



EMPLOYABILITY AND DISABILITY

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ABSTRACT

In Sri Lanka, only 27.3% of the 1.6 million disabled individuals are employed. Visually impaired individuals, in particular, face significant challenges in the workforce, including prejudice, overly sympathetic attitudes, and discrimination. This study aims to explore the barriers faced by visually impaired workers in both the public and private sectors in Sri Lanka, with the goal of enhancing productivity and advancing social sustainability. Using qualitative methods and convenient sampling, the study examines the working conditions and challenges encountered by visually impaired employees. Data were collected from secondary sources, including the UNCRPD, the 2012 Census of Population and Housing in Sri Lanka, and publications from the International Labor Organization (ILO), as well as through open-ended surveys, direct observations, and key informant interviews. The study involved twenty visually impaired workers from Uva Province, who participated in questionnaires and workplace accessibility evaluations. Additionally, five employers and five key informants, including HR staff and executives from disability organizations, were interviewed. Thematic analysis revealed five primary employment difficulties, highlighting a lack of accessible support and recognition. Based on these findings, the study offers specific recommendations for creating a more inclusive environment for people with disabilities. Suggestions include improving accessibility, providing appropriate assistive technologies, redesigning jobs, and fostering an inclusive mindset among government bodies, businesses, organizations, and workers. The report underscores the importance of senior management support in addressing these challenges and navigating the transition with minimal impact on labor and resources.

KEYWORDS: Disability, Employability, Accessibility, Visually Impaired Employees, Inclusive Workplace

Introduction

Approximately 15% of the global population, or around 1 billion people, live with disabilities, making them the largest minority group worldwide. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) defines persons with disabilities as those with long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments that, in combination with societal barriers, hinder their full participation in society. Sri Lanka, through laws such as the Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (1996) and its Constitution, upholds the principle of equal employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

In Sri Lanka, the employability of visually impaired individuals is a critical factor in promoting economic independence, enhancing self-esteem, and fostering social inclusion. Despite the legal frameworks in place, misconceptions and systemic barriers continue to limit their access to meaningful employment. Employment for visually impaired individuals not only supports financial independence and reduces reliance on social assistance, but also promotes a sense of belonging and the development of essential skills. Furthermore, successful employment of visually impaired persons contributes to workplace diversity and sets an example of inclusivity for society.

There is an urgent need for research to identify the barriers preventing visually impaired individuals, particularly in Uva Province, from fully participating in the workforce. Such research is essential to inform policy reforms, raise public awareness, and improve support services, ultimately leading to a more inclusive workforce and empowering visually impaired individuals in their professional lives.

Historically, persons with disabilities (PWDs) have been viewed through a lens of pity and charity, reflecting entrenched societal biases. However, international organizations have redefined the concept of disability. The UNCRPD emphasizes the interaction between impairments and societal barriers, while the International Labour Organization (ILO) sees disability as a condition that limits access to employment. Sri Lanka defines disability as a condition that prevents individuals from meeting life's basic necessities due to impairments. The World Health Organization (WHO) further classifies

disability based on impairment, activity limitation, and participation restriction.

Globally, an estimated 1 billion people live with disabilities, with higher rates of disability seen in low-income countries. Disability disproportionately affects women and children, and disabled individuals often face higher unemployment rates, which can exceed 80% in some regions. Despite this, studies show that over half of workplace accommodations cost nothing, and disabled employees often have higher retention rates. Many disabled individuals turn to self-employment, though they typically earn less than their non-disabled counterparts. However Sri Lanka has limited data on persons with disabilities. The 2001 census revealed a disability prevalence of 162.9 per 10,000 individuals, with visual impairments being the most common type of disability, affecting 61.6% of the PWD population. The leading causes of disability in Sri Lanka include birth defects, war, natural disasters, and aging.

Visual impairments range from moderate vision loss to total blindness, with blindness defined as having a visual acuity of 3/60 or less in the better eye after correction. In Sri Lanka, 1.7% of individuals over the age of 40 are blind, and visually impaired individuals make up 20% of the country's PWD population.

