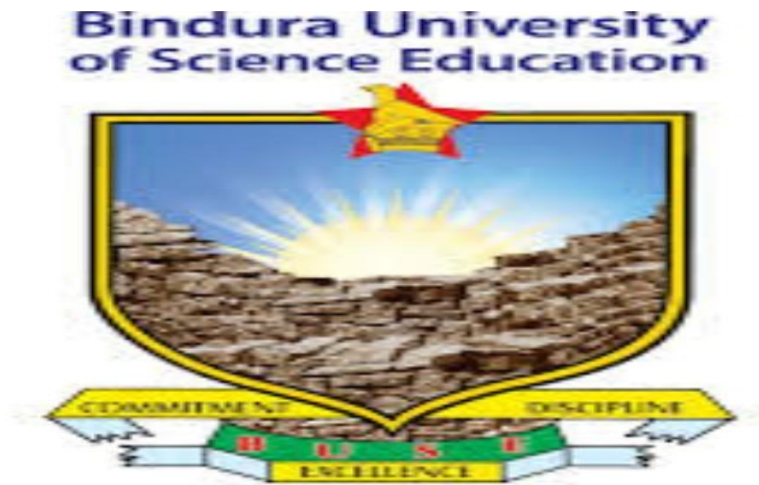


**BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION**  
**FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCE AND HUMANITIES**  
**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK**



**A FRAMEWORK TOWARDS THE WORKPLACE REALITIES OF EMPLOYEES**  
**WITH DISABILITIES IN ZIMBABWE.**

**BY**

**TANISHA PANASHE MUNYURWA**

**B21042**

**A dissertation submitted to Bindura University of Science Education, Faculty of Social Science and Humanities, Department of Social Work, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Bachelor of Science Honours Degree in Social Work.**

**June 2025**

BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK



Tanisha Munguwa ..... 22 August 2025

*Student Signature*

*Date*

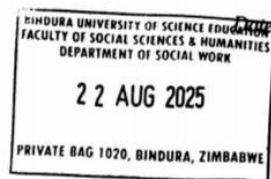
[Signature] ..... 22/08/25

*Supervisor Signature*

*Date*

[Signature] ..... 22/08/25

*Chairperson Signature*



## APPROVAL FORM

Supervisor

I certify that I supervised Tanisha Panashe Munyurwa in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Bachelor of Social Work Honours Degree and recommend that it proceeds for examination.

Supervisor Name R. Muregi Signature Rjs Date 23/06/25

### *Chairperson of the Department Board of Examiners*

The Department Board of Examiners is satisfied that this dissertation report meets the examination requirements and I therefore recommend Bindura University of Science Education to accept this research project by Tanisha Panashe Munyurwa titled: A framework towards workplace realities of employees with disabilities in Zimbabwe in partial fulfilment of the Bachelor of Science Honours Degree in Social Work.

Chairperson Name..... Signature..... Date.....

### DECLARATION FORM

I, Tanisha Panashe Munyurwa studying for a Bachelor's of Science Degree in Social Work, cognizant of the fact that plagiarism is an academic offense and that falsifying information is a breach of the ethics in Social Work research, truthfully declare that:

1. The dissertation reported titled *A framework towards the workplace realities of employees with disabilities in Zimbabwe* is a result of my own work and has not been plagiarized.
2. I have followed research ethics required in pursuit of Social Work research.
3. I grant permission to the University to use this report for educational purposes.

Student's name TANISHA MUNYURWA Signature Tanisha Date 20/06/25

Permanent home address:

7238, 96 Crescent

Glenview, Harare.

## RELEASE FORM

Title: A framework towards the workplace realities of employees with disabilities.

Name: Tanisha Panashe Munyurwa


Registration Number: B210426B

Program: Social Work

Institution: Bindura University of Science Education

### Release statement

I, Tanisha Panashe Munyurwa am hereby granting Bindura University of Science Education the right to distribute and achieve my dissertation in all forms as well not limited to electronic and print formats. My dissertation may be accessed and used for educational and academic purposes. Any reproduction for commercial purposes requires prior consent.

Signature..........

Date.....20/06/25.....

### Contact Information

Email [munyurwatanisha506@gmail.com](mailto:munyurwatanisha506@gmail.com)

Contact number 0781641509

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

First and foremost, I would like to thank the Lord for seeing me throughout this journey. I would also like to express my profound gratitude to my supervisor, Ms Muregi, whose guidance and support was invaluable during this research. Your insight, feedback and encouragement in my work helped me achieve the best results.


I am grateful to the Harare City Council for allowing me to conduct my research and to all the participants I appreciate your cooperation. To my beloved family, thank you for your unwavering support. Your confidence in me kept me going even when I was doubting myself.

I appreciate you all, may the Lord bless you.


## **DEDICATION**


I dedicate this project to my family, my father, Mr. Simbarashe Munyurwa, my ever loving sister Miss Maxine Munyurwa, my ever supportive grandmother Mrs Theresa Mazivanhanga, my pillar Mrs Brenda Chandiwana and my uncle Mr Shingirai Chandiwana, not forgetting my very supportive and encouraging aunts, Mrs Francesca Musvamhira, Mrs Memory Mparihwah and Mrs Bernadette Nyamayaro. Thank you for your love, support and encouragement. Your belief in me has been the cornerstone of my strength and perseverance throughout this journey. In loving memory of my dear mother, Mrs Millicent Chandiwana and uncle Mr Bonface Charambira, though you are no longer with me in person, your, love and sacrifices continue to inspire and guide me every day. This work is a tribute to your memories.




## PLAGIARISM REPORT




MUNYURWA TANISHA PANASH...














8





Match Overview



8%

<

>

1	Submitted to Midlands ... Student Paper	<1%	>
2	listens.online Internet Source	<1%	>
3	Kaushik Kumar, Chikes... Publication	<1%	>
4	www.lindsayevanslee.c... Internet Source	<1%	>
5	Submitted to Mancosa Student Paper	<1%	>
6	ajod.org Internet Source	<1%	>
7	fastercapital.com Internet Source	<1%	>
8	www.tandfonline.com Internet Source	<1%	>
9	erepository.mkuit.ac.rw Internet Source	<1%	>



**Name: Tanisha Panashe Munyurwa**

**Registration No: B210426B**

**MARKING GUIDE: UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH PROJECT**

<b>Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>Possible Mark</b>	<b>Actual Mark</b>
Abstract	<b>10</b>	
Background to the study- what is it that has made you choose this particular topic? Include objectives or purpose of the study	<b>20</b>	
Statement of the problem	<b>10</b>	
Research questions	<b>15</b>	
Assumptions	<b>5</b>	
Significance of the study	<b>15</b>	
Limitations of the study	<b>5</b>	
Delimitations of the study	<b>5</b>	
Definition of terms	<b>10</b>	
Summary	<b>5</b>	
Total	<b>100</b>	
<b>Weighted Mark</b>	<b>15</b>	

**Comments.....**  
.....

**Chapter 2 LITERATURE REVIEW**

Introduction- what do you want to write about in this chapter?	<b>5</b>	
Conceptual or theoretical framework	<b>10</b>	
Identification, interpretations and evaluation of relevant literature and citations	<b>40</b>	
Contextualisation of the literature to the problem	<b>10</b>	
Establishing gaps in knowledge and how the research will try to bridge these gaps	<b>10</b>	

Structuring and logical sequencing of ideas	<b>10</b>	
Discursive skills	<b>10</b>	
Summary	<b>5</b>	
Total	<b>100</b>	
<b>Weighted Mark</b>	<b>20</b>	

**Comments**.....  
.....  
.....

### **Chapter 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Introduction	<b>5</b>	
Research design	<b>10</b>	
What instruments are you using to collect data?	<b>30</b>	
Population, sample and sampling techniques to be used in the study	<b>25</b>	
Procedures for collecting data	<b>15</b>	
Data presentation and analysis procedures	<b>10</b>	
Summary	<b>5</b>	
Total	<b>100</b>	
<b>Weighted Mark</b>	<b>25</b>	

**Comments**.....  
.....

### **Chapter 4 DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

Introduction	<b>5</b>	
Data presentation	<b>50</b>	
Is there any attempt to link literature review with new findings	<b>10</b>	
How is the new knowledge trying to fill the gaps identified earlier	<b>10</b>	

Discursive and analytical skills	<b>20</b>	
Summary	<b>5</b>	
Total	<b>100</b>	
<b>Weighted Mark</b>	<b>30</b>	

### Comments

.....

.....

.....

## Chapter 5 SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction- focus of the chapter	<b>5</b>	
Summary of the whole project including constraints	<b>25</b>	
Conclusions- have you come up with answers to the problem under study	<b>30</b>	
Recommendations(should be based on findings) Be precise	<b>30</b>	
References	<b>5</b>	
Appendices i.e. copies of instruments used and any other relevant material	<b>5</b>	
Total	<b>100</b>	
<b>Weighted mark</b>	<b>10</b>	

### Comments

.....

.....

.....

### SUMMARY: -

**Actual**

**Total**

### Chapter 1

## Chapter 2

## Chapter 3

## Chapter 4

## Chapter 5

<b>Total</b>	<u>                    </u>	<u>                    </u>
--------------	-----------------------------	-----------------------------

## **Abstract**

*This study focused on a framework towards employees with disabilities. This study focused on four objectives which are investigating the challenges faced by employees with disabilities in Zimbabwe, how the challenges affect their job performance and satisfaction, assess the existing support systems and recommend ways of improving the workplace environment for employees with disabilities. A qualitative approach was applied to guide the study and semi-structured interviews, observations and key-informant interviews were used during the data collection process. The social model of disability and the empowerment model served as theoretical frameworks to understand disability and the workplace realities of employees with disabilities. The study targeted employees with disabilities through a purposive sampling technique. 14 employees including 3 key informant were selected for data collection. A thematic analysis was employed to examine the data collected from employees with disabilities and the key informant. The findings highlighted that employees with disabilities face workplace exclusion, physical and environmental, attitudinal and cultural and economic and policy barriers. These challenges affect the employees' job performance and job satisfaction resulting in reduced productivity. The study revealed that the support systems in Zimbabwe are inadequate. Disability policies exist but are not implemented effectively. A lot of employees find it difficult to access some building highlighting workplace exclusion. Employees with disabilities end up feeling unheard and unsupported. Based on the finding, organisations should prioritize workplace inclusion practices and offer employees with disabilities the needed support and accommodation. Advocacy and awareness initiatives should be conducted to promote an inclusive culture. Additionally, employees managing chronic conditions and those requiring medical appointed emphasized the issue of introducing flexible work arrangements. Employees with disabilities need inclusive policies, equal opportunities for career advancement, accessible infrastructure and disability awareness training in the workplace. Thus, addressing these barriers promotes inclusivity in workplaces in Zimbabwe and improves the job productivity and satisfaction for employees with disabilities.*

## **List of abbreviations**

EWD Employees with Disabilities

ILO International Labour Organisation

UNCRP United Nations' Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

WHO World Health Organisation

## Contents

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
1.0 Introduction.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
1.1 Background.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
1.2 Statement of the problem .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
1.3 Aim of the study.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
1.4 Objectives .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
1.5 Research questions.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
1.6 Justification.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
1.7 Definition of key terms .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
1.7.1 Workplace Realities .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
1.7.2 Employees with Disabilities.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
1.7.3. Workplace Environment .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
1.8 Dissertation outline .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
1.9 Chapter summary.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
CHAPTER TWO .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
LITERATURE REVIEW .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
2.0 INTRODUCTION .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
2.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
2.1.1 THE SOCIAL DISABILITY THEORY .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
2.1.2 THE EMPOWERMENT THEORY .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
2.2. BARRIERS FACED BY EMPLOYEES WITH DISABILITIES. ....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
2.2.1 PHYSICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL BARRIERS .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
2.2.2 CULTURAL AND ATTITUDINAL BARRIERS .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
2.2.3 ECONOMIC AND POLICY BARRIERS.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
2.3 IMPACT OF CHALLENGES ON JOB PERFORMANCE AND SATISFACTION .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
2.4 EXISTING SUPPORT SYSTEMS FOR EMPLOYEES WITH DISABILITIES.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
2.4.1 LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY FRAMEWORK.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
2.4.2 ADVOCACY AND AWARENESS INITIATIVES .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
2.5 STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE THE WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT FOR EMPLOYEES WITH DISABILITIES.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
2.5.1 INCLUSIVE ORGANSATIONAL PRACTICES .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
2.5.2 ENSURE ACCESSIBILITY AND ACCOMMODATIONS ....	Error! Bookmark not defined.

2.5.3 CREATE SUPPORT GROUPS .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
2.5.4 MONITOR AND EVALUATE INCLUSION EFFORTS.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
2.6 CONCLUSION .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3.0 INTRODUCTION .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3.1 RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3.2 RESEARCH APPROACH .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3.4 STUDY SETTING.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3.5 TARGET POPULATION.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3.6 SAMPLING .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3.6.1 SAMPLING TECHNIQUES .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3.6.2 SAMPLING SIZE.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3.7 DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES AND TOOLS .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3.7.1 SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3.7.2 OBSERVATIONS .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3.7.3 KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3.7.1 INFORMED CONSENT .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3.7.2 ANONYMITY AND CONFIDENTIALITY .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3.7.3 NON-MALEFICENCE.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3.8 RESEARCH PROCEDURE.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3.9 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY/ TRUSTWORTHINESS.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3.9.1 VALIDITY .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3.9.2 RELIABILITY.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3.10 DATA ANALYSIS.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3.11 LIMITATIONS .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3.12 CHAPTER SUMMARY .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4.0 Introduction.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4.1 Biographical profile of participants .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4.2 CHALLENGES FACED BY EMPLOYEES WITH DISABILITIES .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4.2.1 Physical and environmental barriers .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4.2.2 Attitudinal and cultural barriers .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.



