become independent in all aspects of their lives. These key informants directly involved in the training, indicated that components covered by the training were utilized throughout the supported employment process and referenced during the programme implementation phase. The findings established that a participant, who was successfully employed in the open labour market following this

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training, regarded the process as beneficial. The participant's views about her training and the beneficence thereof support the findings by Wallace et al. (1999) who reported superior employment outcomes for those undergoing skills training intervention.

Interestingly, Mueser et al. (1997) states that direct methods of intervention are better than stepwise methods. Thus, integrated approaches are seen as more beneficial than brokered approaches and assisting people to adapt to specific environments, rather than providing generic training, is more effective. The findings of this study, furthermore, shows that work preparation and training provided a sense of motivation as well as a mechanism for mutual support for the participants. A key informant facilitating the training process described how the participants were able to form meaningful peer relationships during the period of the training programme. Existing research (Wallace et al., 1999; Mueser et al., 1997) confirms that client-centred approaches that incorporate a detailed understanding of the person is essential in determining the needs for skills-based training as part of the supported employment process.
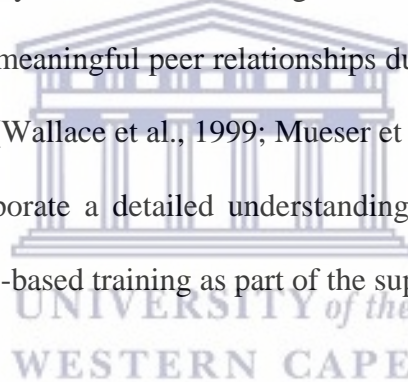
5.4.2.2 Availability of a job coach

According to Wehman et al. (2012) a job coach provides a wide range of support to assist a person with a disability in obtaining and maintaining employment. Renty and Roeyers (2006) indicate that reliable and consistent professional support from job coaches, managers and co-workers is a key factor contributing to the success of supported work internship schemes. Similarly, the findings of this study confirmed the availability and assistance provided by a job coach as a key element of a supported employment programme. As discussed earlier, three participants recounted the multi-faceted ways in which their job coaches aided in their employment. Furthermore, they acknowledged how they were able to transition from more sheltered or protected employment into the open labour market because of the assistance

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received from their job coach. The significance of this process of support provided by job coaches, corresponds with similar findings reported by Wehman (2012).

Alongside their supportive role, the participants also stated that the job coach monitored their fit with their job placements in terms of their interests and work preferences. This finding is consistent with the importance ascribed to an individualistic approach incorporated within supported employment (Van Niekerk et al., 2011) and the role of the job coach (Wehman et al., 2012). The role played by the job coach as a mediator was a significant finding in this research. Participants indicated that their job coaches were able to provide the support they needed in advocating for their needs especially when workplace accommodations needed to be made. Participants as well as the key informants claimed that educating employers and co-workers on disability was crucial for ensuring reasonable accommodations in the workplace. This was a role frequently fulfilled by the job coach. Similar findings were also reported by Romualdez et al. (2020) who explored participants' views on a supported work internship program for autistic and learning-disabled young people. Their study's findings reported that in some cases the role of the job coach was to advise co-workers, raise awareness about social expectations and assist co-workers to develop an understanding of the behaviours of colleagues with disabilities (Romualdez et al. 2020).

Likewise, Van Niekerk et al. (2011) assert that educating employers and co-workers on matters relating to disability awareness and workers' rights, is essential in preparing a work placement for a person with a disability. Education and training is thus a key element of a supported employment programme. Research participants also indicated that their job coaches were able to assist with mediation between employer and employee regarding reasonable accommodations within the workplace. According to MacDonald-Wilson et al. (2003) the

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analysis of the person-environmental fit and the identification of accommodations in the work environment are important elements of support provided to the employee in order to facilitate success.