Disability inclusion is key to ensuring that PWDs are fully integrated into all aspects of life, including employment. While technological advancements have created new opportunities for visually impaired individuals, particularly in education and self-employment, significant barriers remain, including societal misconceptions and negative attitudes from employers. To address these challenges and promote greater participation in the workforce, more comprehensive efforts are needed to ensure the full inclusion of visually impaired individuals in Sri Lanka's job market.

Methodology

Research Approach

This research employs a qualitative approach, which focuses on exploring how individuals understand and experience the social world. Given the exploratory nature of the study, this approach was deemed appropriate. The study was conducted in Sri Lanka's Uva Province, targeting medium- to large-sized organizations. Primary data was collected through in-depth interviews with 20 blind respondents, selected using purposive and convenient sampling due to limited resources.

The respondents represented diverse organizations, including a public university, a financial institution, and an Attorney General's office, though the names were withheld for confidentiality. The interviews, lasting 45 to 60 minutes, were conducted face-to-face using a pre-established interview process, recorded, and transcribed. The collected data was analyzed using pattern matching and thematic analysis to identify key challenges and factors contributing to social inclusion.

Research area

The research on "The Employability and Disability; challenges faced by visually impaired employees." Therefore the research area is the group of persons with disabilities more specified in to visually impaired employees who work in Uva Province more specifically in Monaragala and Badulla district, Sri Lanka and the target is to find what the work place issues faced by visually are impaired employees.

The provincial road development agency states that the Uva province of Sri Lanka is divided into the districts of Badulla and Monaragala. In the province of Uva, many landform characteristics, such as mountain ranges, slopes, ravines, and flatlands, are frequently represented by symbols. Agriculture is the province of Uva's main source of income. However, farmland may be found outside of cities, and Uva Province is seen as a province that is steadily expanding. But according to national statistics report, authorities seldom pay much attention to this region. Because of that can see limitations in the quality of improvement. According to Census of population and housing of Sri Lanka

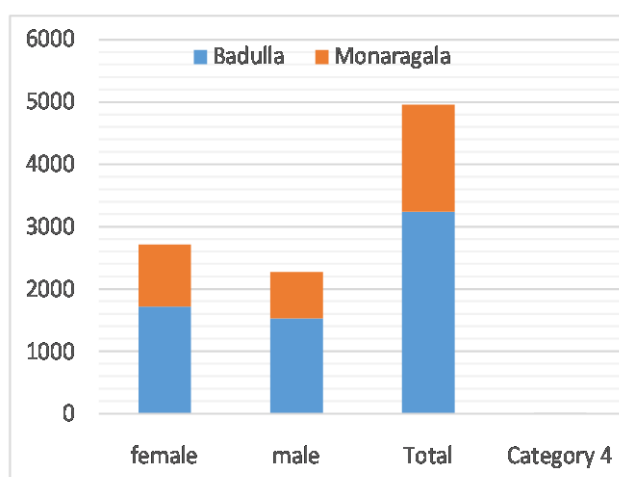
(2012), there are 1,617,924 persons with disabilities in Sri Lanka, Out of these 442,138 are economical active.

Statistics of visually impaired- Uva Province

Person with Disabilities	19504
Visually impaired	4958

Badulla	
Person with Disabilities	12661
Visually impaired	3244 (male-1715, female-1529)

Monaragala	
Person with Disabilities	6843
Visually impaired	1714 (male- 1000, female-746)



Census of Population and Housing
2001 - Sri Lanka
Disabled persons by Type of
Disability, Sex, Rate per 10000
population and District

Sample Population

Characteristic of the sample

20 employees with disabilities in Government sector and Private sector have been selected as main participants. This sample was selected by using purposive and convenient sampling method.

All sample members were blind or partially blind, complete their higher education and well qualified for a job. Both male and female represent in an

equal ratio. Most of the members represent the middle – middle class of the social system and 80 percent is married.

Sampling method

Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling technique that is commonly used in social research due to its practicality and accessibility. This method is particularly useful when time, resources, or other constraints prevent the use of more rigorous random sampling techniques. Additionally, in cases where there is a lack of statistical data availability or comprehensive registries, as is often the case in studies involving employability and disability, convenience sampling becomes a necessary choice. While this approach facilitates the inclusion of participants with disabilities who may be difficult to access, in this research, especially due to the lack of data convenience, sampling provides a practical solution for gaining insights into the work environment and the social work interventions that can improve the employability of persons with disabilities.