4.2.3 Economic and policy barriers .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
4.2.4 Workplace exclusion.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
4.3 IMPACT OF CHALLENGES ON JOB PERFORMANCE AND JOB SATISFACTION ...	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
4.3.1 Emotional stress and mental fatigue .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
4.3.3 Missed opportunities for advancement and recognition .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
4.3.4 Job insecurity linked to economic and policy gaps.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
4.4. SUPPORT SYSTEMS FOR EMPLOYEES WITH DISABILITIES .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
4.4.1 Legislative and policy framework.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
4.4.2 Workplace accessibility and accommodations.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
4.4.3 Advocacy and awareness initiatives .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
4.4.4 Emotional and mental support .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
4.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING THE WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
4.5.1 Enhancing physical accessibility through infrastructure development .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
4.5.2. Enforcing policy implementation and monitoring .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
4.5.4 Introducing flexible work arrangements .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
4.5.5 Establishing mentorship and peer support programs .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
4.6 Conclusion .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
5.0 Introduction.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
5.1 Summary of the findings.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
5.1.1 Challenges faced by employees with disabilities .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
5.1.2 Impact of challenges on job performance and job satisfaction ..	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
5.1.3 Support systems for employees with disabilities .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
5.1.4 Recommendations for improving the workplace environment ..	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
5.2 Conclusions.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
5.4 Recommendations.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
5.4.1 Policy/programmatic recommendations.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
5.4.2. To stakeholders/partners .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
5.4.3 To the community .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
5.4.4 To social workers .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
5.5 Areas of further study .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>

5.6 Intervention model .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
5.7 Conclusion .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
REFERENCE.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
APPENDICES .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
APPENDIX 1: REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
APPENDIX 2: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
APPENDIX 3: INFORMED CONSENT FORM .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
APPENDIX 4: INTERVIEW GUIDES FOR EMPLOYEES WITH DISABILITIES. ....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
<b>Bookmark not defined.</b>	
APPENDIX 5: KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
<b>APPENDIX 6: OBSERVATION GUIDE .....</b>	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
APPENDIX 7: PLAGIARISM REPORT .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>

## List of Figures

Figure 1: Intervention model for employees with disabilities in Zimbabwe. ....	49
--	----

## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

### **1.0 Introduction**

Promoting diversity and equality in the workplace requires the inclusion of employees with disabilities, a key concern for organizations today. Even though there are laws and procedures in place to safeguard the rights of people with disabilities, many nevertheless face social discrimination at the workplace. This study seeks to understand the workplace experiences of employees with disabilities. It examines the difficulties employees face, evaluating the effectiveness of current policies and provide recommendations for enhancing workplace inclusion.

### **1.1 Background**

The World Health Organisation (2023), reports that about 16% of the global population experience significant disability. As a result, it is becoming more widely acknowledged that hiring people with disabilities is essential to organisational diversity and inclusion programs. Socialization into workplace culture signals to employees that they are valued members (Kulkarni & Lengnik-Hall, 2021). Their presence in the workplace demonstrates support for workers, particularly those with impairments. People with disabilities still face significant barriers to finding and keeping a job, even in the face of national regulations and international agreements like the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), which try to guarantee equal work opportunities. These challenges are more present in developing countries where issues such as infrastructure, limited resources and lack of awareness about disability rights persist. The purpose of this study is to investigate the experiences of employees with disability in Zimbabwe.

Zimbabwe's socioeconomic setting and changing laws pertaining to disability rights make it a special place for this study. In Zimbabwe's past, people with disabilities have been marginalized in a number of areas including the job sector. The constitution and the Disabled Person Act (Chapter 17:01) are two examples of the nation's legal system, which has measures protecting the rights of those with disabilities, especially against discrimination in the workplace. Furthermore, Zimbabwe committed to advancing equal rights for people with disabilities in 2013 when it ratified the UNCRPD. However, these policies have not been equally implemented in the public and private sectors.

As a key public institution, Harare City Council has a duty to implement disability inclusion policies and guarantee that its employees, including those with disabilities work in an environment that supports them. Nonetheless, reports suggest that employees with disabilities continue to face challenges in this environment, such as limited physical accessibility, lack of reasonable accommodations, negative attitudes from colleagues and supervisors, and inadequate opportunities for professional development, (WHO,2023). These obstacles prevent these workers from fully engaging in the workplace, which exacerbates already-existing social injustices. Understanding these difficulties is essential for identifying implementation gaps in policies and creating plans to improve the working circumstances for workers with disabilities.

Furthermore, individuals with disabilities often encounter limited opportunities for career progression, despite being employed. Maroto & Pettinicchio (2024), found that people with disabilities were approximately twice as likely as those without disabilities to experience job displacement, with heightened vulnerability during times of economic turmoil. Their professional development is further hampered by limiting constraints such as lack of adaptable technologies, inadequate training programs catered to their demands and inadequate managerial assistance. Research shows that employers who do not provide for the unique needs of employees with disabilities may see increases in absenteeism, high turnover and lower job satisfaction. These issues can be more acute in environments where resources are scarce, as is the case in Zimbabwe.

This study is particularly significant as it seeks to address the gap between policy and practice regarding the employment of people with disabilities in Zimbabwe's public sector, a challenge that has been noted by researchers such as Mizunoya and Mitra (2016) who highlighted the persistent disability employment gap in developing countries. Focusing on Harare City Council, will provide an in-depth exploration of the experiences of employees with disabilities, evaluating the extent to which workplace policies and environments comply with both national and international standards for disability inclusion. Moreover, by highlighting areas that require improvement, the study will help Zimbabwean organisations create a more welcoming working.

In summary, understanding the workplace realities of employees with disabilities is crucial for fostering an inclusive work environment that aligns with legal frameworks and promotes the professional growth and well-being of all employees, regardless of their abilities. For people with disabilities, employment is particularly important, because having a disability often means being

socially isolated (WHO, 2023). This study will provide valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities faced by employees with disabilities, contributing to the broader discourse on workplace inclusivity and disability rights in Zimbabwe.

## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

Despite the existence of Zimbabwe's Disability Rights Act and international commitments to foster inclusive workplaces, employees with disabilities still face major challenges. Research indicates that their full participation is hindered by persistent stigma and prejudice, a lack of effective support systems and physical and attitudinal barriers. employees with disabilities continue to encounter significant obstacles. Research indicates that physical and attitudinal barriers, a lack of effective support systems, and ongoing stigma and discrimination hinder their full participation. However, there is limited research on the specific experiences of these employees. This lack of insight restricts the development of targeted interventions and policies to meet the unique needs of this vulnerable group. As a result, employees with disabilities may not be able to progress in their career as much, be less satisfied with their jobs. The study seeks to fill this knowledge gap by examining the workplace realities of employees with disabilities in Zimbabwe, identifying obstacles to inclusion and guiding the development of more inclusive and supportive work environments.

## **1.3 Aim of the study**

Understand the experiences of employees with disabilities at Harare City Council.

## **1.4 Objectives**

1. To investigate the challenges faced by employees with disabilities.
2. To examine how these challenges, affect job performance and job satisfaction.
3. To assess the existing support systems available for employees with disabilities.
4. To recommend ways of improving the workplace environment for employees with disabilities.

## **1.5 Research questions**

1. What are the challenges faced by employees with disabilities?

2. What is the impact of these challenges on job performance and job satisfaction?
3. What are the existing support systems available for employees with disabilities?
4. How can the workplace environment be improved to better support employees with disabilities?

## **1.6 Justification**

The research is important for several reasons. Firstly, it will add to the existing body of knowledge by addressing a gap in research on the workplace experiences of employees with disabilities, especially within Zimbabwe's public sector. While global studies exist, there is a lack of localized research that examines how employees with disabilities manage workplace challenges in Zimbabwe. This study will offer insights that will improve future discussions on disability inclusion and workplace conditions in Zimbabwe. Policy makers and other stakeholders may find this study's findings helpful in enhancing accommodations for employees with disabilities and guaranteeing compliance with regional and international laws. The findings may influence laws to improve workplace accessibility and inclusivity for workers with impairments.

One prejudice that continues to affect people with disabilities is that they are perceived to not want to work at all (Hemphill & Kulik, 2016). For the community and participants, the study may support efforts to advocate for better workplace accommodations and improve the quality of life for employees with disabilities. The study also aligns with the Education 5.0 model by focusing on research with real-world applications for social change and community development. This research could lead to initiatives that promote workplace equality and accessibility. This study will benefit the university by contributing to curriculum development and teaching methods in fields like disability studies, social work, human resource management and public administration. It can serve as a valuable case study to educate future professionals about inclusive practices and workplace diversity, enriching the academic environment with practical insights.

## **1.7 Definition of key terms**

### **1.7.1 Workplace Realities**

According to De Lucas Ancillo et al (2020), workplace realities encompass not only the physical environment where work occurs but also the social relationships, employee interactions, creativity,

training, motivation, engagement and self-realization that define organizational life. It encompasses factors such as organizational culture, managerial practices, social dynamics, and access to resources, all of which influence an employee's sense of belonging and job satisfaction.

### **1.7.2 Employees with Disabilities**

The International Labour Organization (ILO) defines employees with disabilities as individuals who have physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments that may hinder their full and effective participation in the workplace on an equal basis with others (ILO, 2014). This broad definition includes visible and invisible disabilities, recognizing the need for workplaces to be inclusive and accessible for all types of impairments.

### **1.7.3. Workplace Environment**

Bakker and Demerouti (2019) describe the workplace environment as the physical and social conditions that characterize an organization, including factors such as lighting, ergonomic design, social support, and management practices. A supportive workplace environment promotes employee well-being, engagement, and productivity by catering to diverse employee needs.

## **1.8 Dissertation outline**

**Chapter One:** The chapter provides a structured approach for developing a dissertation, highlighting the steps to clearly define and address a research problem. It begins by establishing the importance of distinguishing between practical and research problems, stressing that research must address an unresolved issue or gap in understanding. Definitions of key terms and ethical considerations are included to ensure clarity and integrity.

**Chapter Two:** It outlines the literature reviews of the topic, reviewing existing literature on employees with disabilities. It articulates on the key concepts such as disability, workplace inclusion and accessibility, drawing on international and Zimbabwean legal frameworks.

**Chapter Three:** The methodology chapter outlines the research design, which is based on a qualitative approach focusing on City of Harare. This design is chosen to capture detailed personal experiences and workplaces realities through in-depth analysis.

**Chapter Four:** This chapter presents and analyzes the findings, starting with an overview of



participant demographics, such as the type of disability, job role and length of employment. This helps in framing the specific challenges participants face.

**Chapter Five:** The chapter interprets the findings in light of the theoretical framework and existing literature.

## **1.9 Chapter summary**

This as the opening chapter gave a background of the study as it highlighted the global and regional trends in regards to the workplace realities of employees with disabilities. The chapter also presented the statement of the problem, justification of the study, study aim, objectives of the study, research questions and definition of key terms

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.0 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter focuses on providing existing literature on employees with disabilities. Various research studies, both locally and internationally, contributed to approaching the research from different perspectives. This enabled the researcher to explore what is currently known globally about employees with disabilities in the workplace.

#### **2.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

##### **2.1.1 THE SOCIAL DISABILITY THEORY**

The Social disability model sees disability as something created by society rather than a medical or mental condition. It was developed in the 1970s by disability rights activists and later named by Michael Oliver in 1983. According to Shakespeare (2013), the social model of disability redefines disability as a social issue, emphasizing that the barriers created by society, such as discrimination, inaccessible environments and negative attitudes, are the primary factors that disable individuals. The model explains that people with impairments are excluded not because of their condition but because of barriers in society such as unfair attitudes, inaccessible environments and poor systems. It makes a clear difference between impairments which are physical or mental limitations and disabilities, which happen when society fails to include and support people with impairments. The model focuses on breaking down these barriers to make society more equitable and inclusive. This aligns with the study's purpose of identifying the challenges that employees with disabilities face in the workplace, understanding how these problems affect their involvement and advancement and developing strategies to create more inclusive environments. The social disability model transfers responsibility for inclusion from people to society and organisations, advocating for changes that enable equal opportunities for all.

##### **2.1.2 THE EMPOWERMENT THEORY**

Julian Rappaport created the empowerment theory in 1981 and this theory highlights the necessity for marginalized people or groups to take charge of their life and the institutions that impact them. According to the World Health Organisation (2015), the empowerment theory is the process through which people, organisations or communities acquire the capacity, self-assurance and

authority to decide for themselves and take charge of their lives. According to this notion, empowerment happens when people and communities are given the chance to gain the knowledge, assets and self-assurance necessary to have a positive impact on their surroundings. This approach in social work focuses on giving people the ability to access resources and have an impact on the decisions that affect them. The empowerment theory will be used in this study to determine whether or not workers with disabilities can participate in decision-making and how their empowerment can enhance their working conditions.

## **2.2. BARRIERS FACED BY EMPLOYEES WITH DISABILITIES.**

### **2.2.1 PHYSICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL BARRIERS**

Kulkarni and Gopakumar (2018), argue that globally, physical inaccessibility, such as the lack of ramps, elevators and assistive technologies, continues to exclude employees with disabilities from full participation in workplace activities. A 2022 study published in Archives of Public Health highlighted the significance of environmental factors in the participation of individuals with disabilities. The author underscored that the physical environment had by far the highest influence on disability, with transportation, toilet of dwelling and the dwelling itself being the most important factors. The United Nations' Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), emphasizes the importance of removing barriers to accessibility, noting that these barriers perpetuate exclusion and discrimination (UN,2006). Despite such frameworks, international studies reveal ongoing stigma and discriminatory practices in workplaces, particularly in developing regions.

Zimbabwe's infrastructure often remains inaccessible to people with disabilities. Many workplaces lack ramps, elevators or accessible facilities, making it difficult for employees with physical disabilities to participate fully (Mtetwa ,2019). These challenges limit their full participation and career advancement.

### **2.2.2 CULTURAL AND ATTITUDINAL BARRIERS**

Cultural beliefs and societal attitudes play a significant role in shaping workplace experiences. Traditional views often associate disability with curses, bad luck or dependence, leading to stigma and discrimination (Choruma,2007). These misconceptions affect employees with disabilities during the hiring process and in the work environment. For instance, a global study by Bruyère et

al. (2019) identifies stigma and stereotypes as pervasive challenges, particularly in industries with low diversity awareness. Gathu (2021), found that in Africa, many employees with disabilities report being overlooked for promotions or professional development opportunities due to entrenched biases and systematic inequalities. Such attitudes permeate workplaces, where employees with disabilities may face biases, exclusion and limited opportunities for advancement. In Zimbabwe, while legislation such as the Disabled Persons Act (Chapter 17:01), prohibits workplace discrimination, implementation remains limited. According to Macha and Nhemachena (2021), many employers hold negative perceptions about the productivity and reliability of employees with disabilities, resulting in limited workplace accommodation. These beliefs and misconceptions hinder inclusivity in the workplace.