The creation of an environment for the integration of workplace accommodations can be facilitated by the cooperative efforts of the job coach and employer (Nisbeth & Hagner 1988; Test & Wood 1996; Targett et al. 2007). A study completed by Lucca et al. (2004) showed that there was a correlation between acceptance of employer accommodations and job possession. Similar results were also evident in this study, notably when a participant described how her employer accepted her and ensured reasonable accommodation within the workplace. She cited an example of when she required time off from work whilst her medication regime was being reassessed and changed.
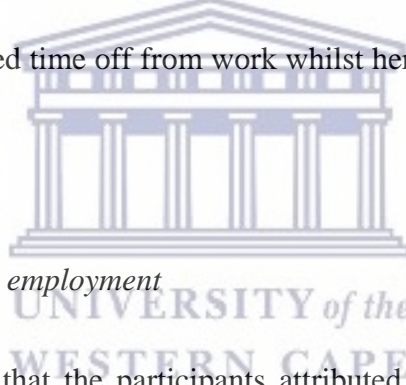
5.4.2.3 Continued support after employment

From the findings it emerged that the participants attributed much value to the continued support that they received from their job coach even after they became employed. The findings showed that the participants experienced a sense of ease in the work environment when they knew their job coach had ensured that the workplace was suitable and would continue to support them. A similar outcome was reported by Bond et al. (2001) who argued that a critical component in successful supported employment programmes include the continued support able to facilitate sustained employment of people with disabilities. They furthermore note that follow-along support must to be maintained indefinitely during the person's employment. Gustafsson et al. (2018) also indicated that continual support provided by the job coach helps to ensure that employment is sustained.

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5.5 Implementing Supported Employment

5.5.1 Enablers to the successful implementation of supported employment

Key informants in this study identified enablers to the implementation of supported employment programmes. As discussed earlier, the lack of implementation of a legislative framework to provide the basis for development of services, such as supported employment in South Africa, is a barrier to work access and inclusion. The study's key informants, nevertheless referred to some aspects of policy as an enabler, namely the scorecard as an attempt to monitor employment of people with disabilities. This reflects policy related to the Employment Equity Act of 1998 that stipulates that medium and large companies should employ people with disabilities (South African Government, 1998). Employers who comply are then eligible for financial incentives (Silver & Koopman, 2000).

Another enabler that emerged from the findings is the role of a supportive family, a significant contributor to the success that participants experienced in supported employment programmes. Participants and key informants stressed the importance of family support in their progression through the programme. These findings corroborate the results of the study by Romualdez et al. (2020) who explored participants' views on a supported work internship program for autistic and learning-disabled young people. The Romualdez et al. (2020) study further provided evidence of the value of family involvement and its critical contribution to the interns' success. Nicholas et al. (2017) also notes that family support, that can include the provision of emotional, practical planning and implementation support, benefits employment outcomes for people with disabilities.

The study also found that a further enabler of successful implementation, was the positive attitudes of the employer where people with disabilities were placed. Participants who were employed articulated that their general work environment was conducive and accommodating of their needs. The findings reported a sense of openness and willingness from employers was critical to the implementation of supported employment programmes. As discussed earlier, these perceived accommodating environments were also facilitated through engagement between the job coaches and employers. According to Wehman, et al. (2003) establishing relationships with employers is vital for the success of supported employment programmes. Findings also showed that prospective employers may be more willing to employ people with disabilities knowing that they are assisted by the supported employment process. As previously noted, the need to fulfil requirements set out in the Employment Equity Act of 1998, was also an important facilitator of employment access.
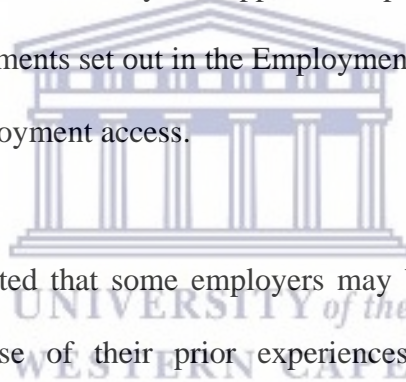
However, the findings also noted that some employers may be more willing to partake in supported employment because of their prior experiences of employing people with disabilities. These findings are supportive of those found in the Huang and Chen (2015) study which investigated the experiences of employers who had long-term experiences with employing people with disabilities in Taiwan. Huang and Chen (2015) identified four main reasons that led to hiring, namely including personal experience relating to people with disabilities, economic concerns, charitable perspectives, and policy implications. These reasons highlighted by Huang and Chen (2015) were also found as enabling factors in the study reported here. One of the key informants in this study suggested that employers often feel an innate need to give back and offer this as a reason for employing a person with a disability. This motivation, she noted, was often associated with a charitable approach to disability in society. Given the importance of promoting a social model of disability as a countermeasure to

the charity model, it is imperative that job coaches raise this distinction as a way to affect real disability inclusion. Consequently, it is imperative for job coaches when addressing disability awareness in the workplace, to address the social model of disability opposed to the charity model of disability to effect real disability inclusion.