Data Collection Method

The data collection for this research involved both primary and secondary methods. **Primary data** refers to authentic, original information gathered specifically for the study, such as surveys and interviews. In this research, data was collected from 20 visually impaired employees in Uva Province, Sri Lanka, working in both the public and private sectors through questionnaires. These included open-ended questions allowing for detailed responses. The **direct observation method** was also used, with the researcher spending time with the participants in their work environments to understand their experiences and feelings more deeply. Additionally, **key informant interviews** were conducted with leaders from disability organizations, department secretaries, and HR staff. Open-ended questions were used to gather insights from five employers. **Secondary data** was sourced from documents such as the UNCRPD, disability rights acts, and ILO articles. The **data analysis** used a qualitative thematic analysis, which involved identifying and analyzing patterns and themes in the data. This method allowed for an in-depth understanding of the collected information, uncovering recurring themes to interpret and gain insights into the experiences of visually impaired employees.

Data Analysis

Education Background of Visually Impaired Employees

School Education Background

Visually impaired employees' education data were collected across three levels: Primary, G.C.E. (O/L), and G.C.E. (A/L), with the highest level used for analysis. All visually impaired employees completed their G.C.E. (A/L), and most transitioned from special schools after G.C.E. (O/L) to integrated systems for A/L, predominantly in the Arts stream.

Higher Education Background

Higher education data were categorized into Graduate, Diploma Holder, and Certificate Holder. Most blind employees hold a BA degree, while those without a degree pursued diplomas or certificates to further their careers.

Reasonable Accommodation for Education

Visually impaired employees received adequate accommodations during their schooling, including:

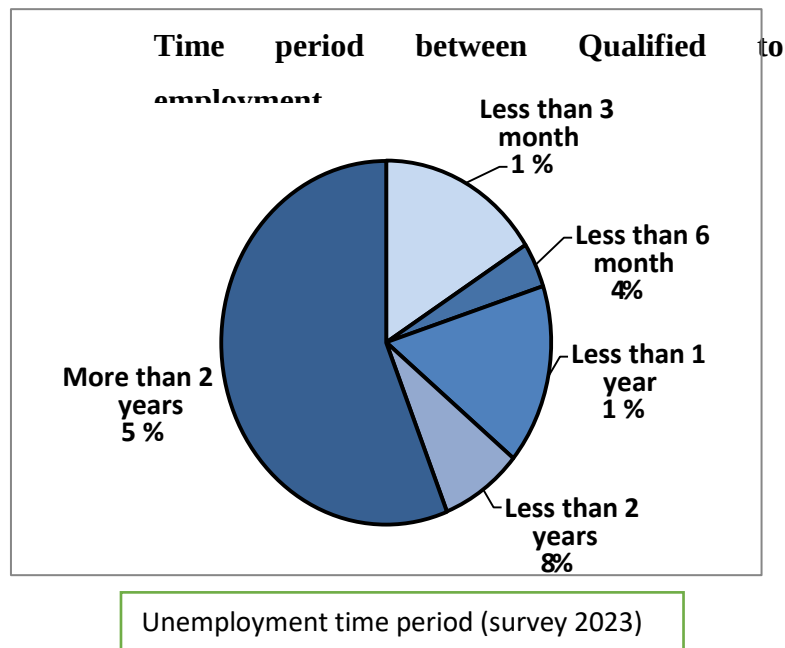
1. Textbooks in accessible formats.
2. Special education teachers.
3. Braille papers and assistive devices.
4. Accessible exam papers.
5. Extra time for government exams.

Government institutions provided these accommodations, and many visually impaired employees accessed universities through the government's 3% quota for disabled students. Diploma and certificate holders attended private institutions, where accommodations were often lacking, except at The Employers Federation of Ceylon's IT training center, which provided full support.

Despite these accommodations, many visually impaired individuals remain trapped in poverty due to lack of employment, as education plays a crucial role in breaking the cycle of poverty. While many blind individuals believe they

can pursue higher education and contribute to society, they face limited opportunities and struggle to find decent jobs despite their qualifications and efforts.