### **2.2.3 ECONOMIC AND POLICY BARRIERS**

Employees with disabilities often face economic and policy barriers that hinder their workforce participation and limit their career advancement. Economically, individuals with disabilities are disproportionately affected by poverty, with limited access to financial resources needed for education, training and adaptive technologies. These financial constraints often lead to underemployment or employment in low-paying jobs. Hernandez et al (2015), notes that individuals with disabilities are often underemployed, even in countries with strong anti-discrimination laws. Inadequate anti-discrimination enforcement and insufficient workplace accommodations result in systematic marginalization. Employees with disabilities frequently face wage gaps compared to their non-disabled peers. According to Hernandez et al (2015), many employers may undervalue their contributions due to stereotypes about capacity, leading to lower salaries and fewer opportunities for raises. This creates wage disparities in workplaces. Many organisations do not have comprehensive policies that promote the hiring and retention of employees with disabilities. This can include a lack of reasonable accommodation processes, insufficient training for management on disability inclusion and limited outreach to attract disabled candidates (Hughes and Paterson, 2015). Zimbabwe's economic instability has limited resources for enforcing disability-inclusive policies and providing accommodations.

### **2.3 IMPACT OF CHALLENGES ON JOB PERFORMANCE AND SATISFACTION**

The barriers faced by employees with disabilities have significant implications for job performance and satisfaction. According to Shore et al (2018), international studies reveal that employees often

face exclusionary behaviors despite formal inclusivity policies. In regions like North America, research emphasizes the role of workplace climate in shaping these experiences. Nguyen and Le (2020), note that in Asia, cultural norms significantly influence how disability is perceived and addressed in organizational settings. In Africa, studies emphasize that employees with disabilities frequently report feelings of invisibility and marginalization due to limited representation in decision-making processes. Bruyere et al (2019), asserts that employees with disabilities who face barriers often struggle to perform at their full potential, which negatively impacts organizational outcomes. This is compound by feelings of frustration and invisibility, which further reduce job satisfaction. Ma cha and Nhemachena (2021), reveal that in Zimbabwe, the lack of workplace accommodations leads to diminished motivation and career aspirations, perpetuating cycles of marginalization.

The National Disability Policy (2021), outline measures to improve inclusion, such as promoting accessible infrastructure and raising employer awareness. Despite these efforts, Chimedza and Mutasa (2019), note that many employers the knowledge or resources to implement effective support systems, leaving employees with disabilities at a disadvantage. However, non-governmental organisations play a crucial role in bridging these gaps, providing training, advocacy and resources for employees with disabilities. This geographical gap calls for localized research to understand the interplay between cultural, economic and organizational factors in shaping workplace realities.

## **2.4 EXISTING SUPPORT SYSTEMS FOR EMPLOYEES WITH DISABILITIES**

### **2.4.1 LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY FRAMEWORK**

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) advocates for systematic changes, including accessibility audits, reasonable accommodations and anti-discrimination training. The United Nations also promotes inclusive policies through initiatives such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), particularly Goal 8 which advocates for decent work for all and recognizes the need to support employees with disabilities. In Africa, regional efforts such as the African Disability Protocol, encourages members' states to integrate disability inclusive participation into their labor frameworks. Zimbabwe has made some legislative progress towards disability inclusion. The Constitution includes provisions for the rights of people with disabilities, mandating equality and non-discrimination. According to the Zimbabwe Human

Rights Commission (2021), the National Disability Policy aims to operationalize these constitutional provisions by addressing barriers to education, employment and public participation. However, implementation lags due to limited enforcement mechanisms and resource constraints (Chimedza and Mutasa ,2018).

## **2.4.2 ADVOCACY AND AWARENESS INITIATIVES**

Grech (2021), states that non-governmental organisations play an important role of bridging gaps related to disability, providing resources and advocating for employees with disabilities. Beatty et al (2019), emphasizes the role human resources practitioners play in promoting equitable treatment through evidence-based practices. Advocacy and aware initiatives aim to educate the workforce on disability inclusion, thereby fostering understanding and empathy. Many researchers identified that many employers lack adequate knowledge about disability inclusion, which can lead to unintentional biases and barriers in the workplace. A study published in the Journal for Equity in Health (2023), underscores the importance of educational programs to bridge these knowledge gaps and promote disability inclusion. These combined efforts not only help eliminate physical, technological and attitudinal barriers but also enhance employee morale, engagement and productivity. Local disability organisations, such as the Federation of Organisations of Disabled People in Zimbabwe (FODPZ), have played a pivotal role in advocating for workplace inclusion. These organisations work to raise awareness, promote disability rights and engage employers in creating accessible and inclusive work environments (Mtetwa, 2019).

## **2.5 STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE THE WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT FOR EMPLOYEES WITH DISABILITIES**

### **2.5.1 INCLUSIVE ORGANSATIONAL PRACTICES**

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) encourages organisations to adopt inclusive practices such as accessibility audits, disability awareness training and the provision of assistive technologies (Kulkarni & Gopakumar, 2018). Research indicates that supportive workplace policies and practices can significantly enhance the experiences of employees with disabilities. Baker et al (2018), found that inclusive workplace cultures, characterized by acceptance and support for diversity, can improve job satisfaction and retention rates among employees with disabilities. Furthermore, Bourke et al (2016), argue that

organisations that actively promote inclusivity through training and awareness programs can mitigate stigma and foster a more supportive environment. Reasonable accommodation is also critical in enabling employees with disabilities to perform effectively. Harpur (2019), discusses the importance of workplace accommodation, noting that flexible work arrangements, assistive technologies and modified job responsibilities can enhance productivity and job satisfaction for employees with disabilities. Establishing psychological safety, where employees feel respected and supported is another essential strategy.

### **2.5.2 ENSURE ACCESSIBILITY AND ACCOMMODATIONS**

Physical and digital accessibility is a cornerstone of creating an equitable workplace. As noted by Hernandez et al (2015), organisations must assess and modify their physical spaces to ensure they are accessible to all employees. This includes ramps, accessible restrooms and ergonomic workstations. Additionally, digital accessibility is crucial, employers should ensure that their websites, software and communication tools are usable by individuals with disabilities (Santuzzi and Waltz, 2016). This may include screen readers, captioning services and accessible websites. Research has shown that accessible workplace design can have a significant impact on the job satisfaction and career advancement for employees with disabilities (Sanford and Milchus, 2019). Moreover, accessible workplace design can also benefit employers, as it can lead to increased productivity, reduced absenteeism and improved employee retention. Regular assessment should be conducted to identify and eliminate barriers that may hinder mobility or access to essential facilities.

### **2.5.3 CREATE SUPPORT GROUPS**

Support groups are crucial as they serve as valuable resources for both employees and employers, helping to identify barriers and propose solutions. They also create a sense of belonging among employees with disabilities. These groups provide a platform for employees with disabilities to share experiences, offer support and advocate for necessary changes within the organisation (Baldrige et al ,2016). They provide a safe space where individuals can share their experiences, challenges and triumphs, fostering a culture of inclusivity and understanding within the workplace. Support groups can provide a platform for discussing mental health challenges, offering peer support and resources. This can include sharing coping strategies, providing stress management training and promoting mental health awareness. Baldrige et al (2016), states that these groups

are crucial for fostering a sense of community and reducing feelings of isolation among employees with disabilities. Support groups act as a resource hub where employees can access information about available accommodations, health insurance benefits, legal rights and company policies related to disability and mental health. Employers can use these groups as a feedback loop to identify areas of improvement, whether it's in the accessibility of workspaces or the need for further mental health resources.

#### **2.5.4 MONITOR AND EVALUATE INCLUSION EFFORTS**

Organisations should measure the impact of their inclusion strategies. Nishii (2013), underscores the importance of tracking metrics such as recruitment, retention and promotion rates of employees with disabilities. This data driven approach ensures accountability and continuous improvement. Regular survey and focus groups can also provide insights into employees' experiences and help refine inclusion. Hernandez et al (2018), emphasize the need for organisations to not only advertise job opportunities in ways that are accessible, but also track how effectively these efforts lead to the recruitment of diverse candidates. This data helps ensure that recruitment efforts are not just focused on attracting talent but also on providing equitable opportunities for all applicants. By measuring recruitment, retention, promotion rates and regularly gathering qualitative feedback, organisations can ensure they are creating an inclusive and supportive environment for employees with disabilities.

#### **2.6 CONCLUSION**

The above chapter examined the theoretical framework, outlining its key principles and evaluating its relevance and applicability to the research. The chapter also offered a comprehensive review of existing literature related to the topic, aligned with the study's objectives



## **CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.0 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter outlined the research methods used in this study. It articulated the steps taken to understand the plight of employees with disabilities. The chapter consisted of different methodological aspects which provided a deeper understanding on how the research was conducted.

### **3.1 RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY**

The research philosophy guiding this study is rooted in interpretivism. Interpretivism is concerned with correctly determining the meanings of certain actions in the context of societal culture. Ontology concerns the nature of reality and what can be known about it. This perspective assumes that reality is subjective, socially constructed and shaped by individual experiences, interactions and contexts. In the case of employees with disabilities, their workplace realities are not fixed but are continually constructed through their interactions with colleagues, supervisors and organizational systems (Bryman,2016). These individuals may experience the workplace differently based on their specific disability, the support they receive from employers and the organizational culture in which they are embedded. Epistemologically, the interpretivist approach emphasizes understanding the meanings and interpretations individuals give to their lived experiences. According to Schwandt (2019), this approach is crucial in uncovering the personal, social and institutional factors that influence their workplace encounters, highlighting their perceptions of barriers, accommodations and support systems. Through qualitative methods such as interviews, focus groups and ethnographic observations, this study gathered in-depth data that provided insights into the subjective realities of employees with disabilities. These methods enabled the researcher to uncover the complex perspectives of individuals, which might be overlooked in more positivist approaches. The interpretivist approach allowed the researcher to have an understanding of how employees make sense of the support systems and accommodations provided by their organisations and how these experiences influence their engagement and job satisfaction. The axiology of this research supports an advocacy-oriented approach, where the research did not simply aim to understand the lived experiences of employees but also highlighted issues of inequality and proposed solutions that could contributed to positive change. By adopting a participatory approach where employees were actively involved in the research process, the study aimed to not only explore their experiences but also promote inclusivity and enhance

organizational policies and practices (Shakespeare,2014). This research philosophy facilitated the co-construction of knowledge, where employees with disabilities actively participated in shaping the findings.

### **3.2 RESEARCH APPROACH**

A research approach is the procedure selected by the researcher to collect, analyze and interpret data (Moffit 2023). The research utilized the qualitative approach with the primary aim of understanding the lived experiences of employees with disabilities within the workplace. Qualitative approach was suited for this study because it allowed the researcher to examine the subjective experiences of employees with disabilities in their work environment. This aligned with Neumann (2014), who argues that qualitative research being informed by a constructionists and interpretivists philosophical underpinnings it largely seeks to interpret the subjective experiences of the population under study in their natural environment. This approach allowed for the exploration of the diverse ways individuals interpreted their workplace realities and the challenges they faced. This was evident as the researcher gathered data from employees in their workplace environments, exploring their subjective experiences and understanding the challenges they face as individuals with disabilities in the workplace.

### **3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN**

The research design for this study was a case study, chosen to explore the workplace realities of employees. This study was appropriate because it enabled an in-depth examination of the challenges faced by employees with disabilities. By collecting data through interviews, focus groups and observations, the case study allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the personal and institutional factors influencing these employees' experiences. The design aligned with the study's interpretivist approach, emphasizing the subjective meanings and perceptions of the participants. Case studies allow researchers to explore a situation in its real-life context and can be especially useful for understanding complex issues within particular settings (Yin,2018). Ultimately, the case study aimed to uncover challenges, identify coping strategies and provide actionable recommendations for creating more inclusive and supportive work environments for employees with disabilities.

### **3.4 STUDY SETTING**

Harare City Council was chosen as the study setting for this research. The selection of this location was largely influenced by the observation that it employs a diverse workforce, including a

significant number of employees with disabilities. This presents it with many challenges in terms of accessibility, inclusion and workplace dynamics. It also provides an ideal setting to explore the experiences of employees with disabilities navigating a range of organisational and social barriers in their work environments.

### **3.5 TARGET POPULATION**

The study targeted employees with disabilities. This group was selected because they possess firsthand experiences of these employees which include challenges such as accessibility issues, stigma and discrimination and the effectiveness of accommodations. This population is ideal as they can offer in-depth, personal perspectives that align with the study's aim of exploring the workplace realities of employees with disabilities.

### **3.6 SAMPLING**

#### **3.6.1 SAMPLING TECHNIQUES**

The researcher employed a purposive sampling technique in selecting employees with disabilities who could provide relevant insights and experiences. Purposive sampling was used as a non-probability sampling technique to deliberately select participants based on specific characteristics relevant to the research objectives (Patton, 2015). In studying the workplace realities of employees with disabilities, this method ensured that only individuals with relevant experiences provided in-depth information into workplace challenges. The researcher also combined purposive sampling with convenience sampling technique in selecting participants who were available at that given time and those who were willing to participate in the study. According to Rahi (2017), convenience sampling describes the data collection process from a research population that is effortlessly reachable to the researcher. Combining these two sampling techniques helped the researcher to achieve a balance between data quality, accessibility and enhancing the reliability and applicability of the study findings.

A purposive sampling technique was employed to select key informants, including employee wellness officers, human capital managers and safety and health management officers. By selecting key informants who are directly involved in these areas, the study gathered insightful and contextual information that shed light on the research questions. This sampling technique ensured that the perspectives and experiences of these critical stakeholders are captured, providing a comprehensive understanding of the topic.

#### **3.6.2 SAMPLING SIZE**

From the target population, the researcher selected 14 employees, including 3 key informants. Due to the number of employees with disabilities at Harare City Council the researcher selected a few employees with different types of disabilities so as to acquire more information on their plight. Most employees were reporting the same problems showing a repetition of information, and this helped in ensuring that findings were reflective of the experiences of employees with disabilities.

### **3.7 DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES AND TOOLS**

For this study the researcher used in-depth interviews, observations, key informant interviews and focus group discussions as data collection methods.

#### **3.7.1 SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with employees with disabilities to gain a deeper understanding of their workplace experiences. This method allowed participants to express their perspectives freely while ensuring that key topics related to workplace accessibility, discrimination and accommodation were covered. According to DeJonckheere & Vaughn (2019), semi-structured interviews provide non-verbal cues such as body language and facial expressions which can provide valuable insights to the researcher into the thoughts and feelings of participants. In-depth interviews are essential as they explore subjective experiences of employees with disabilities. A flexible interview guide and open-ended questions were used to facilitate discussions while allowing new issues to emerge. The semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to explore the complexities of workplace experiences and gather rich and detailed data.