5.5.2 Barriers to the implementation of supported employment

Supported employment is an effective service approach to promote the inclusion of people with disabilities in work, particularly in the open labour market (Crowther et al., 2001). Barriers to the implementation of supported employment programmes were, however, highlighted by the findings of this study. Firstly, the lack of awareness, exposure and understanding of supported employment by society emerged. Van Niekerk et al. (2011) raises similar concerns and note that as supported employment is a new idea in South Africa with very few programmes available, there is a need for relevant stakeholders to engage in the development of a supported employment knowledge base to inform South African practice. These stakeholders should be employers, potential job coaches, service providers and consumers i.e., people with disabilities (Van Niekerk et al., 2011). As illustrated by the findings of this study, information exchange between stakeholders will contribute to greater awareness and understanding regarding the implementation of supported employment programmes. A further outcome may be the generation of funding for supported employment programmes.

Secondly, the findings reflect limited multi-sectoral governmental support available to implement supported employment programmes, despite the extensive policy adoption by the South African government. This in turn shifts the responsibility onto private companies and non-governmental organizations who will understandably struggle to meet the needs of the broader South African population living with disabilities. This result also confirms the findings

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of the Van Niekerk et al. (2011) study who argue that supported employment service providers in South Africa are dissatisfied with the dispersal of current services and limitations imposed by situating services predominantly within the health sector.

Thirdly, the cost associated with implementing supported employment and lack of government funding were highlighted as barriers. Key informants reported that the cost to businesses for those who participated in supported employment posed a challenge and those employers may initially and continue to be hesitant when engaging in such programmes. A similar finding was identified by Bond et al. (2001) who state that a common barrier to the implementation of supported employment is the money needed to finance start-up and ongoing programme costs. Van Niekerk et al. (2011) also point out that the current government subsidy in South Africa tends to cover vocational services until the point when an employment placement occurs. Therefore, the fragmentation of funding sources within the South African context is a serious barrier hindering the development of supported employment services. The lack of funding provided to supported employment programmes was found to be a concern as addressed by key informants directly involved with programme implementation. Van Niekerk et al. (2011) also argue that supported employment providers require government funding for the development of services that address the employment needs of people with disabilities. In addition to the day-to-day running of these programmes, funding and support is also required for job coaches who play a vital role in ensuring access to work for people with disabilities. Funding job coaches was frequently met with hesitancy from businesses, as suggested by key informant 2. A cost calculation study of supported employment funding completed by Engelbrecht et al. (2017) described how supported employment could be funded. Included in their calculation was the proposal of government funding for supported employment organizations. A mitigating factor identified, however, was that the cost of providing supported

employment services to individuals with disabilities could be substantially lower than government investments in disability grants and protective workshops subsidies (Engelbrecht et al., 2017).

Lastly, a lack of specific legislation regarding the implementation of supported employment in South Africa was identified as barrier within this study. A key informant revealed the fine line between risk taking in the business environment and ensuing that the respective legislation was put in place to protect employer and employee. Another key informant noted the lack of policy in South African government departments to enforce the implementation of supported employment. This stands in contrast to the proven efficacy of such policies for ensuring the employment of people with disabilities and the fact that the South African government has accepted and ratified UNCRPD (UN, 2006) and WPRPD (DSD, 2016) disability policy directives. These findings support suggestions that labour legislation should facilitate good practice and the implementation of supported employment to incentivise employers who employ people with disabilities (Van Niekerk et al., 2011).

5.6 Facilitating access to work through supported employment: working towards occupational justice

Participants of this study shed light on the value that access and participation in work had, further underlining the value of occupational engagement as a resource for health and well-being; what Wilcock (1998) describes as an occupational right. Participants and key informants elucidated the kinds of barriers that people with disabilities face in relation to engaging in work. It was through the exploration of these barriers that the concept of occupational justice, as it relates to the fulfillment of human rights, was foregrounded. According to Alheresh et al. (2013) occupational justice is a vehicle by which issues of access and opportunity to engage in

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meaningful occupations can be addressed. Thus, occupational justice entails working towards having peoples' occupational rights, and by implication, human rights, met. This understanding of occupational justice as it relates to the findings of this study, will be explored in the following section of this discussion.