Unemployment Time period



Unemployment time period was collected by using five categories of time periods; less than 3 months, Less than 6 months, Less than 1 year, Less than 2 years and more than 2 years.

According to the chart, the majority of visually impaired workers who are looking for work in the private sector wait less than three months, six months, or a year. The majority of visually impaired workers who wanted to work in the public sector had to wait more than two years for employment than people without disabilities. Due to Sri Lanka's highly competitive employment market, the circumstance exists.

Employment issues Due to Visual Disability

People with visual impairments may face serious work difficulties. These issues are caused by a number of things, such as a lack of accessibility in the workplace, a dearth of employment options, and unfavourable perceptions of

the talents of those who are visually impaired. Lack of appropriate accommodations, such as accessible work settings or assistive technology, may make it more difficult for them to complete duties successfully. Furthermore, the lack of employment possibilities that are designed to meet their demands worsens the problem. In addition, social preconceptions and misconceptions about visual impairment might be a barrier to employment, resulting in prejudice and poor job opportunities. To provide equitable opportunities, advance inclusion, and unlock the latent potential of visually impaired people in the profession, it is imperative to address these employment issues.

Recognized Issues visually impaired employees face

Problems	Reasons	Impact
1.Less responsibilities A. Employers' attitude B. Limited representativeness	In equal treatment Stereotype and bias Lack of awareness and accommodation	Greater Unemployment Rates Economic Disadvantage Dependence on Social Welfare Limited Opportunities for Career Growth and Advancement Influence on the Mind and Heart Social Isolation and Exclusion Limited Access to Education and Training Unfair Access Facing problems in safety
3. Difficulty of reading printed materials 4. Lack of access to data 5. Limited work efficiency 6. Limited access to required technology	Unbalance focus on nature of job requirement (poor job design)	
7. Lack of skill improvement and less knowledge about updates 8. Limited access to training programs 9. Rare job advancement 10. Unsatisfied work responsibilities	Under employment Lack of access to education and training.	
11. Lack of workplace safety and accessibility		
12. Limited networking opportunities 13. Transportation and mobility 14. Communication and social interaction challenges	Barriers in choosing the suitable job opportunity	

Recognized Issues visually impaired employees face (survey 2023)

Challenges faced by visually impaired employees

The challenges faced by visually impaired employees in this study are discussed under five key themes;

1. Less Responsibilities, Employers' Attitude, Limited Representativeness

Visually impaired employees often face misconceptions that lead to less responsibility at work compared to their sighted peers. This limits their professional growth and reinforces the idea that they are less capable. However, most respondents reported good relationships with coworkers, though sometimes excessive sympathy makes them feel undervalued.

The attitude of employers is a significant barrier, with negative perceptions and biases leading to unfair treatment and limited employment opportunities. To counter this, awareness and education are needed to create a more inclusive work environment.

Additionally, limited representativeness of visually impaired employees in the workforce is a critical issue, fueled by inaccessible hiring practices and biases. This underrepresentation prevents organizations from fully utilizing the talents of visually impaired employees, and proactive measures like inclusive hiring practices are required to address this.

2. Difficulty Reading Printed Materials, Limited Access to Data and Technology

All respondents noted that difficulty accessing printed materials and technology significantly hampers their work efficiency. The inability to access written information affects productivity and participation in decision-making processes. Limited access to adaptive technology, such as screen readers, further restricts their ability to perform tasks independently. This issue could be resolved by providing accessible formats for documents and updating workplaces with adaptive technology.

3. Lack of Skill Improvement, Limited Access to Training, Rare Job Advancement, Unsatisfied Work Responsibilities

Visually impaired employees often face limited opportunities for skill development and training. Many respondents mentioned that training programs are not accessible, limiting their ability to keep up with industry developments. This lack of training hinders job advancement, with 46% of respondents stating that their visual impairment made it difficult to progress in their careers. Many felt underemployed and believed they were not utilizing their full potential due to a lack of suitable opportunities and proper job design.

4. Lack of Workplace Safety and Accessibility

Workplace safety and accessibility remain significant issues, as most workplaces are not designed with visually impaired employees in mind. Physical hazards, lack of accessible signage, and improper accommodations increase the risk of accidents and limit employees' ability to navigate the workplace. Addressing these safety concerns through inclusive design, assistive technologies, and ergonomic modifications can help visually impaired employees feel safer and more confident in their work environment.