#### **3.7.2 OBSERVATIONS**

Non-participant observations were carried out in selected workplaces to assess accessibility, inclusivity and interactions among employees. Observations helped validate interview findings by providing firsthand insights into the physical and social environment (Yin, 2018). This method was useful in identifying practical barriers that employees might not explicitly mention in interviews. The observation focused on observing the physical environment, including ramps and accessible restrooms. By observing the workplace dynamics and physical layout, the researcher gained a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by employees with disabilities. Observations provide firsthand insights, validate interview findings and help identify practical barriers.

#### **3.7.3 KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS**

Key informant interviews were conducted with Human Capital managers, social workers from the Employee Wellness section and other disability advocates to gather opinions on workplace policies and disability inclusion. These discussions encouraged participants to interact, compare experiences and generate new insights. These interviews were useful in identifying common issues related to workplace accessibility, discrimination and support systems.

### **3.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Ethical considerations refer to the principles and guidelines to ensure that their study is conducted in a morally responsible and respectful manner.

#### **3.7.1 INFORMED CONSENT**

According to Creswell et al (2018), participants voluntarily agree to take part after being fully informed about the study's purpose, risks and benefits. Before participation, participants received a comprehensive explanation of the study's objectives, methods, potential risks and benefits. Participants were informed of their role, the possibility of emotional discomfort when sharing their experiences and how their data will be handled. They were also informed of their voluntary participation and their right to withdraw at any time without facing any penalties. This helped participants to make an informed decision about their involvement.

#### **3.7.2 ANONYMITY AND CONFIDENTIALITY**

Confidentiality and anonymity are also crucial in ensuring that participants' identities and responses are protected and used solely for research purposes (Bryman,2016). Protecting participants' privacy is important especially when dealing with sensitive information. Employees with disabilities disclosed personal workplace experiences, thus steps were taken to safeguard their identities. To maintain confidentiality, codes of pseudonyms replaced personal identities and data was securely stored to prevent unauthorized access. These measures ensured that participants felt safe in sharing their insights.

#### **3.7.3 NON-MALEFICENCE**

The principle of non-maleficence ensured that participants did not experience harm or distress as a result and of the research. The study was carefully designed to minimize any potential risks and all unnecessary precautions were taken to protect employees with disabilities from discomfort or negative consequences. Their safety and wellbeing remained a priority throughout the research. Researchers must avoid harm, both physically and psychologically, by creating a safe space for participants to share their experiences without fear of discrimination or repercussions (Flick,2018).

### **3.8 RESEARCH PROCEDURE**

The research procedure outlines the steps taken in conducting this research. The research included the following steps:

1. Bindura University of Science Education approved the researcher's topic. After this the researcher submitted the letter of approval from the university to Harare City Council requesting to conduct the research.
2. The researcher was assisted by social workers and human capital managers to schedule interviews with employees with disabilities.
3. The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with employees with disabilities after clearly explaining the purpose of the research. Key-informant interviews were also conducted.
4. Data collected was analyzed through thematic analysis and this helped in identifying patterns in meaning across data to derive themes.

### **3.9 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY/ TRUSTWORTHINESS**

#### **3.9.1 VALIDITY**

Validity refers to the extent to which the study accurately measures what it intends to measure (Creswell & Crewsell, 2018). In qualitative research validity is often assessed through credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Credibility ensured that the findings are true reflections of participant's review and validate the interpretations made by the researcher. Triangulation was used by collecting data through multiple methods, such as in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and observations, to cross-verify findings and reduce bias. Transferability was achieved by providing detailed descriptions of the study settings, participants and data collection process, allowing other researchers to determine whether the findings could be applicable in other contexts.

#### **3.9.2 RELIABILITY**

A study is considered reliable if it produces similar results when repeated under the same conditions (Creswell et al, 2018). To ensure reliability, the researcher employed several strategies to enhance the consistency and dependability of the findings. Dependability was established by maintaining a detailed record of all research processes, including data collection, coding and analysis and this ensured that the data could be replicated under similar conditions. A pilot study

was conducted before the main data collection to test the clarity and effectiveness of interview and focus group discussions, helping to refine the instruments for consistency.

### **3.10 DATA ANALYSIS**

The study employed thematic analysis to examine the data collected from employees with disabilities. Thematic analysis involves identifying patterns in meaning across a data set to derive themes (Delve et al,2020). This method involved systematically identifying and analyzing recurring themes, patterns and concepts related to workplace experiences, accessibility and inclusion. The findings were structured using thematic frameworks, ensuring that key insights were organized around the most significant themes emerging from the data. Thematic analysis enabled the researcher to uncover underlying patterns in participants' narratives, providing a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by employees with disabilities at the workplace (Nowell et al,2017). By categorizing into well-defined themes, the study presented the data in a coherent and meaningful manner, making it easier for readers to interpret. This approach allowed for the identification of both common experiences shared by most participants and unique perspectives, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the research topic (Clarke & Braun,2021). By presenting the findings in a structured and accessible manner, the study provides valuable insights into the experiences of employees with disabilities and informs strategies for promoting inclusive workplaces.

### **3.11 LIMITATIONS**

One limitation of the study was the busy work schedule of employees with disabilities, which made it difficult to conduct in-depth interviews. To address this the researcher scheduled lessons during lunch breaks or after work. Additionally, the sensitivity of the topic may have made more participants hesitant to share openly. Confidentiality and anonymity were assured to encourage honest responses.

### **3.12 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This study adopted a qualitative approach to understand the workplace realities of employees with disabilities. This chapter outlined the research design, sampling, data collection methods and analysis procedure. Measures to ensure trustworthiness and ethical considerations were discussed, along with study limitations and how they were addressed.

## CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

### 4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents, interprets, analyses and discusses the findings on a framework towards employees with disabilities in Zimbabwe. The study sought to explore the current challenges, support systems and policy frameworks surrounding employees with disabilities in Zimbabwe and to propose a strategic framework for their inclusion and empowerment in the workplace. Findings are presented according to the study's objectives with each theme supported by sub-themes.

### 4.1 Biographical profile of participants

This section outlines the biographical details of the research participants, organized in table formats. Understanding these profiles is important as it provides context for interpreting the study's findings and offers insight into the backgrounds of those involved.

#### 4.1.1 Table: Total Response Rate

	<b>Intended</b>	<b>Actual</b>
Key Informant Interviews	3	3
Semi-structured Interviews	11	11

The table above shows that there were 14 respondents in total, 3 participated as key informants and 11 were employees with disabilities.

#### 4.1.2 Table: Biographical details of key informants

<b>Key Informant</b>	<b>Experience</b>
Social worker	20
Human Capital Manager	12
Safety and Health Management officer	7

The table below shows the biographical information of the key informants which included a social worker, human capital manager and a safety officer. It shows that the social worker had 10 years'



experience, the human capital manager had 12 years' experience. Lastly, the safety and health officer had 7 years' experience in the same organisation. This shows that the key informants were experienced enough to provide the researcher with information.

#### **4.1.3 Table: Biographical details of employees with disabilities (EWD)**

<b>Identity</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Disability</b>
EWD 1	Female	Physical disability
EWD 2	Male	Visual impairment(monocular vision))
EWD 3	Female	Physical disability
EWD 4	Male	Physical disability
EWD 5	Male	Hearing impairments
EWD 6	Female	Physical disability
EWD 7	Male	Chronic illness
EWD 8	Female	Albinism
EWD 9	Male	Physical disability
EWD 10	Female	Physical disability
EWD 11	Female	Physical disability

The table shows employees with disabilities in which 6 were male and 5 were females. Although most employees have physical disabilities, these disabilities are in different forms and this makes their insight significant for the study.

## **4.2 CHALLENGES FACED BY EMPLOYEES WITH DISABILITIES**

The study unearthed a number of challenges that are faced by employees with disabilities. These include workplace exclusion, physical and environmental, attitudinal and cultural and economic and policy barriers and will be presented in detail below.

#### **4.2.1 Physical and environmental barriers**

Participants highlighted multiple challenges ranging from inaccessible physical infrastructure to negative stereotypes. Many noted that recruitment and promotion practices were discriminatory and accommodations were often overlooked by employers. Regarding this issue an employee with a 3 had this to say:

*I have to work on the ground floor because the elevator does not work. It's been like that for years and no one seems to be in a hurry to fix it. It limits what I can do and I feel cut off from the rest of the team. Even if we complain about these issues, we are just given promises but right now the elevators are not even working.*

The same sentiments were echoed by the second employee 4:

*Disability issues are treated as optional. Management often says, "We are struggling to meet payroll, how can we afford ramps or special equipment". There is also little awareness of the legal obligations. Acts and policies are there but they are not backed by any serious monitoring or support system.*

The study brought out that the workplace is not just unprepared but it is often indifferent to the needs of employees with disabilities. The problem is not just a broken elevator, but the lack of urgency in addressing accessibility issues. It reflects a deeper organizational culture that does not prioritize inclusion. From the above quotes, it becomes apparent that institutional ignorance, inaccessible infrastructure and unclear communication channels significantly hinder the participation of employees with disabilities. Employees with disabilities are forced to use accommodations that were not built with their needs in mind, which not only affects their productivity but also their sense of belonging in the workplace. These findings support the social model of disability which shifts the focus from impairment to society's failure to remove barriers and provide enabling environments. These findings align with Kulkarni et al (2018), who argues that physical inaccessibility such as lack of ramps, elevators and assistive technologies, continues to exclude employees with disabilities from full participation in workplace activities. The person-

environment theory also suggests that job performance and satisfaction are influenced by how well the work environment aligns with the individual's physical and psychological needs. The consequences of these barriers are not only physical, but also emotional and psychological. Employees report feelings of exclusion and discouragement, which can lead to disengagement from their work. In applying the capabilities approach, it asserts that having employment is not enough. What matters is the individual's ability to function effectively and to make choices that lead to well-being and dignity. When systems fail to provide necessary accommodations or when processes are so complicated that employees are discouraged from applying, they are robbed of their full capabilities. As a result, employment becomes a site of survival, rather than empowerment. These findings reinforce the need to shift institutional mindsets, simplify processes and invest in infrastructure and training.

#### **4.2.2 Attitudinal and cultural barriers**

Participants also described negative attitudes from clients and colleagues, ranging from pity and overprotection to outright discrimination.

Employee 5 stated:

*When I first joined the council my team avoided assigning me certain tasks assuming I would not manage. I had to prove myself over and over.*

In light with above Employee 6 uttered:

*Some clients refuse to be served by me when they see that I have a disability. One woman even said, "Hapana mumwe here anogona kundibatsira asiri imimi", (Is there someone else who can help me). It was painful, but I have heard comments like that more than once. They assume I'm not capable just because I have a physical disability.*

Key Informant 2 expressed:

*Some colleagues still believe that employing persons with disabilities is a form of charity, not a recognition of skills. There are still many myths around disability and these attitudes are a big barrier to inclusion. Vanhu ava vanotoshanda kunge vamwe vese asi vanotarisirwa pasi munzvimbo zhinji (Do these people work like other able bodies people but they are looked down upon in many areas).*

These statements demonstrate how cultural beliefs and stigma continue to hinder full inclusion. Attitudinal barriers also create invisible walls around people with disabilities. These beliefs limit opportunities and contribute to emotional distress. Bruyère et al. (2019) identify stigma and stereotypes as pervasive challenges, particularly in industries with low diversity awareness. These attitudes not only affect social cohesion in the workplace but also have mental health implications for the employees involved. They contrast with the inclusive values promoted by the UNCRPD, which calls for a shift in public attitudes as a key component of inclusion. The evidence presented strongly suggests that the challenges faced by employees with disabilities are rooted in structural and systematic failures, not personal deficits. Negative stereotypes and misinformed assumptions can create a hostile work environment, leading to stress, burnout and disengagement. This reinforces the need to shift institutional mindsets, simplify processes and invest in infrastructure and training. Without such intervention, the inclusion of people with disabilities will remain a symbolic gesture rather than a lived reality. The social model of disability helps understand that the disabling factor is not the impairment itself, but the societal structures and attitudes that create barriers. Attitudinal barriers are just as disabling as a lack of physical access. The invisible nature of attitudinal discrimination makes it even more insidious, as it often goes unaddressed and unchallenged contributing to a workplace culture of exclusion. Attitudinal and cultural barriers are not simply individual prejudices but are entrenched in broader social norms and organisational cultures. For inclusion to occur, there must be a deliberate shift in mindset, supported by training, policy enforcement and the active participation of people with disabilities in shaping workplace norms. According to Macha and Nhemachena (2021), many employers hold negative perceptions about the productivity and reliability of employees with disabilities, resulting in limited workplace accommodation. These beliefs and misconceptions hinder inclusivity in the workplace.

#### **4.2.3 Economic and policy barriers**

A number of participants highlighted that poor implementation of inclusive labor policies, limited economic incentives for employers and the cost of assistive technology as critical barriers.

Employee 2 remarked:

*I had to purchase my own assistive tool. I tried using my medical aid but it had shortfalls. I then tried to acquire funds from the company through the employee wellness section but the funds could not cover all of the hospital bills. It was costly but I had no choice.*

On the same note employee 4 added:

*Even though the policy says the workplace must be inclusive, there is no follow-up or enforcement. Some of the employees with disabilities are even included in meetings to address our needs but no action is taking place everything is just on paper.*

Key Informant 3 expressed:

*One of the biggest barriers we see in the field is the mismatch between policy and practice. Yes, we have national disability policies and labor regulations that speak to inclusion but these are not being effectively implemented. There are no real monitoring mechanisms in place and as a result many employers see inclusion as optional rather than mandatory. There is need for policy implementation that is backed by enforcement and funding because financial constraints is the major problem we face and this hinders accessibility in the workplace.*

The disconnection between policy and practice highlights the inadequacy of existing frameworks. While laws and conventions may recognize the rights of persons with disabilities, their effectiveness depends on enforcement, resource allocation and awareness especially in developing economies. The systems theory supports this highlighting how systematic inequality, economic oppression and unjust policies affect individuals with disabilities. Participants' testimonies show that cost-related issues disproportionately burden employees with disabilities who may already face economic marginalization. Requiring them to fund their own workplace accommodations not only violates their rights but also entrenches inequality. Economic and policy barriers often stem from systemic neglect and limited political will. Zimbabwe's ratification of UNCRPD is a step in the right direction, but without a disability specific employment quota or financial incentives for employers, compliance remains voluntary and rare. According to Mitra (2018), economic inclusion of persons with disabilities is not just a social justice issue, it is an economic imperative. Inclusive workplaces have been shown to improve productivity, innovation and team performance. However, without state support and policy enforcement, companies are unlikely to bear the costs of accommodation. Thus, advocacy must target both policy reform and organisational accountability.