The findings showed that even if participants entered labour markets with support, they would still encounter challenges that arise from social injustices such as poor job availability. These challenges alongside past discriminatory workplace practices continue to impact the South African labour market. This lack of availability of jobs in South Africa results in participants experiencing occupational deprivation (Whiteford, 2003); defined as a prolonged state of exclusion from participation due to factors outside the control of the individual. It is therefore a reasonable expectation for job creation and economic empowerment to be implemented within South Africa.
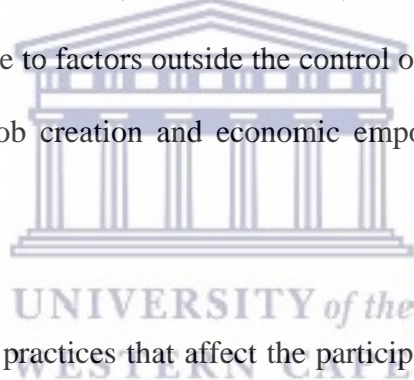
The stigma and discriminatory practices that affect the participants' ability to access work is established within the medical and charitable approaches to disability. This stigma and resultant discrimination limits the availability of work pursuits for people with disabilities. These pre-conceived ideas, embedded within society results in people with disabilities' experiencing occupational marginalization. Townsend and Wilcock (2004b) define this as the exclusion from participation in occupations based on 'invisible' norms and expectations set out in society. This exclusion tries to dictate individuals' participation in occupations, with the consequence of disregarding the person's desire to engage in occupations and the possible meaning derive from such engagement. Ineffective policy implementation and monitoring also presents as a societal barrier through which participants experience occupational injustice, namely that of occupational deprivation and marginalization.

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Factors like national priorities and social values create an occupational just society. By addressing these matters, people are able to develop their potential for participation, rather than being expected to fit into socio-economically established roles (Wilcock, 1998). Within this study, the supported employment programmes were found to include facilitatory mechanisms that support people with disabilities to engage in the open labour market. Support strategies put in place the onus on society to change rather than the person with the disability (Wilcock, 1998). It can thus be argued that supported employment in itself is a mechanism through which occupational justice for people with disabilities can be addressed. Examples of how the supported employment programmes fulfill this role are skills development and job preparation activities, the presence of job coaches, who also have an advocacy role, as well as the availability of continued support. The role and importance of disability advocacy as a key facilitator of occupational justice in the workplace cannot be over emphasised. Key informants as well as participants in this study stressed the importance of advocating for access and the creation of suitable environments for people with disabilities to engage in work.
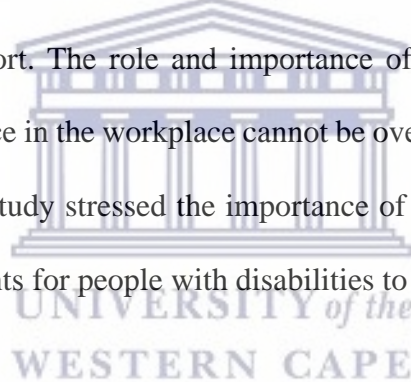
5.7 Summary

In this chapter the findings of the study as it relates to its objectives were discussed. The findings were evaluated in light of existing literature on supported employment programmes and in many instances, evidence of strong alignments and corroboration with previous studies in the field established. The findings of the study were synthesized to offer an interpretation of the usefulness of supported employment as a vehicle of occupational justice in terms of access to work for people with disabilities in the open labour market.

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CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter summarizes the study regarding its main conclusions. Recommendations that emerged from the findings are presented, and lastly, the limitations of the study are discussed.