5. Limited Networking Opportunities, Transportation and Mobility, Communication Challenges

Visually impaired employees struggle with networking, mobility, and communication. Lack of accessible networking opportunities and transportation issues hinder their professional development and career growth. Most respondents (78%) reported challenges in finding and accessing reliable transportation, which affects their mobility and job opportunities. Social interaction and communication with coworkers are also impacted due to difficulties in accessing visual and nonverbal cues. Employers can address these challenges by promoting accessible networking events, providing transportation assistance, and fostering an inclusive workplace culture to support visually impaired employees.

Each of these themes highlights the significant barriers that visually impaired employees face and suggests that targeted interventions are needed to foster a more inclusive, accessible, and equitable work environment for them.

Findings and Suggestions

Barriers for Employment of Visually Impaired Employees

Visually impaired employees face significant challenges in the workplace, with two major barriers identified:

1. **Lack of Accessibility and Transportation Services**-Most workplaces are not accessible, with only 28% of companies providing accessible environments. Government sector workplaces were found to have no accessibility. Employees often adapt to inaccessible environments.
2. **Job Orientation and Attitudes**-Negative attitudes from non-disabled coworkers create uncomfortable situations, especially in team settings. This issue is prevalent in both private and public sectors.

Specific Barriers for Visually Impaired Teachers

All visually impaired teachers in the study highlighted the following challenges:

- Difficulty handling the blackboard.
- Trouble marking students' notebooks and exam papers.
- Lack of accessible formats for teachers' guidebooks.

Other visually impaired employees face similar issues but have adapted to overcome simpler barriers in the workplace.

Impact of Workplace Barriers on Visually Impaired Employees:

1. **Higher Unemployment Rates**-Visually impaired individuals face higher unemployment due to lack of job opportunities, inclusive hiring practices, and accessibility.
2. **Economic Disadvantage**-Unemployment or underemployment leads to financial instability, limited income, and dependence on social support.
3. **Dependence on Social Welfare**-The inability to secure employment leads many to rely on social welfare, which strains public resources and limits financial independence.

4. Limited Career Growth-Restricted access to training and advancement opportunities hampers career development for visually impaired workers.
5. Mental and Emotional Impact-Job search difficulties and workplace barriers can lead to frustration, low self-esteem, loneliness, and depression.
6. Social Exclusion and Isolation-Work-related issues may reduce social interactions, community participation, and a sense of belonging.
7. Limited Access to Education and Training-Employment challenges may hinder access to quality education and vocational training, limiting the development of skills and qualifications.
8. Unfair Access to Opportunities-Barriers to employment and accessibility prevent visually impaired people from competing fairly, hindering their societal advancement and overall well-being.

To address these issues, stakeholders must work together to create inclusive workplaces, promote accessibility, raise awareness, and provide necessary accommodations. These efforts can improve the quality of life and career opportunities for visually impaired individuals in Sri Lanka, fostering a more equitable society.

Employment Opportunities for Visually Impaired in Sri Lanka

The Sri Lankan job market is highly competitive, making it difficult for both disabled and non-disabled individuals to find work after completing their studies. Visually impaired employees often expect government jobs, which contributes to delays in securing employment. In the private sector, challenges include limited academic disciplines offered by universities, Sinhala-language instruction, and lack of encouragement to pursue further qualifications, leading to long waits for job opportunities after graduation.

A 3% government job allocation for people with disabilities, according to Gazette notice 27/88, benefits many educated disabled individuals, but many visually impaired people are unaware of these opportunities. Most visually impaired employees work in education (teachers), government administration, or in the manufacturing and banking sectors in the private sector.

Some visually impaired individuals pursue self-employment with assistance from public and private sectors, including low-interest loans, raw materials at

discounted rates, and help with market access. The Ministry of Social Services has made efforts to improve employment opportunities for disabled individuals, including enforcing the 3% allocation and establishing job-financing systems. However, private sector opportunities, especially in regions like Uva province, remain limited, discouraging many visually impaired individuals from seeking jobs in this sector.