#### **4.2.4 Workplace exclusion**

Workplace exclusion remains a critical barrier to job satisfaction for employees with disabilities. Despite efforts to promote inclusion, many employees continue to face persistent forms of exclusion, from inaccessible team activities to being overlooked in decision making.

In light with this, employees 4 had this to say:

*Sometimes I feel like I am just here to do a task not to be part of the team. I am often left out of informal discussions or team outings because they are held in places I can't easily access. It makes me feel invisible and that really affects how motivated I am to come to work.*

Key informant 2 added:

*We have noticed that some employees with disabilities report feeling left out of both formal and informal workplace interactions. While this is not always intentional, we realize now that without inclusive planning and communication, exclusion becomes systematic. We are now revisiting our team engagement strategies to ensure everyone feels involved and valued.*

Key informant 3 had this to say:

*It's easy to assume that everyone is comfortable or able to participate in team activities., but that's not often the case. I have come to realize that unless we actively check in with staff about accessibility needs and preferences, employees end up feeling overlooked and isolated which then affects morale and engagement.*

The responses above reflect that workplace exclusion affects employees with disabilities. It leads to a low job satisfaction. This exclusion often manifests through inaccessible social activities, lack of consultation or being left out in informal networks. Lindsay et al (2019), states that exclusion in the workplace has a significant negative impact on both emotional well-being and professional development for people with disabilities. It reduces opportunities for collaboration, visibility and belonging and this leads to lower morale and higher turnover intentions. Exclusion also undermines one of the core component of job satisfaction. According to Shore et al (2019), inclusion goes beyond mere presence, it involves being treated as an insider, with equal access to influence and participation. When employees with are not included in meetings, decision making and casual team-building events, it communicates that their presence is peripheral rather than integral. Team events that require physical exertion, inaccessible venues or last- minute planning

with no accommodation exclude employees with disabilities. Workplace inclusion, whether intentional or not, is a significant barrier to employees with disabilities. The problem worsens when managers and coworkers are not trained to recognize exclusionary practices.

### **4.3 IMPACT OF CHALLENGES ON JOB PERFORMANCE AND JOB SATISFACTION**

The challenges faced by employees with disabilities, as discussed in the previous section, have profound implications on their job performance and overall job satisfaction.

#### **4.3.1 Emotional stress and mental fatigue**

Discriminatory attitudes, biases and workplace stigma are significant sources of emotional strain for workers with disabilities.

Employee 4 expressed:

*I have had colleagues ask me if I'm sure I'm capable of doing certain tasks. It's demoralizing and makes me feel like I'm not valued. Some even say I didn't expect you to do that task so well.*

Employee 10 added:

*Sometimes the hardest part is not the physical barriers but it is how people look at you and treat you like you are less capable. It wears you down mentally. I go home feeling drained not because of the work itself but because I constantly have to prove that I belong here.*

Key informant 1 shared:

*We have seen that many employees with disabilities don't just struggle with access but with how they are perceived in the workplace. The lack of confidence from colleagues or the tendency to exclude them from key roles creates a silent pressure. Overtime, it leads to emotional exhaustion even when they are performing well.*

Attitudinal barriers such as discrimination, stigma and low expectations from colleagues or supervisors, can cause significant emotional strain and mental fatigue for employees with disabilities. These findings illustrate the emotional toll of attitudinal barriers on employees with disabilities. The lack of trust and respect from colleagues can lead to feelings of demoralization and decreased job satisfaction. This emotional burden leads to mental fatigue, burnout, isolation and sometimes withdrawal from team engagement. The responses also highlight how

discriminatory attitudes, biases and stigma in the workplace are often more emotionally affecting employees than physical barriers. It shows the emotional toll of being constantly scrutinized and treated as less capable and thus causes mental exhaustion from trying to prove their worth. This aligns with Kattari et al (2020), who argue that internalized stigma and systematic macroaggressions against people with disabilities in professional environments contribute to chronic emotional distress and lower workplace engagement. Colleagues may not intentionally exclude these employees but unconscious biases can influence decisions. This exclusion can be as harmful as direct discrimination. When people are routinely left out or overlooked, they begin to internalize that they are not truly part of the team. This sense of isolation can reduce motivation, hinder performance and contribute to emotional exhaustion even when the employee is skilled and capable.

#### **4.3.2 Reduced productivity**

Physical barriers in the workplace can lead to reduced productivity for employees with disabilities

Employee 1 stated:

*I have to spend so much time navigating the office, it's exhausting. Sometimes I feel like I am already tired before I even start.*

Employee 11 added:

*The broken elevator has been a huge challenge for me. I have to take the stairs which is really tough with my mobility impairment.*

Key Informant remarked:

*Some areas in the organisation are outdated and are in need of urgent updates. The elevator issue is something we have flagged but due to budget constraints, repairs have been delayed. We need to review accessibility policies and seek staff input to ensure that the environment supports all employees equitably.*

It is apparent from the above responses that physical and emotional toll of navigating an inaccessible workplace. When essential facilities like elevators are not functioning, employees may need to find alternative solutions, which can be time-consuming and stressful. These barriers go beyond basic movement, they affect rest, comfort and even emergency safety. Being forced to



use stairs with a mobility impairment introduces safety concerns and exacerbate physical strain, further compromising their ability to perform. These everyday barriers signal a broader organisational oversight where physical accessibility remains a reactive consideration rather than a proactive priority. Sharma et al (2020), highlights that inclusive infrastructure should be seen not as a compliance issue, but as a core component of workplace equity. Physical design is intertwined with social inclusion and if employees with disabilities must constantly adapt to inaccessible conditions, it signals their outsider status and weakens their ability to contribute meaningfully. Regular accessibility audits, staff input in design decisions and long term investment in universal design principles are critical to ensure sustained inclusivity. Physical barriers do more than just hinder mobility but they perpetuate exclusion by placing an added burden on employees with disabilities that their colleagues do not face. An inclusive workplace must anticipate the needs of employees focusing on accessibility into the core of infrastructure planning and daily operations. When accessibility is prioritized, all employees are empowered to contribute fully and organisation benefit fully from a more engaged and productive workforce.

#### **4.3.3 Missed opportunities for advancement and recognition**

Employees with disabilities often face unconscious bias or lack of accommodations in training programs, leading to missed opportunities for advancement and recognition.

Employee 9 stated:

*I have been interested in taking on more leadership roles, but I have been told that I have been told that I am not ready or that it is not feasible given my disability. It's frustrating to feel like my abilities are being judged based on my disability rather than my skills and experience.*

Employee 7 added:

*I have been excluded from team building activities that were not physically accessible. I also feel like I get overlooked for leadership roles because there is this unspoken assumption that I might not cope with the pressure or responsibilities.*

Key informant 2 had this to say:

*We are aware that leadership development programs and team activities may not have always fully inclusive. It may not have been intentional but the impact has been significant. As a result,*

*there is need for making adjustments to ensure employees have equitable access to growth and leadership opportunities. Some employees have been promoted before and the organisation is working on engaging other employees with disabilities to these leadership opportunities.*

The experiences by employees reveal a pattern of systematic exclusion from advancement and recognition opportunities in the workplace, often rooted in unconscious bias and structural inaccessibility. Inaccessible team-building activities shows how informal spaces of professional development are not equally available to all employees, further creating gaps recognition and growth. Shore et al (2019), states that organisations often highlight selective inclusion where employees with disabilities are accepted in supportive roles but implicitly excluded from leadership or high pressure positions. This kind of selective inclusion often stems from subtle stereotypes. These assumptions erode trust and reinforce workplace hierarchies that position disabled employees as less capable regardless of their actual performance. Through the lens of empowerment theory, advancement opportunities are essential for developing a sense of agency and self-efficacy. When these are systematically withheld, employees with disabilities may internalize feelings of inadequacy which can lead to disengagement, lower job satisfaction and eventually attrition. A workplace that empowers all employees must actively dismantle barriers to advancement by offering accessible leadership training, mentorship, sponsorship programs and visible representation of people with disabilities in decision making roles. Organisations should audit their promotion and recognition practices, ensure that team-building and leadership training are accessible and actively challenge internal biases about who can lead.

#### **4.3.4 Job insecurity linked to economic and policy gaps**

The absence of robust policy enforcement, lack of job protection and economic constraints can create job insecurity for employees with disabilities.

Employees with disability 7 had this to say:

*I am always worried about losing my job because my disability might impact my productivity. It is stressful and makes it hard to plan for the future.*

Employee with disability 1 added:

*I feel like I have to work twice as hard just to prove I am worth keeping. There's this fear that if budgets get tight, I will be the first to go. It's hard to feel secure when you know your rights are not protected.*

Key informant 3 expressed:

*Job insecurity among employees with disabilities is a pressing issue. While we are compliant with employment legislation, enforcement and workplace protection can still fall short in practice.*

From the above responses it is clear that there is a profound sense of job insecurity. This is due to the absence of strong policy enforcement and protections. The fear that disability may negatively influence job security is not unfounded. Research by Chan et al (2020), indicates that despite legislative protection, there remain a significant implementation gap particularly during organisational restructuring or economic downturns. In such cases, employees with disabilities are disproportionately affected by layoffs because employers usually perceive them as higher cost. This perception is rooted more in bias than in fact. According to ILO (2020), workers with disabilities are more likely to be employed in lower-wage, less secure jobs and less likely to benefit from contracts with protections like paid sick leave, reasonable accommodations, or health benefits. While policies may exist, without proper training and awareness job insecurity will persist. Addressing this issue requires organisations to go beyond surface level compliance and disability inclusive frameworks into their human resource strategies. This includes formalized commitments to reasonable accommodations and clear communication channels that allow employees with disabilities to voice concerns without fear. Job insecurity among employees with disabilities is rooted in both economic vulnerability and policy failure. Unless organisations commit to fully operationalizing inclusion, not just in paper but in culture and practice, employees with disabilities will continue to bear the burden of stress, uncertainty and workplace marginalization.

#### **4.4. SUPPORT SYSTEMS FOR EMPLOYEES WITH DISABILITIES**

An evaluation of current support systems revealed that while some organisations have policies in place to support employees with disabilities, the implementation and effectiveness of these systems vary significantly.

##### **4.4.1 Legislative and policy framework**

Legislative and policy frameworks provide critical support for employees with disabilities by establishing clear guidelines and standards for inclusion.

Regarding this Employees with disability 7 stated:

*We do have policies on paper ergonomic support and accessible facilities, but how consistently they are applied depend on the supervisor in charge. The organisation recently updated its inclusion policy, which now emphasizes physical and cognitive disabilities. It is a step in the right direction.*

Employee with disability 8 expressed frustration on the same issue:

*There is a disability inclusion policy but many employees don't even know it exists. Awareness is just as important as having it in place.*

Key informant 3 had this to say:

*Our organisations has implemented several disability-inclusive policies. The organisation tries to provide reasonable accommodation in line with legal standards, however due to financial constraints, sometimes it is difficult to provide everything effectively. The organisation also has a formal accommodation request process that ensures confidentiality and timely response.*

Even where policies exist, lack of awareness and enforcement mechanisms often dilute their effectiveness. The responses above point to a gap between policy design and execution. Policy effectiveness is described as inconsistent and dependent on individual's supervisors suggesting a lack of enforcement. The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities outlines the necessity for states and institutions to ensure the full realization of rights through concrete support systems. Low awareness among staff highlights a critical flaw because policies cannot serve their purpose if the very people they are designed to protect or implement are unaware of them. As supported by the International Labor Organisation (ILO,2015), successful inclusion requires not only clear policies but also robust communication, awareness training and accessible dissemination of information across all levels of the organisation. While resources constraints are valid concerns, they must not become excuses for minimal compliance. Instead organisations are encouraged to prioritize reasonable accommodations as emphasized in article 27 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which mandates full and active participation

in the workplace. Without accountability, awareness and consistent application, even the most well-crafted policies may not address their intended issues.

#### **4.4.2 Workplace accessibility and accommodations**

The physical and technological accessibility of the workplace remains a cornerstone of support for employees with disabilities.

Employee with disability 6 had this to say:

*Many people believe that as long as there is a ramp or a lift, the workplace is accessible; nevertheless, this is only the surface. What about being able to join meetings in rooms set aside for everyone? What about software that works with screen readers, or appropriate signage for people with visual impairments? Accessibility should be incorporated into all levels of the organisation, not simply the entry. Too frequently, I feel as if I'm navigating a space that wasn't designed for me, which affects not only my productivity but also how included I feel.*

Employee with disability 11 added:

*Due to persistent weariness, I sought a little schedule adjustment, not a reduction in hours, but rather a shift. However, it turned into an entire bureaucratic process. My manager had to gain approval from their supervisor, and then HR had to approve the request, so I felt like I was continually defending my situation. It was eventually accepted, but only after a series of difficult confrontations. I kept questioning why flexibility was such a huge deal when it would obviously help me accomplish my job better. The pushback made me question the organization's commitment to inclusivity.*

Key Informant 3 uttered:

*One of the biggest challenges is consistency. Some departments are very proactive in responding to accommodation requests, while others lack awareness or delay the process due to bureaucracy and unfamiliarity with policies. The organisation is working hard to bridge this gap by training other employees, streamlining the accommodation request process and encouraging a culture of openness where employees feel comfortable disclosing their needs.*

The quotes highlight that while physical infrastructure like ramps and lifts exist, true workplace accessibility goes far beyond that. Employees emphasize the need for inclusive meeting spaces,

accessible technology, and flexible policies that don't require excessive justification. The inconsistency across departments and bureaucratic hurdles in securing accommodations reflect a gap between policy and practice. As the key informant notes, efforts are being made to address this through training and streamlining processes, but the lived experiences of employees suggest that more proactive and holistic approaches are needed to foster genuine inclusion. According to Shore et al (2021), points out that when accessibility is treated as an afterthought, the result in a workplace that may technically comply with legal standards but fails to promote equitable participation. This disconnect leads to feelings of exclusion and reduced morale as highlighted by the responses above. Providing reasonable accommodations are critical for employees with disabilities to perform their job duties effectively. By providing reasonable accommodations, employers can promote inclusion, improve employee productivity and reduce turnover.

#### **4.4.3 Advocacy and awareness initiatives**

Advocacy and awareness initiatives aims to educate the workforce on disability inclusion, thereby fostering understanding and empathy.