6.2 Conclusion

Despite extensive literature highlighting the role of supported employment for enabling access to work for people with disabilities, there is limited research that investigates their perspectives surrounding engaging in these programmes. Therefore, this qualitative descriptive study aimed to explore and describe people with disabilities' perspectives on how participation in a supported employment programme facilitates access to work. The significance of the study lies in its generation of knowledge about the views, perceptions, and experiences of people with disabilities and their engagement within supported employment programmes in a manner that strengthens their voices. As a result, this study contributes to the knowledge resources on this topic, while also providing valuable insights that can inform the development of relevant services and current practices associated with supporting persons with disabilities in the open labour market in South Africa. By demonstrating the effectiveness of supported employment programmes, it is envisaged that this study will assist in promoting the benefits of such programmes, which may, in turn lead to the increased adoption and support for these programmes in South Africa.

All participants in this study accessed supported employment services to enable their access and inclusion in work. Four themes emerged from the study: 1) Work: An occupation for all? 2) Enablers to supported employment; 3) Barriers to supported employment; and 4) Support, a foundation to inclusion. The first theme captured the value that being able to access work has for the participants. It also detailed the position they found themselves in when trying to access work in a society where systemic and structural issues of social injustice are evident. The second theme captured the perspectives regarding factors that enable supported employment. This theme elucidated personal as well as societal factors that influence the implementation of supported employment programmes. Theme three evidenced the implementation barriers of supported employment programmes. These barriers ranged from societal stigma, poor understanding of disability accommodations, and poor implementation of disability inclusive policies. The fourth and final theme reported on participants' perspectives regarding the facilitatory mechanisms used within supported employment to ensure access to work for people with disabilities. The important role of the job coach able to promote participants' engagement within work was a significant insight.

The main conclusions derived from the study are:

- There are still extensive barriers present within the South African labour market that limits people with disabilities' engagement within work.

- Policy directives adopted at international and national levels that relate to inclusivity in and access to the workplace are not effectively implemented.

- Supported employment programmes can effectively address barriers by providing people with disabilities with the necessary support. Beneficial support strategies

include the involvement of a job coach, training, and preparation, as well as the ongoing support provided after employment is secured. These strategies promote advocacy for the inclusions of people with disabilities in the workplace.

- Despite being found to be a viable support to promote inclusion, supported employment programmes encounter significant challenges that impact its implementation, including:

  o Limited multi-sectoral governmental support.

  o Funding shortages with the responsibility of implementation being primarily in the hands of non-governmental organizations.

  o Limited awareness and understanding of supported employment by broader society.

  o No specific legislation that provides mandatory implementation guidelines for supported employment programmes resulting in limited or no buy-in from governmental departments.

6.3 Recommendations

The findings of this study are beneficial to the development of supported employment programmes in South Africa. In relation to this, the following recommendations are made.

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6.3.1 Legislation and policy to guide the implementation of supported employment

It is recommended that legislation that governs the implementation of supported employment programmes in the South African open labour market, is developed. Clear guidelines regarding the implementation of programmes, ownership, and accountability towards employing people with disabilities under a supported framework must be provided. The development of legislation can assist workplaces in creating specific policies that outline how they will guarantee the inclusion of people with disabilities.

6.3.2 Inclusive job creation and economic empowerment programmes

It is recommended that when programmes that target job creation and economic empowerment are developed, specific reference should be made about the involvement of people with disabilities and the nature of support required for their successful engagement.

6.3.3 Multi-sectoral approaches to supported employment

It is recommended that vocational rehabilitation be extended to incorporate a multi- sectoral approach, thereby ensuring the integration of people with disabilities into the open labour market. It is further recommended that this approach be outlined in policy, mandating the collaboration of governmental sectors such as labour, health, and social development.

6.3.4 Supported employment advocacy and information exchange
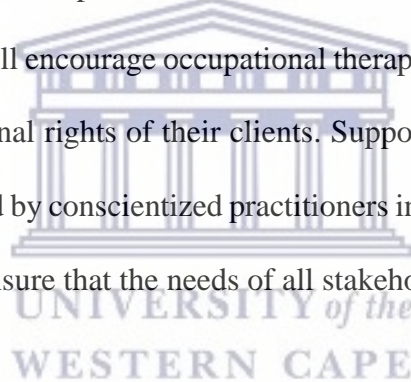
It is recommended that supported employment programmes continue to provide information sessions that advocate the transitional role they can play in vocational rehabilitation, especially at sheltered and protected employment workshops. This advocacy should extend to business enterprises within South Africa and involve key role players responsible for job recruitment,

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i.e., human resource departments should be informed of available services to assist people with disabilities and companies.