Barriers Faced by Visually Impaired Employees and Solutions

Visually impaired employees in Sri Lanka, especially in the Uva province, face several workplace challenges. One key issue is the lack of accessibility in both public and private sector workplaces. While some disability-focused organizations and special schools offer accessibility, most government and private institutions lack accessible facilities like track tiles and uninterrupted access to assistive equipment, which are essential for visually impaired workers.

Visually impaired teachers also face specific difficulties, such as using the chalkboard and marking students' papers. The introduction of smart classrooms and technology, like smart whiteboards, could help address these challenges. Another issue is the negative attitude of coworkers, which creates a discouraging work environment for visually impaired employees. To address this, public and private sectors should introduce disability etiquette programs to improve attitudes and raise awareness about the skills and capabilities of visually impaired employees.

To overcome these challenges, three key stakeholders—government, society, and visually impaired employees themselves—must collaborate to create a more inclusive and supportive employment environment.

Suggestions – 01

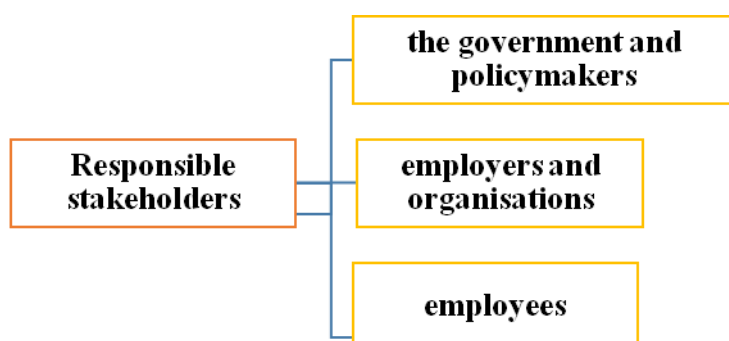
Improving the employability of visually impaired individuals requires a holistic approach involving multiple stakeholders. In Sri Lanka, social inclusion practices for people with disabilities are already in place, but they need to be enhanced rather than replaced by complex new solutions. Social inclusion is defined as ensuring everyone has equal opportunities for housing, work, societal participation, and a voice in decisions affecting them (Fraser 2003, cited in Grove 2008).

Although Sri Lanka has a social inclusion model, it remains inactive in some sectors due to a lack of adaptation. Rather than focusing solely on social inclusion, developing each component separately could provide clearer insights into the issues and help identify solutions.

The United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy provides a framework for disability inclusion across all UN programmatic areas. It reaffirms that the full realization of human rights for people with disabilities is essential for achieving universal human rights and basic freedoms. Initiated by the Secretary-General in 2018, the strategy aims to improve accessibility and mainstream the rights of people with disabilities. A thorough institutional review by the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities informed its development.

As a remedy for the weaknesses in Sri Lanka's social inclusion system, especially regarding disability inclusion for employability, the researcher proposes adaptations aligned with the UN strategy. These adaptations aim to address current gaps and improve outcomes for individuals with disabilities.

When we use the model, we can pinpoint three primary stakeholders:



A comprehensive, multi-stakeholder approach is essential to improve the employability of visually impaired individuals in Sri Lanka. The responsibilities of each stakeholder can be outlined as follows:

Government and Policymakers:

1. Legal Compliance- Ensure adherence to disability-related laws, such as the Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, and

guarantee accessibility and employment opportunities for visually impaired individuals.

2. Accessibility Audits- Assess workplace infrastructure to remove barriers and install features like ramps, braille signs, and tactile indicators.
3. Training and Skill Development- Provide relevant training, mentoring, and career development for visually impaired workers.
4. Disability Sensitivity Training- Educate all staff members on inclusion, vision impairment etiquette, and effective collaboration with visually impaired colleagues.

Employers and Organizations:

1. Accessible Job Ads- Ensure job advertisements are accessible, using clear layouts and screen-reader compatible text.
2. Interview Practices- Focus on candidates' skills and qualifications, avoiding inappropriate questions related to disability.
3. Assistive Technology- Provide tools like screen readers, braille displays, and other devices to help visually impaired employees work efficiently.
4. Reasonable Accommodations- Create a system for visually impaired employees to request adjustments, such as ergonomic modifications or flexible schedules.
5. Peer Support- Encourage mentoring and collaboration between visually impaired employees and their peers.
6. Partnerships with Disability Organizations- Collaborate with NGOs to gain expertise and guidance in creating an inclusive workplace.
7. Inclusive Communication= Ensure accessible communication methods, including braille documents, large print, and verbal cues.
8. Inclusive Values and Attitudes-Promote core organizational values of diversity, focusing on employees' skills rather than their impairments. Encourage respect and inclusivity at all levels.