Employees with disability 8 had this to say:

*The disability policy was amended last year and some of the employees with disabilities represented us. We also had a meeting last year at Jameson hotel where we were given the platform to bring out issues that need redress. It was good as it helped me to connect with others who understand what I am going through. It was a good space to share and learn.*

Employee with disability 3 added:

*Pakupihwa rubatsiro kubva kuCompany tinopihwa apo neapo. Inini semunhu anorara mealbinism ndomboshurungurudzika nemaziso neganda. Pamwe tonzi tirikupihwa mafuta anotibatsira paganda redu asi hapasi pese. Kushaya mafuta aya kunombonditadzisa kuenda kubasa uye maziso zvekare anomborwadza zvekuti unotoona kuti kurova kubasa kunenge kurinani. Dai tichigara tichibatsirwa necompany handifunge kuti taimbonetseka. (The company assists occasionally it's not consistent. As a person with albinism I usually suffer from visual impairments and skin problems. We receive sunscreen oil here and there from the organisation. Lack of these oils results in skipping work sometimes because of the pain I experience and sometimes my eyes hurt that I*

*end up deciding to spend the day at home instead of working. If the company was consistent in providing us the things we need, I do not think we would face any difficulties.)*

Key informant 2 stated:

*We provide training to other employees but there's definitely room for improvement. We currently offer annual inclusion and diversity training that includes a section on disability awareness. However, based on employee feedback, this needs to be more detailed and scenario-based.*

Advocacy and awareness initiatives play a crucial role in supporting employees with disabilities by fostering a more inclusive, informed and emphatic workplace culture. The responses from employees underscore the growing importance of advocacy and awareness initiatives in building a supportive work environment for employees with disabilities. These initiatives when effectively implemented foster a culture of inclusion. Employee 8's reflection reveals the value of representation and dialogue spaces. Participation in the policy amendment process and forums like the Jameson Hotel meeting not only gave employees with disabilities a voice but also created a platform for peer connection. engagement enhances not only policy relevance but also the sense of belonging and empowerment among employees. In contrast, Employee 3's quote exposes gaps in practical and consistent support, particularly for individuals with specific conditions such as albinism. The occasional provision of sunscreen and visual support tools is inadequate and results in real occupational disadvantages, missed work, pain, and isolation. This highlights the disconnect that can exist between advocacy intentions and material follow-through. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2015), effective disability support requires predictability and sustainability, not one-off or symbolic gestures. It is evident that inclusion training exists but it remains too generic and lacks depth.

#### **4.4.4 Emotional and mental support**

Disability in the workplace is not only about accommodation and policies, it also includes aspects such as mental health. Emotional support, empathy and psychological safety were strongly highlighted in employees' narratives.

Employees with disability 2 highlighted on this issue:

*I am not aware of any support groups. If there is a support group, it is not well promoted. Most of us with disabilities feel pretty isolated.*

Employee 8 added:

*We sometimes meet with other employers and discuss about issues that affect us. Honestly it feels more symbolic than supportive. There's not much follow-up discussions we have or the initiatives we propose. I think the company is acknowledging the importance of disability inclusion, but it is not enough to have a group that meets occasionally. We have made recommendations for change that would benefit employees with disabilities but they are not implemented.*

Key Informant 1 had this to say:

*We have an Employee Resource Group (ERG) for persons with disabilities, which operates across several offices. It offers peer support, organizes events during Disability Awareness Month, and also functions as an advisory group to management. We are in the early stages of piloting a mentorship program that pairs new hires with more experienced staff who have navigated similar challenges. We're also exploring more structured leadership pathways for employees with disabilities.*

From the above narratives reveal an urgent need for genuine emotional support, meaningful engagement and psychological safety. The feeling of isolation underscores the absence of structured emotional support systems. The lack of awareness or promotion of support groups suggests a communication gap and a failure to integrate such initiatives into the broader organisational culture. Lack of follow-up discussions contribute to emotional exhaustion and reinforce workplace exclusion especially when employees feel their feedback is dismissed or ignored (Foster, 2019). Mentorship improves productivity and builds confidence. Such programs also promote leadership development and career progression, essential for sustainable inclusion. However, a key tension remains between the existence of these initiatives and how accessible, inclusive and impactful they truly are. If employees are unaware of support groups or feel that group efforts are not taken seriously then the structures are not functioning as intended. Lindsay (2021), argues that many inclusion programs fail due to weak internal communication, limited follow-up and inadequate disability specific training for staff.

#### **4.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING THE WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT**



The final purpose of the research was to identify ways of improving the workplace for employees with disabilities in Zimbabwe

#### **4.5.1 Enhancing physical accessibility through infrastructure development**

Many employees with disabilities cited physical barriers as a key contributor to their daily struggles at work. While accessibility policies may exist, the implementation gap remains significant

In line with this employee 5 had this to say:

*Every day I have to ask for assistance to get up the stairs because the elevator has been out of service for years. I recommend that companies invest in consistent maintenance. Accessibility should be functional not symbolic.*

Employee 6 added:

*I believe one of the most impactful improvements would be to ensure that accessibility is considered in every aspect of the workplace, from physical infrastructure to digital tools. This includes things like adjustable desks, accessible restrooms, ramps, screen/ reader friendly software and quiet workplaces for those with sensory sensitivities. More importantly, inclusion should be built into the culture, not just the facilities. Employees with disabilities should be involved in conversations about policy and planning.*

Employee 9 highlighted the following:

*The workplace should ensure that all areas are fully wheelchair accessible, including meeting rooms, kitchens and emergency exits. Automatic doors, lowered switches and accessible parking are critical. Regular audits should be consulted to ensure that accessibility standards are not only met but maintained over time.*

The responses from the employees above highlight the significance of enhancing physical accessibility in the workplace through infrastructure development. The employees' experiences reveal that physical barriers such as broken elevators and inaccessible facilities can significantly impact their daily lives. To address this issue, companies should prioritize consistent maintenance and ensure that accessibility is considered in every aspect of the workplace, including physical infrastructure and digital tools. According to the social model of disability, disability is not caused

by the individual's impairment but rather by the societal barriers that prevent them from fully participating. In line with this, Kulkarni (2019), emphasizes the importance of involving employees with disabilities in conversations about policy and planning to ensure that needs are met. This aligns with the empowerment theory which emphasizes active participation, control and the capacity of marginalized individuals to influence systems that affect their lives. The inaccessibility of spaces, tools and planning processes reflects a disabling environment. Organisations must shift from tokenistic compliance to functional accessibility, involving employees with disabilities in designing solutions that address their experiences. By embedding accessibility into the core of workplace planning, employers not only improve productivity and retention but also foster a more just and inclusive labor market.

#### **4.5.2. Enforcing policy implementation and monitoring**

Despite disability inclusion policies being available in Zimbabwe, inconsistent implementation leaves many employees unsupported. Employee 11 said the following:

*Sometimes I hear about disability-friendly policies from management. There's no clarity on how they are used or who qualifies for what. I suggest regular staff meetings or newsletters that share updates about policies and how to access support.*

Employee 7 stated:

*They assume the policy works because no one complains but we are tired. I think there should be regular anonymous surveys where we can give feedback on accessibility and how policies are being followed. There is need for clear enforcement guidelines like having inclusion indicators on the supervisor's performance appraisal. That would motivate them to actually follow the rules.*

Employee 8 added:

*There's a disability inclusion policy in our company but it feels more like checklist than something that actually protects us. For example, during training or staff retreats, there are no adjustments for people like me who have visual impairment. I always have to advocate for myself every time. I think inclusion should be automatic not something we have to beg for. They should involve us when drafting and reviewing policies because we know our needs better than anyone.*

These statements point to a significant implementation gap between formal policy and lived experiences. While Zimbabwe may have ratified progressive disability frameworks and workplace inclusion strategies, their failure to translate into actionable practices renders them ineffective. They highlight the importance of consistent policy implementation and monitoring in supporting employees with disabilities. Despite having policies in place, inconsistent implementation can leave employees feeling unsupported and demotivated. A lack of policy enforcement perpetuates exclusion by allowing inaccessible spaces and discriminatory attitudes. According to Kulkarni (2019), organisations need to ensure that their policies are not just written but also implemented and monitored consistently to create a truly inclusive work environment. The lack of consistent implementation can be attributed to various factors, including lack of training, inadequate resources and lack of accountability. To address this issue, organisations need to prioritize training and education on disability inclusion policies, allocate adequate resources to support employees with disabilities and establish clear accountability mechanisms. Organisations can create a more inclusive and support work environment that values diversity and promotes employee well-being by ensuring consistent policy implementation and monitoring. Applying the empowerment theory is essential as effective policy monitoring is not just a managerial duty but it is a tool of empowerment. It fosters accountability, transparency and a sense of belonging among employees with disabilities, affirming that their rights are both recognized and protected. Without regular audits, feedback loops and consequences for non-compliance, employees remain vulnerable to marginalization even in legally compliant organisations.

#### **4.5.3 Promoting an inclusive culture through training and awareness**

Creating a truly inclusive workplace goes beyond physical infrastructure or policy but also requires a fundamental shift in attitudes, awareness and daily behavior. Many employees with disabilities emphasized that cultural inclusion remains one of the most neglected yet impactful aspects of workplace equity.

Employees 10 had this to say:

*Mandatory disability inclusion training for all employees would help build empathy and understanding. This should include awareness around both visible and invisible disabilities, appropriate language and etiquette and practical strategies for being inclusive teammates. It*

*would also be beneficial to have panels where employees with disabilities can voluntarily share their experiences. This personal connection often has a deeper impact than any manual.*

Employee 1 added:

*An inclusive training should be rolled out in every department, not just during inductions for new employees. This should include unconscious bias training related to disabilities, inclusive language workshops and practical guidance on how to support person with disabilities in everyday situations.*

Employee 4 shared the following:

*Sometimes people talk around me or exclude me from conversations because they do not know how to interact with me. I recommend disability awareness workshops at least twice a year so people learn how to communicate better.*

These narratives underscore the emotional and psychological burden that comes with being consistently misunderstood or excluded in everyday professional interactions. The issue is not just about ignorance but about systematic underinvestment in training that supports inclusivity. According to Kulkarni (2019), disability awareness training can help to reduce stigma and promote inclusion in the workplace. Organisations should create a more inclusive and supportive work environment that value diversity and promotes employee well-being by providing regular training and awareness programs. From the perspective of the social model of disability, such exclusion is not an individual issue but a structural failure of the environment to adapt to all members. The empowerment theory also supports these training initiatives as a way of shifting power and giving employees with disabilities the opportunity to influence workplace culture by sharing lived experiences and leading awareness programs. Therefore, beyond induction sessions, organisations should embed continuous disability inclusion education into their annual programming. They should also offer platforms for peer learning, involve employees with disabilities in training design and set measurable outcomes for improved attitudes and inclusive behaviors. Doing so will not only improve morale and engagement for employees with disabilities but will build a workplace culture that genuinely reflects values of equity, diversity and inclusion.

#### **4.5.4 Introducing flexible work arrangements**

Flexibility emerged as a top recommendation especially for employees managing chronic conditions and those requiring frequent medical appointments.

Employee 7 had the following to say:

*When I am unwell, I feel guilty for asking g to work from home. I think flexible hours and remote work policies would reduce pressure and also promote productivity.*

Key Informant 1 added:

*Flexible work arrangements are essential for employees with chronic conditions and disabilities. It allows them to manage their health and work in a way that is productive and sustainable for them.*

Employee 10 had this to say:

*I recommend that the company consider flexible start and end times, as well as remote work options. This would allow employees to better manage their work-life balance and reduce stress.*

The above responses highlight the importance of flexible work arrangements in supporting employees with disabilities. Flexible work arrangements, such as remote work policies and flexible hours can help reduce pressure and promote productivity. From the social model of disability perspective, barriers like rigid scheduling are socially constructed and prevent full participation in the workplace. Flexibility is therefore necessary accommodation to dismantle such systematic limitations. The empowerment theory supports workplace autonomy asserting that when employees are given control over how they manage their tasks and times, it leads to increased self-efficacy and ownership of their roles. The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), under Article 27 emphasizes the right to work on an equal basis with others, including access to reasonable accommodation at the workplace. Flexible work arrangements are a direct expression of this principle and a concrete way to promote equity and retain talent within organisations. Thus, flexibility should not to be treated as a privilege granted at discretion, but rather as a structured, formalized policy integrated into broader diversity and inclusion strategies.

#### **4.5.5 Establishing mentorship and peer support programs**

Employees shared the need for platforms to share their experiences and support each other beyond formal grievance procedures.

Employee 4 shared the following:

*When I joined, I had no one to talk to about my challenges. I recommend a mentorship group where we can talk about how to cope and support each other at work.*

Employee 6 added:

*Peer support systems can empower employees by validating their experiences, fostering resilience and guiding newcomers. These programs are more effective when led by employees with disabilities, as they create psychological safe spaces to address challenges without fear of judgment.*

Employee 7 had this to say:

*It took me years to learn how to request accommodations and understand my rights. If there had been a mentorship program with senior employees with disabilities, I could have avoided a lot of stress. These programs should be formal, not just left to chance.*

Mentorship and peer support are powerful tools for inclusion, especially for historically marginalized groups such as people with disabilities. When designed and implemented effectively, these initiatives promote emotional resilience, reduce turnover and build collective agency. They also improve retention, enhance skills development and offers emotional support. Peer support systems can empower employees by validating their experiences, fostering resilience and guiding newcomers. These programs are more effective when led by employees with disabilities, as they create psychological safe spaces to address challenges without fear of judgement. They offer an alternative to traditional grievance mechanism, which are often seen as intimidating. Baldrige et al (2016), states that these groups are crucial for fostering a sense of community and reducing feelings of isolation among employees with disabilities. He argues that informal social networks when consciously shaped to be inclusive can compensate for structural deficiencies in formal policy or leadership engagement. These networks foster the development of social capital and this helps employees with disabilities navigate career advancement and institutional culture. Formalizing mentorship and peer support systems particularly those led by individuals with lived

experiences creates safe spaces, builds capacity and enhances inclusion in tangible, human-centered ways.

## **4.6 Conclusion**

This chapter presented and analyzed the data derived from interviews which focused on understanding employee with disabilities. The key findings highlight persistent structural and attitudinal barriers, weak institutional support and a shared vision among stakeholders for a more inclusive, regulated and accountable employment framework. The integration of participant voices and literature reinforces the need for a shift from tokenism to inclusion.