6.3.5 Emphasis on the role of supported employment in addressing occupational injustice

It is recommended that occupational therapy students and practitioners continue to develop a more in-depth understanding of occupational justice as a matter of inclusivity and human rights. It is through such provisions, that occupational therapy practice to facilitate the transition of people with disabilities into employment, can be ensured. The Occupational Therapy Association of South Africa (OTASA) should take a more active role in promoting the use of occupational justice conceptualisations in the initial and professional education of occupational therapists. This will encourage occupational therapists to reflect on their practices while addressing the occupational rights of their clients. Supported employment programmes should continue to be developed by conscientized practitioners in consultation with people with disabilities and employers to ensure that the needs of all stakeholders are met.

6.3.6 Recommendations for future research

Future research should be conducted that includes participants with a broader range of impairments and examines their perspectives of supported employment programmes. This will provide a more in depth and detailed understanding of these programmes and their implementation successes. Such further research will also make an important contribution towards the development of relevant strategies able to facilitate the transitions into the open labour market for people with disabilities.

It is recommended that research that focusses on the perspectives on those people with disabilities who are employed in the open labour market and who did not receive support is

also undertaken. This will be valuable in developing non-formalized supports that could be incorporated within supported employment programmes.

It is recommended that further research that utilizes larger samples of participants under a randomized control design take place to provide evidence that examines the effectiveness of supported employment programmes, particularly in the South African setting.

6.4 Limitations of the study

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly affected the data collection process of this study, especially regarding how the interviews were conducted. Ethical approval was granted for telephonic and virtual interviews. However, the researcher believes that the participants and key informants may have been more engaged in the interview process if the interviewer was physically present. The face-to-face interviews that were conducted allowed the researcher to be more aware of the participants' non-verbal ques. A potential additional organizational research setting was severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and was no longer operational, at the time of data collection, due to the withdrawal of international funding. This limited the range of disabilities represented in this study, as only two research settings could be utilized under the circumstances. Recommendations for future research in this regard have been proposed.

It was also noted from the findings that some participants were unable to identify any barriers or describe negative perceptions of their engagement in specific supported employment programmes or degree of support provided in their current workplaces. Although this may be a true reflection, it was also important for the researcher to recognise participants' feelings

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regarding the potential consequences of disclosing such information and the impact it might have had on their continued and future engagement in these programmes or workplaces.

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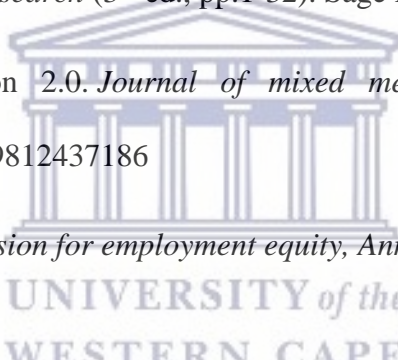
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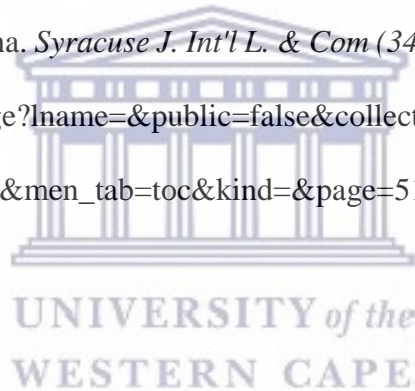
APPENDIX 1

UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa **Tel: +27 21-959 3151 Fax: 27 21-959 9359**

E-mail: michaelaotty@gmail.com

INFORMATION SHEET: KEY INFORMANT

Project Title: People with Disabilities' perspectives on how participation in a supported employment programme facilitates access to work.

What is this study about?

This is a research project being conducted by Michaela Ellen Otty, Postgraduate Occupational Therapy Masters Student, at the University of the Western Cape (UWC). We are inviting you to participate in this research project because you have been involved in a supported employment programme. The purpose of this research project is to facilitate a greater understanding of how PWDs perceive the value of vocational rehabilitation. It is envisaged that with the information gained from this study, the vocational rehabilitation services provided to

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PWDs in the area of supported employment, can be further developed in order to ensure their access to work, as highlighted in various universal and national policies.