Employees:

1. Self-Advocacy- Visually impaired employees should confidently request necessary accommodations and demonstrate their skills and competencies.

2. **Blindness Skills-** Maintain strong orientation, mobility, and assistive technology skills to adapt to job requirements.
3. **Representativeness-** Employees with visual impairments may need to actively engage in reducing discomfort in the workplace by being approachable and open about their experiences.
4. **Positive Attitudes-** Avoid using blindness as an excuse and embrace challenges as opportunities.
5. **Professionalism-** Interact with colleagues in a positive manner, meet the same performance standards as peers, and take full responsibility for job duties.

Creating an Inclusive Workplace

- Employers should prioritize physical and digital accessibility, offer disability-specific training, and implement adaptive work processes. Inclusive communication, empathy-building workshops, and awareness programs will foster understanding and collaboration.
- A twin-track approach is recommended, combining disability-specific efforts with mainstream inclusion policies to create a more equitable workplace and society.
- The key is to balance specialized support for people with disabilities while integrating them into all facets of the workforce. By engaging all stakeholders—government, employers, and employees—Sri Lanka can create an inclusive work environment that promotes the full participation of visually impaired individuals.

Suggestion - 02

The lack of reliable and up-to-date information on people with disabilities presents a challenge for researchers. To address this, the researcher suggests that the government and other stakeholders conduct a comprehensive disability survey using modern technology to create a reliable, easily updatable database. This database would serve multiple purposes:

1. **Policy Development-** It would provide policymakers with accurate and current data on the needs and challenges of people with disabilities, enabling more informed decision-making and efficient resource allocation.
2. **Tracking Progress-** Regular surveys would allow monitoring of the status and conditions of individuals with disabilities over time, helping assess the effectiveness of policies and programs.
3. **Advocacy and Awareness-** Advocates could use the data to highlight the barriers faced by people with disabilities, supporting calls for inclusive practices and reducing stigma.
4. **Inclusion and Empowerment-**By involving the disability community in the survey process, the database would ensure their voices are heard, fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility.

In summary, a disability survey is crucial for creating a reliable database that supports policy-making, progress tracking, advocacy, and empowerment, ultimately promoting the rights and social inclusion of people with disabilities.

Conclusion

The conclusion emphasizes several critical reasons for promoting employment for visually impaired individuals in Sri Lanka:

1. **Inclusion and Equality-** Providing equal job opportunities supports inclusion and upholds the principles of equality and non-discrimination, allowing visually impaired individuals to contribute to the workforce and become financially independent.
2. **Economic Impact-** Employing visually impaired individuals can enhance creativity, productivity, and competitiveness by utilizing their unique skills, perspectives, and problem-solving abilities.
3. **Social Integration-** Employment fosters social integration, challenges prejudices, and reduces stereotypes associated with visual impairments, contributing to a more inclusive society.
4. **International Commitments-** Supporting the employability of visually impaired individuals aligns with Sri Lanka's commitment to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which advocates for equal job opportunities.

The research highlights five key work-related challenges for visually impaired employees and the need for better orientation, mobility assistance, and

workplace technologies. It stresses that redesigning jobs to accommodate visually impaired workers can improve organizational productivity. Training other employees to adopt inclusive attitudes and gaining support from senior management are also essential.

Despite progress, stakeholders continue to face challenges, including political and bureaucratic issues. Modern workplaces benefit from diversity, and technological advancements have opened new career opportunities, particularly for women with disabilities. In Sri Lanka's aging population, maximizing demographic advantages is crucial.

The conclusion calls for collective efforts to shift from **sympathy to empathy, dependence to independence, and exclusion to inclusion**, ensuring a supportive environment for people with disabilities that upholds justice and dignity for all. Only through this transformation can the right to employment become a reality for visually impaired individuals in Sri Lanka.

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