## **CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.0 Introduction**

This chapter outlines the summary of findings, conclusion and recommendations for a framework towards the workplace realities of employees with disabilities in Zimbabwe. The objectives of the study were to understand the challenges faced by employees with disabilities in Zimbabwe, the effects of these challenges on job performance and job satisfaction, assess the existing support systems and recommend ways of improving the workplace environment for employees with disabilities.

### **5.1 Summary of the findings**

The summary of the findings shall be discussed as per objective.

#### **5.1.1 Challenges faced by employees with disabilities**

The study highlights that employees with disabilities in Zimbabwe face significant challenges in the workplace, including physical, cultural and economic barriers. This postulates that employees with disabilities often feel excluded and do not get supported in the workplace. The data collected by the researcher highlighted the importance of flexible work arrangements and disability awareness initiatives in promoting inclusion and support in the workplace. Employees with disabilities face marginalization in the workplace decision-making process. The study revealed that employees with disabilities face barriers in accessing training and development opportunities. This lack of accessible infrastructure was a major challenge. This showed that both the physical and social environments in the workplace are not fully inclusive.

#### **5.1.2 Impact of challenges on job performance and job satisfaction**

The study brought out that the challenges faced by employees with disabilities impact their job performance and job satisfaction negatively. Employees with disabilities reported feeling frustrated and demotivated due to the challenges they face. This results in a decrease in productivity and job satisfaction. The study also highlighted the emotional and psychological impact of these challenges including feeling excluded and discouraged. This showed that exclusionary practices reduce motivation and morale.

#### **5.1.3 Support systems for employees with disabilities**



The study indicated that the existing support systems for employees with disabilities in Zimbabwe are inadequate. Policies that support employees with disabilities exist but there is a significant gap in the implementation of these policies. The findings highlighted that a lot of employees find it difficult to access assistance and this reveals a lack of communication, follow-through and accountability in support systems. The existing support systems are often ineffective in supporting employees and this leaves employees with disabilities feeling unheard and unsupported. Managers and co-workers lack the proper training and this further worsens the issue.

#### **5.1.4 Recommendations for improving the workplace environment**

Research findings showed that it is essential for organisations to prioritize disability inclusion and offer employees with the support and accommodations they need in their day to day lives. This is important for employees to be progressive in the workplace. The findings highlight that employees need the following, flexible work arrangements, disability awareness training and mentorship, enhancing physical accessibility and policy implementation and monitoring. Employees with disabilities desire inclusive policies, equal opportunities for career advancement, accessible infrastructure and disability awareness training in the workplace.

### **5.2 Conclusions**

To conclude this research, it was uncovered that, employees with disabilities face various problems in the workplace which are structural, attitudinal and economic in nature. These problems range from structural barriers like inaccessible buildings and broken lifts, attitudinal barriers like discrimination and isolation and economic barriers which include cost-related issues. These barriers do not only affect their daily movement but also affects how they work and this negatively affects their job performance and satisfaction. Mental fatigue and decreased motivation are also other problems faced by employees with disabilities due to the pressure of trying to demonstrate their abilities in an unsupportive environment. Although support systems exist, their application is poorly enforced. For instance, many companies have disability policies but workplace exclusion still exist despite those policies. Many employees do not get the support from employees as a result of this mismatch between legislation and reality, which leads to inequality. Overall, the study demonstrated the pressing need for practical, inclusive strategies that go beyond compliance and genuinely improve the working conditions for employees with disabilities. In order to create

equitable and encouraging work environments, organisations must enhance accessibility, put inclusive policies into place and involve those with disabilities in decision-making.

### **5.3 Implications for social work**

The study's findings have implications for the social work profession, especially in the context of the workplace. In order to support employees with impairments, human-rights based approaches must be promoted. Promoting work environments free from both physical and mental barriers should be a priority for social workers. Social workers should take an active role in advocating for inclusivity in the workplace. They should encourage organisations to involve people with disabilities in the planning and execution of workplace interventions. Additionally, social workers need to receive specialized training that will improve their capacity to support people with disabilities. Social workers have ethical obligations to uphold fundamental principles which include social justice, equity and respect for human dignity. These principles should guide their actions when representing and supporting employees with disabilities. In light with education 5.0, which emphasizes innovation and responsiveness to societal needs, social work education should adapt to include modules on disability rights, inclusive practices and policy development. In order to create more inclusive and equitable workplaces throughout Zimbabwe, social workers should also be at the forefront of establishing alliances with public and commercial sectors.

### **5.4 Recommendations**

#### **5.4.1 Policy/programmatic recommendations**

- The government should strengthen enforcement of existing disability-related legislation by ensuring regular audits of both public and private sector institutions. This should be done annually.
- Government agencies should prioritize accessibility in public buildings and workplaces, with clear targets of eliminating structural barriers. Routine evaluation of physical infrastructure should be carried out yearly to address accessibility challenges.
- Human capital departments should include disability inclusion checklists in their policy evaluations and provide quarterly reports on implementation progress.
- Every organisation should establish a disability inclusion office to manage accessibility request, raise awareness and support employees with disabilities.

#### **5.4.2. To stakeholders/partners**

- Private sectors actors must collaborate with local institutions to provide yearly training on disability inclusion. This also includes community conscientization.
- Labor unions and worker's associations should include disability rights in their charters and offer legal assistance to affected employees.
- Development partners and Non-governmental organisations should support capacity-building programs and fund adaptive technologies for workplaces through grants and innovation hubs.
- Organisations should mobilize funding to provide assistive devices and technical support to workers with disabilities particularly in rural and low-income urban areas.
- Legal aid units should be established to assist employees with disabilities who face discrimination and unfair dismissal.
- Stakeholders should partner with government to monitor workplace inclusion practices and publish yearly reports highlighting progress and gaps.

#### **5.4.3 To the community**

- There should be disability-inclusive programs, allowing employees to effectively engage in workplace dialogues and report rights violation.
- Individuals with disabilities should be given the tools to advocate for themselves in workplace setting through training and peer education initiatives.
- Peer support networks for employees with disabilities should be established in large organisations to foster solidarity and well-being.

#### **5.4.4 To social workers**

- Academic institutions should revise their curricula to include practical modules on workplace disability inclusion.
- Social workers should be positioned in organisations as inclusion officers who provide guidance on accessible practices and help resolve inclusion-related challenges.
- Interdisciplinary collaborations that involve social workers, health professions and human capital managers should be prioritized to create inclusive workplace environments.

#### **5.5 Areas of further study**

- Further studies might focus on the perspectives of the Human capital professionals and employers, examining how they manage inclusion and the challenges they encounter.

- Another area worth exploring how gender and disability intersect to shape workplace experiences.

## 5.6 Intervention model

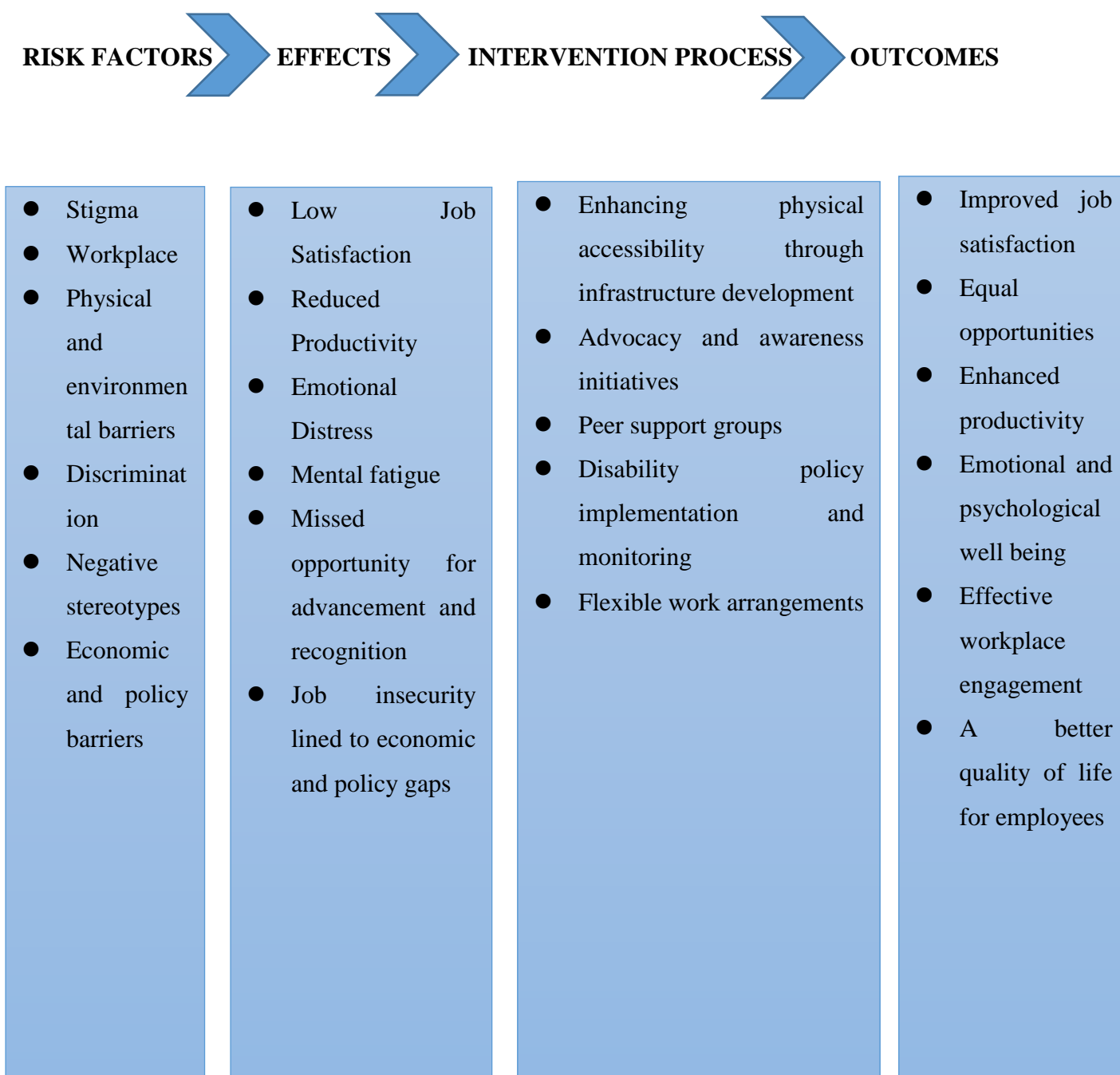


Figure 1: Intervention model for employees with disabilities in Zimbabwe.

The framework was developed to address the study's objectives which were; to investigate the challenges faced by employees with disabilities in Zimbabwe, to examine how these challenges affect job performance and job satisfaction, to assess the existing support systems available for employees with disabilities and to recommend ways of improving the workplace environment for employees with disabilities. The model above shows the risk factors that lead to employees with disabilities being marginalized. Employees with disabilities face vulnerability due to stress, exclusion and inadequate organisational support and the lack of adaptive resources. The wellness of employees can be adversely affected by organisational obstacles such as inaccessible infrastructure, stigma and workplace exclusion. This indicates that employees with disabilities will suffer negative consequences if their plight is not addressed. The second column identifies the effects of these challenges. These factors affected the day to day lives of employees with disabilities. As presented above employees face emotional distress, mental fatigue and reduced productivity due to the risk factors. The third phase presents the intervention process to address the problem and effects. These intervention strategies include policy implementation and monitoring, inclusive infrastructure development and peer support groups. These intervention strategies help improve employees' physically, psychologically and emotional well-being.

This model serves as a visual framework for understanding the issues of employees with disabilities in Zimbabwe that need redress. By focusing on the workplace realities of employees the model helps policymakers and other stakeholders to develop effective intervention strategies that are inclusive. It promotes the idea that employees with disabilities are important contributors whose full involvement is essential to inclusive development. Therefore, this model provides a workable road map for converting the workplace into a place of opportunity, support and dignity while elevating the voices of one of Zimbabwe's most marginalized group.

## **5.7 Conclusion**

This chapter provided the summary, conclusion and recommendations of the study. It also outlines recommendations to policy makers, stakeholders, social workers and the community. It also proposed a framework that can be used in redressing issues that affect employees with disabilities. The framework and recommendations can also be useful to the social work practice. This framework is essential for addressing the plight of employees with disabilities.

## REFERENCE

- Baker, S., Burch, A., & Wiggins, M. (2018). *The impact of an inclusive workplace culture on employee retention*. Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 23(1),34-45.
- Bakker, A., & Demerouti, E. (2019). Job demands–resources theory. In P. Y. Chen & C. L. Cooper (Eds.), *Wellbeing: A complete reference guide, Work and Wellbeing* (pp. 37-64). Wiley-Blackwell.
- Baldrige, D. C., Litz, E., & Rhoades, J. (2016). *Disability and work: The role of social networks in job search*. Retrieved from Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation, <https://doi.org/10.3233/JVR-160844>.
- Beatty, J. E., Baldrige, D. C., Boehm, S. A., Kulkarni, M., & Colella, A. (2019). *On the treatment of persons with disabilities in organizations: A review and research agenda*. Human Resource Management, 58(2), 119–137. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hrm.21940>.
- Bourke, J., & Dillon, B. (2016). *The diversity and inclusion revolution: Eight powerful truths*. Deloitte Review, 20, 1-10.
- Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2019). *Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis*. Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health, 11(4), 589-597. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2019.1628806>.
- Bryman, A. (2016). *Social research methods (5<sup>th</sup> ed)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bruyère, S., Erickson, W., & VanLooy, S. (2019). *The impact of workplace accommodations on job satisfaction and productivity for employees with disabilities*. Journal of Occupational Rehabilitation, 29(3), 563–572. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10926-018-9780-8>.
- Chan, F., Tansey, T.N., Iwanaga, K., Bezyak, J., Wehman, P., Phillips, B. N., Strauser, D.R., & Anderson, C. (2020). *Company characteristics disability inclusion practices and employment of people with disabilities in the post COVID-19 job economy: A cross-*

- sectional survey study. Journal of Occupational Rehabilitation*, 31(3), 463-473. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10926-020-09941-8>.
- Chimedza, R., & Mutasa, F. (2019). *Barriers to inclusive employment for persons with disabilities in Zimbabwe: An analysis of public sector practices. Zimbabwe Journal of Disability Studies*, 5(2), 45–62.
- Choruma, T. (2007). *The Forgotten Tribe: People with Disabilities in Zimbabwe*. Progressio.
- Crewsell, J. W. & Crewsell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches (5<sup>th</sup> ed)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Delve, H. L. & Limpaecher, A. (2020). *How to Do Thematic Analysis: Essential Guide to Coding Qualitative Data*. Retrieved from <https://delvetool.com/blog/thematic-analysis>.
- De Lucas Ancillo, A., del Val Nunex, M. T., & Gavrilă, S. G. (2021). *Workplace change within the COVID-19 context: A grounded theory approach. Economic Research-Ekonomska Istrazivanja*, 34 (1), 2297-2316. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1331677X.2020.1862689>.
- DeJonckheere, M. & Vaughn L. M. (2019). *Semi structured interviewing in primary care research: a balance of relationship and rigor. Fam Med Community Health: Doi:10.1136/fmch-2018-000057*
- Flick, U. (2018). *An introduction to qualitative research (6<sup>th</sup> ed)*. Sage Publications.
- Foster, D., & Wass, V. (2019). *Disability in the labour market: An exploration of concepts of the ideal worker and organizational fit. Disability & Society*, 34(9), 1410–1431. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2019.1608426>
- Gathu, J. (2021). *Exploring the employment gap: Discrimination against persons with disabilities in Africa. African Labor Journal*, 8(4), 245–267.
- Grech, S. (2021). *Disability in sub-Saharan Africa: Understanding cultural and structural challenges. African Disability Studies Review*, 10(1), 15–34.
- Harpur, P. (2019). *Reasonable accommodations: A pathway to inclusion for employees with disabilities. International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 30(12), 1859-1881.