What will I be asked to do if I agree to participate?

You will be asked to engage in one 45-minute key informant individual interview with the researcher. It will be conducted in a time and location most convenient to the informant. You will be asked to discuss: your experience and involvement within a supportive employment programme; the barriers or enablers that you think exist with regards to PWDs accessing work opportunities within the South African Labour Market; how you think supported employment addresses or does not address some of these barriers; and changes or additions you would suggest to ensure a supported employment is of greater benefit to PWDs?

Would my participation in this study be kept confidential?

The researcher undertakes to protect your identity and the nature of your contribution. To ensure your anonymity, the researcher will: make use of participant pseudonyms within the research transcriptions; conduct interviews of the participants in a location of their choosing; and refrain from discussing the participants with any person besides the professional staff if the need arose... The confidentiality of the participants will be maintained by ensuring that all data gathered including audiotapes and transcripts will be secured in a password protected electronic folder and stored in a locked cabinet for a period of five years following the study after which it will be destroyed. If we write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected.

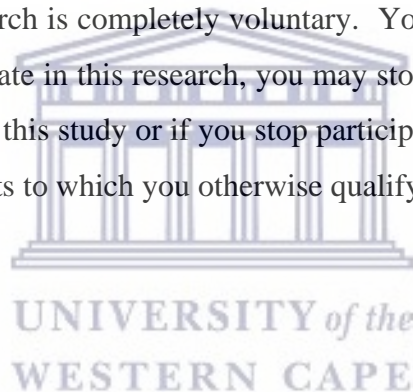## What are the risks of this research?

All human interactions and talking about self or others carry some amount of risks. We will nevertheless minimise such risks and act promptly to assist you if you experience any discomfort, psychological or otherwise during the process of your participation in this study. Where necessary, an appropriate referral will be made to a suitable professional for further assistance or intervention.

What are the benefits of this research?

This research is not designed to help you personally, but the results may help the investigator learn more about your perspectives of supportive employment in order to ensure that the strategy can be further developed and contribute to the inclusion of PWDs within the open labour market.

Do I have to be in this research and may I stop participating at any time?

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify.

What if I have questions?

This research is being conducted by Michaela Ellen Otty (Occupational Therapy) at the University of the Western Cape. If you have any questions about the research study itself, please contact Michaela Otty at: 084 781 2422 or 3451943@myuwc.ac.za.

Should you have any questions regarding this study and your rights as a research participant or if you wish to report any problems you have experienced related to the study, please contact:

Prof. Shaheed Soeker

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Prof Anthea Rhoda

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This research has been approved by the University of the Western Cape's Biomedical Research

Ethics Committee.

Biomedical Research Ethics Committee

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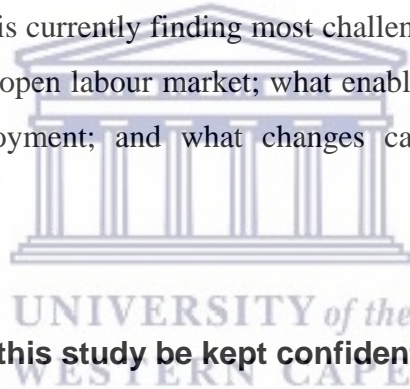## INFORMATION SHEET: RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Project Title: People with Disabilities' perspectives on how participation in a supported employment programme facilitates access to work.

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This is a research project being conducted by Michaela Ellen Otty, Postgraduate Occupational Therapy Masters Student, at the University of the Western Cape (UWC). We are inviting you to participate in this research project because you have been involved in a supported employment programme. The purpose of this research project is to facilitate a greater understanding of how PWDs perceive the value of vocational rehabilitation. It is envisaged that with the information gained from this study, the vocational rehabilitation services provided to PWDs in the area of supported employment, can be further developed in order to ensure their access to work, as highlighted in various universal and national policies.

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What will I be asked to do if I agree to participate?