- Hemphill, E., & Kulik, C., T. (2016). Which employees offer hope for mainstream job opportunities for disabled people? *Social Policy and Society*. Retrieved from: Cambridge, org.
- Hernandez, B., McGaughey, D., & Cormier, K. (2015). *The employment of persons with disabilities*. Retrieved from Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation, <https://doi.org/10.3233/JVR-150759.10.1177/1938965511424151>.
- Hughes, B., & Paterson, K. (2015). *The social model of disability and the human rights model of disability: A critical reflection*. In *Disability Studies*. Routledge.
- International Journal for Equity in Health. (2023). *The role of educational programs in addressing disability inclusion gaps*. Retrieved from <https://equityhealthj.biomedcentral.com>.
- International Labor Organization. (2014). *Decent work and persons with disabilities: Promoting rights in the global development agenda*. Geneva: ILO. Retrieved from <https://www.ilo.org>.
- International Labour Organisation(ILO). (2021). *ILO disability inclusion policy and strategy 2020-23*. <https://www.ilo.org/publications/ilo-disability-inclusion-policy-and-strategy-2020-23>.
- Kulkarni, M., & Lengnik-Hall, M., (2011). Socialization of people with disabilities in the workplace. *Human Resource Management*. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1002/hrm.20436>.
- Kulkarni, M., & Lengnick-Hall, C. A. (2014). *Obstacles to success in the workplace for people with disabilities: A review and research agenda*. *Human Resource Development Review*, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1534484313485229>.
- Kulkarni, M., & Gopakumar, K. V. (2018). *Career barriers for people with disabilities: A review and research agenda*. *Human Resource Management Review*, 28(2), 254–266. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2017.06.001>.



- Kulkarni, M. (2019). *Providing Accommodations: A Business Imperative for Organizations*. Journal of Management and Organization, 25(6), 814-828.
- Kulkarni, M., & Lengnick-Hall, C. A. (2021). *How mentorship enhances workplace inclusion for people with disabilities*. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal, 40(2), 143–157. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EDI-01-2020-0020>.
- Lindsay, S., Cagliostro, E., & Carafa, G. (2021). *A scoping review of workplace disclosure and accommodation practices for people with disabilities*. Disability and Rehabilitation, 43(6), 802–813. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09638288.2018.1503734>.
- Lindsay, S., Cagliostro, E., Leck, J., Shen, W., & Stinson, J. (2019). *Employers' perspectives of including young people with disabilities in the workforce, disability disclosure and providing accommodations*. Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation, 50(3), 275-283. <https://doi.org/10.3233/jvr-180996>.
- Macha, L., & Nhemachena, T. (2021). *Disability and workplace inequality in Zimbabwe: A case study of Harare*. Southern African Journal of Labor Studies, 7(3), 123–139.
- Mita, S. (2018). *Disability, health and human development*. Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-53638-9>.
- Mizunoya, T., & Mitra, S. (2016). *Is there disability gap in employment rates in developing countries?* Retrieved from the World Development, 42, 28-43.
- Moffitt, M. (2023). *Research approaches in social sciences*. Academic Press.
- Mtsetwa, E. (2019). *“Exploring Workplace Accessibility in Zimbabwe.”* Journal of Disability Studies, 25(3), 215-231.
- Nowell, L.S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E. & Moules, N. J. (2017). *Thematic analysis: Striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria*. International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 16(1), 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917733827>.
- Nguyen, L., & Le, T. (2020). *Government incentives and inclusive employment: A*

- study of workplace accessibility in developing countries*. Journal of Development Policy, 14(5), 321–345.
- Oliver, M. (2017). *The politics of disablement* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed). London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Patton, Q. (2015). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods: Integrating theory and practical* (4<sup>th</sup> ed). Sage Publications.
- Sanford, J. A., & Milchus, K. (2019). *Inclusive design of workplaces for employees with disabilities*. Journal of Applied Rehabilitation Counseling, 50(2), 15-26.
- Santuzzi, A. M., & Waltz, P. (2016). *Disability in the Workplace: A Unique and Variable Identity*. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206315626269>.
- Santuzzi, A. M., Waltz, P. R., Finkelstein, L. M., & Rupp, D. E. (2020). *Invisible disabilities and workplace belonging: How authenticity shapes the experience of inclusion*. Journal of Management, 46(6), 1141–1169. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206318811303>.
- Schwandt, T. A. (2019). *The SAGE dictionary of qualitative inquiry* (4<sup>th</sup> ed). Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.
- Shakespeare, T. (2013) *Disability Rights and Wrongs Revisited*. London: Routledge.
- Sharma, R. H., Asselin, R., Stainton, T., & Hole, R. (2020). *A scoping review of the literature*. Social sciences, 14(2),67. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci14020067>.
- Shore, L. M., Cleveland, K. N., & Sanchez, D. (2018). *Inclusive workplaces: A review and model*. Retrieved from human resource management review, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2017.07.003>.
- Stewart, D. W. (2018). *Focus groups*. In B. B. Frey (Ed.), *The SAGE encyclopedia of educational research, measurement, and evaluation*\_ (Vol. 2, pp. 687–692). Sage Publications.
- United Nations. (2006). *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)*.

Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html>.

World Health Organisation (2011). *World Report on Disability: Summary, 2011*. Geneva, Switzerland.

World Health Organization. (2015). *Empowerment: A guide for health workers*. World Health Organization.

World Health Organisation. (2023). Disability and health. Retrieved from <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/details/disability-and-health>.

Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case Study Research and Applications: Designs and Methods (6<sup>th</sup> ed)*. SAGE Publications.

Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission. (2021). National Disability Policy Review.

Zimbabwe National Disability Policy. (2021). Ministry of Public Service, Labour, and Social Welfare, Harare, Zimbabwe.


Zimmerman, M. A. (2000). *Empowerment Theory*. In: Rappaport, J., Seidman, E. (eds) *Handbook of Community Psychology*. Springer, Boston, Ma. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4615-4193-6\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4615-4193-6_2).

## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 1: REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES  
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK

P. Bag 1020  
BINDURA, Zimbabwe  
Tel: 263 - 71 - 7531-6, 7621-4  
Fax: 263 - 71 - 7531-4



BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION

Date: 5 May 2025


TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

RE: REQUEST TO UNDERTAKE RESEARCH PROJECT IN YOUR ORGANISATION

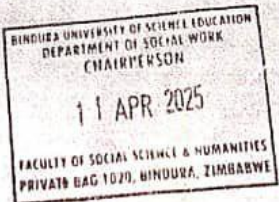
This serves to introduce the bearer, Munyurwa Tanisha P., Student Registration Number B2104263, who is a BSc Social Work student at Bindura University of Science Education and is carrying out a research project in your area/institution.

May you please assist the student to access data relevant to the study, and where possible, conduct interviews as part of a data collection process.

Yours faithfully



E.E. CHIGONDO  
CHAIRPERSON



## APPENDIX 2: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH



CITY OF HARARE

HUMAN CAPITAL DEPARTMENT  
TOWN HOUSE, HARARE, ZIMBABWE  
POST OFFICE BOX 990  
TELEPHONE 752979 / 753000

EMAIL: [hcd@hararecity.co.zw](mailto:hcd@hararecity.co.zw)  
ADDRESS ALL CORRESPONDENCE TO HUMAN CAPITAL DIRECTOR

Bindura University of Science Education  
P. Bag 1020  
Bindura

05 MAY 2025

**RE: AUTHORITY TO UNDERTAKE RESEARCH: TANISHA MANYURWA**

This letter serves as authority for Tanisha Manyurwa to undertake a research survey on the topic: "A FRAMEWORK TOWARDS WORKPLACE REALITIES OF EMPLOYEES WITH DISABILITIES."

The City of Harare has no financial obligation and neither shall it render any further assistance in the conduct of the research. The researcher is however requested to avail a soft and hard copy of the research to the undersigned so that residents of Harare can benefit out of it. The research should not be used for any other purpose other than the study purpose specified.

This letter is issued upon payment of \$usd administration fee.  
Receipt number: 15274172

Yours faithfully



  
MR J. DUVE  
ACTING HUMAN CAPITAL DIRECTOR

Harare to achieve a WORLD CLASS CITY STATUS by 2025

### **APPENDIX 3: INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

My name is Tanisha Panashe Munyurwa, and I am a fourth-year Social Work student at Bindura University of Science Education. As part of my degree requirements, I am conducting a research project and invite you to participate. The study, titled “A Framework Towards Employees with Disabilities in Zimbabwe,” seeks to explore the challenges that employees with disabilities face, the impact of these challenges on their work participation, and to propose strategies to enhance their inclusion in the workplace. Your participation in this study and in the interview will be kept confidential and used solely for research purposes. Participation is entirely voluntary, with no financial compensation, and you may withdraw at any time. Your cooperation and input will be greatly appreciated.

If you agree to participate, please fill in your details below.

Participant Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher’s Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

#### **APPENDIX 4: INTERVIEW GUIDES FOR EMPLOYEES WITH DISABILITIES.**

My name is Tanisha Panashe Munyurwa from Bindura University of Science Education. I am conducting this study to explore the workplace realities of employees with disabilities. Your participation in this study is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw at any time without any consequences. All responses will be kept structured confidential and used for research purposes. study's findings.

Demographic information

Age	
Gender	
Type of disability	
Years of employment	
Current job title	

#### **SECTION A: CHALLENGES FACED BY EMPLOYEES WITH DISABILITIES.**

1. What are the biggest challenges you face at the workplace as an employee with a disability?
2. Are there physical or environmental barriers in your workplace that hinder your ability to work effectively?
3. Have you experienced workplace discrimination or exclusion based on your disability? If yes, how?

#### **SECTION B: IMPACT OF CHALLENGES ON JOB PERFORMANCE AND JOB SATISFACTION.**

4. How do the challenges you face affect your job performance?
5. Do you feel you receive equal opportunities for career growth and promotions compared to other employees?
6. How satisfied are you with your job?
7. What factors contribute the most to your job dissatisfaction or satisfaction?
8. Have workplace challenges affected your mental health or motivation to work?

## **SECTION C: SUPPORT SYSTEMS FOR EMPLOYEES WITH DISABILITIES.**

9. Does your organisation provide any disability-friendly policies or accommodations. If yes, what are they?
10. Have you received assistive technology, flexible work arrangements or other workplace adjustments?
11. Are there disability support groups, mentorship programs or employee resources networks available for you?
12. Do you think your employer provides adequate training for other employees on disability awareness and support?
13. Are there gaps in the existing support systems that you think need to be addressed?
14. What challenges do you face in accessing buildings and facilities at your workplace and how do these impact your daily work experiences?

## **SECTION D: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING THE WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT.**

15. What improvements would you suggest to make the workplace more inclusive for employees with disabilities?
16. What training and awareness programs do you think should be implemented to promote inclusion?
17. If you could change anything about your workplace to make it more accessible, what would it be?
18. Would you like to share any thoughts or insights before we conclude?



## **APPENDIX 5: KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS**

My name is Tanisha Panashe Munyurwa from Bindura University of Science Education. I am conducting this study to explore the workplace realities of employees with disabilities. Your participation in this study is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw at any time without any consequences. All responses will be kept structured confidential and used for research purposes. study's findings

Demographics information

Gender	
Job title	

### **SECTION A: CHALLENGES FACED BY EMPLOYEES WITH DISABILITIES.**

#### **KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDES**

#### **SECTION A: CHALLENGES FACED BY EMPLOYEES WITH DISABILITIES**

1. What are challenges employees with disabilities face in the workplace?
2. From your observation, are there common physical or environmental barriers affecting employees with disabilities?
3. Have you witnessed or been informed about any incidents of workplace discrimination or exclusion based on disability? Can you describe the context?

#### **SECTION B: IMPACT OF CHALLENGES ON JOB PERFORMANCE AND JOB SATISFACTION**

4. How do these challenges typically impact job performance and productivity for employees with disabilities?
5. Do you believe employees with disabilities are provided with equal opportunities for promotions and career development? Why or why not?
6. How satisfied do you think employees with disabilities are in their roles?
7. What do you believe are the key factors contributing to their job satisfaction or dissatisfaction?

8. Have you noticed any connection between workplace challenges and the mental health or motivation of employees with disabilities?

### **SECTION C: SUPPORT SYSTEMS FOR EMPLOYEES WITH DISABILITIES**

9. What kinds of disability-friendly policies or accommodations are in place in the organization?

10. Are employees with disabilities provided with assistive technology, flexible hours, or other workplace adjustments?

11. Does the organization offer any support networks such as disability support groups, mentorship, or employee resource groups?

12. How would you rate the training provided to staff regarding disability awareness and inclusion?

13. In your view, are there any major gaps in the current support systems that need to be addressed?

### **SECTION D: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING THE WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT**

14. What specific improvements would you recommend to make the workplace more inclusive and supportive for employees with disabilities?

15. What type of training or awareness campaigns would you suggest to foster a culture of inclusion?

16. If there is anything you could change about the workplace to improve accessibility, what would it be?

17. Finally, do you have any other insights or recommendations to share on improving the experience of employees with disabilities?

### **APPENDIX 6: OBSERVATION GUIDE**

1. Physical accessibility.
2. Workplace interactions and inclusion.