You will be asked to engage in two 45-minute individual interviews with the researcher. These will be conducted in a time and location most convenient to the participant. The initial interview will take place and then a follow up interview will be conducted, three weeks later, to gain further insight into key points of discussion brought up in the initial interview. During both interviews, the researcher will utilize an interview guideline. The research participant will be asked to describe: their engagement in work before accessing a supported employment programme; the supported employment that they have or are currently undergoing; their employer's involvement within the supported employment programme; as well as the employer's attitude with regards to employing PWDs. Participants will then be asked to discuss the elements of the programme that have supported them the most in terms of (re)gaining employment within the open labour market. In the follow up interview the participant will be asked to describe: what he/she is currently finding most challenging with regards to returning to work or working within the open labour market; what enablers there were with regards to becoming or regaining employment; and what changes can be made to a supportive employment programme.

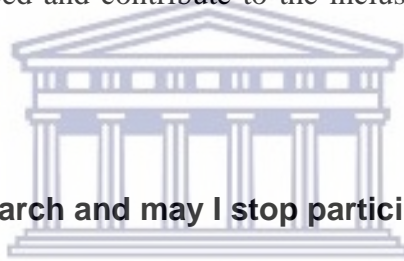**Would my participation in this study be kept confidential?**

The researcher undertakes to protect your identity and the nature of your contribution. To ensure your anonymity, the researcher will: make use of participant pseudonyms within the research transcriptions; conduct interviews of the participants in a location of their choosing; and refrain from discussing the participants with any person besides the professional staff if the need arose... The confidentiality of the participants will be maintained by ensuring that all data gathered including audiotapes and transcripts will be secured in a pass-word protected electronic folder and stored in a locked cabinet for a period of five years following the study after which it will be destroyed. If we write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected.

What are the risks of this research?

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APPENDIX 3

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CONSENT FORM

Title of Research Project: **People with Disabilities' perspectives on how participation in a supported programme facilitates access to work.**

The study has been described to me in language that I understand. My questions about the study have been answered. I understand what my participation will involve and I agree to participate of my own choice and free will. I understand that my identity will not be disclosed to anyone. I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason and without fear of negative consequences or loss of benefits.

____ I agree to be [videotaped/audiotaped/photographed] during my participation in this study.
____ I do not agree to be [videotaped/audiotaped/photographed] during my participation in this study.

Participant's name...........................

Participant's signature....................................

Date...........................

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APPENDIX 4

INTERVIEW GUIDE (KEY INFORMANTS)

1. Describe the supported employment programme offered to people with disabilities?

2. Describe the rationale for the strategies utilized within the supported employment programme?

3. How do you feel employees respond to the supported employment rehabilitation strategy?

4. What are the barriers that the supported employment model faces within the South African open labour market?

5. How do you think the programme could be further developed to assist people with disabilities and their access to work?

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APPENDIX 5

<u>INTERVIEW GUIDE (RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS)</u>

1. Describe your engagement in work before enrolment into the supported employment programme

2. Describe the supported employment process that you have or are currently undergoing

3. What elements of this programme have supported you the most in terms of (re)gaining employment within the open labour market?

4. What elements of this programme were not/or not beneficial with regards to (re)gaining employment?

5. Describe your employee's involvement within the supported employment programme

6. Describe how employee's attitude with regards to the employing people with disabilities

7. What are you currently finding most challenging with regards to returning to work or working within the open labour market?

8. What do you think are the enablers with regards to you being becoming employed?

9. What do you think can be changed in terms of the support being provided to you?

APPENDIX 6

UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

YEARS
*of hope, action
& knowledge*

07 April 2021

Ms ME Otty
Occupational Therapy
Faculty of Community and Health Sciences

Ethics Reference Number: BM19/10/14

Project Title: People with disabilities perspectives on how participation in a supported employment programme facilitates access to work

Approval Period: 12 March 2021 – 12 March 2024

I hereby certify that the Biomedical Science Research Ethics Committee of the University of the Western Cape approved the scientific methodology and ethics of the above mentioned research project.

Any amendments, extension or other modifications to the protocol must be submitted to the Ethics Committee for approval.

Please remember to submit a progress report annually by 30 November for the duration of the project.

Permission to conduct the study must be submitted to BMREC for record-keeping.

The Committee must be informed of any serious adverse event and/or termination of the study.

Ms Patricia Josias
Research Ethics Committee Officer
University of the Western Cape

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FROM HOPE TO ACTION THROUGH KNOWLEDGE.

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