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Employment Issues and Challenges Experienced by Persons with Disabilities in Gilgit-Baltistan

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the employment issues and challenges faced by persons with disabilities (PWDs) in Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan. Utilizing a quantitative research design, data were collected from 190 employed PWDs across various districts through a structured Likert-scale questionnaire. Findings reveal that negative employer attitudes, limited job opportunities, physical inaccessibility, and social stigma significantly hinder PWDs' inclusion in the workforce. While moderate workplace support and awareness exist, accessibility and policy implementation remain inconsistent. Statistical analysis indicates minimal gender or sectoral differences in perceptions, though urban respondents reported slightly better workplace accessibility. The study emphasizes that institutional barriers, rather than individual limitations, perpetuate employment inequality. Strengthening policy enforcement, promoting inclusive workplace design, enhancing awareness, and improving institutional coordination are vital to achieving equitable employment for PWDs. The findings advocate for a multi-sectoral approach to ensure social justice, empowerment, and sustainable inclusion of PWDs in the Gilgit-Baltistan labor market.

Introduction

Employment is a fundamental human right that is vital to personal identity, socialization, and the satisfaction of day-to-day needs. Approximately 1.3 billion individuals across the world have some kind of disability, and securing their employment rights was prioritized in global documents like the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which promotes equal opportunities and equal treatment in the workplace (Ananian & Dellaferrera, 2024). The lack of employment of individuals with disabilities has a significant impact on the

employment rates of persons without disabilities around the world. An illustration is the number of persons with disabilities in the United States in 2024, where the employment rate among the disabled was 22.7, whereas among the non-disabled persons stood at 65.5. Equally, in the Netherlands, as few as 48% of adults with autism were employed in 2021 relative to 72% of the normal population, and in the United Kingdom, the proportion was only 29% (Brouwers et al., 2024). This continuing joblessness leads to social segregation, reliance, and inadequate mental well-being.

Work is a source of income but also assists in defining personal identity and social belonging. Although the world has been making efforts to increase employment inclusion, PWDs still experience barriers to inclusion in the form of discrimination, physical inaccessibility, and the absence of workplace accommodation. Employers confidently believe that PWDs are less productive, but the research has shown that the working environment, rather than the disability, is becoming the limiting factor of their performance (Abbas et al., 2019). These negative perceptions, along with structural issues, heavily limit the involvement of PWDs in the labor market.

Unemployment affects an individual and society. In PWDs, it causes poverty and dependency, and in communities, it means loss of potential talent and productivity (Teborg et al., 2024). In a developing nation like Pakistan, poverty, inadequate healthcare, and lack of awareness exacerbate poverty and reduce the number of people who can work. This exclusion is enhanced by stereotypes and social stigma, where PWDs cannot receive education, vocational training, and good employment (Anwar et al., 2020).

These global trends can be seen in the case of Gilgit-Baltistan. PWDs experience more barriers to employment finding and retention because of geographic isolation, lack of economic opportunities, and poor public awareness. Most of them are able and willing to work but fail to find jobs because of inaccessible workplaces, non-supportive policies, and discrimination.

This research seeks to define and discuss the most significant problems and challenges of PWDs who seek and receive employment in Gilgit-Baltistan. It concentrates on obstacles like attitudes of the employers, environmental limitations, absence of aids, and social stigma. Knowledge on these issues can be used by policymakers, employers, and nongovernmental organizations to develop inclusive employment policies that enhance equal opportunities and economic empowerment. The job is not just a means of living but also a means of pride, autonomy, and self-esteem. With the development of inclusive workplaces in Gilgit-Baltistan, the society will be able to unlock the potential of PWDs, decrease dependency, and have a more equal and productive community.

Statement of the Problem

Negative attitudes toward people with disabilities (PWDs), the absence of workplace accessibility, insufficient accommodations, and social stereotyping remain significant problems that affect the ability of people with disabilities to get employment. These obstacles translate to the exclusion of the economy, dependency, and social isolation. In Gilgit-Baltistan, the case is even worse due to a lack of employment opportunities, geographical boundaries, and an absence of non-discriminatory work policies. Even after many PWDs have skills, motivation, and desire to work, they do not get engaged in meaningful jobs, and they end up poor and a financial liability to families and society. Although the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and other international obligations focus on equal employment opportunities, PWDs are still facing systematic discrimination and inequality in the labor market. In Gilgit-Baltistan, no extensive research has been carried out to reveal the particular problems and challenges encountered by

PWDs when seeking and maintaining jobs. Policymakers and communities cannot come up with effective strategies to enhance inclusion without knowing these challenges. The purpose of the study is to examine the employment barriers experienced by PWDs in Gilgit-Baltistan and determine how it is possible to enhance their ability to access fair and meaningful work opportunities.

Research Objectives

1. To identify the issues and barriers faced by persons with disabilities (PWDs) in accessing employment opportunities in Gilgit Baltistan.
2. To examine how employers' attitudes, workplace environment, and social perceptions influence the employment of persons with disabilities in Gilgit Baltistan.
3. To explore the level of accessibility and availability for PWDs in workplaces in Gilgit Baltistan.
4. To identify the gaps between existing employment policies and their actual implementation across various sectors in Gilgit-Baltistan.

Literature Review

Issues and Barriers Faced by PWDs in Accessing Employment Opportunities

Employment is crucial in giving people income, self-respect and inclusion into society. Nevertheless, individuals with disabilities (PWDs) still experience major challenges in attaining and retaining jobs especially in developing nations like Pakistan. Research has shown that in low- and middle-income countries, unemployment rates among PWDs are 60-90 percent. The obstacles are inaccessible infrastructure, transport, poor policy enforcement, and negative attitudes of the employers (Morwane et al., 2021). There are also personal reasons like low levels of education, lack of vocational training and discrimination along gender lines that limit access to decent work. In Pakistan, lack of proper implementation of job quotas, inefficient social coordination, outdated vocational training and lack of data on PWDs further diminish employment opportunities. There are still significant obstacles related to negative perceptions and unwillingness to employ persons with disabilities, and insufficient training facilities, transportation, and workplace accessibility impedes long-term employment (Khalid et al., 2022).

Employers' Attitudes, Workplace Environment, and Social Perceptions Influencing PWD Employment

Attitudes of the employers are decisive in determining employment opportunities among PWDs. Although there are employers who recognize their value, a large number of employers continue to underestimate the PWDs as inferior in ability or as expensive to accommodate. Individuals who have previously employed PWDs say that they are reliable and motivated employees, dispelling the myth of poor productivity. Nevertheless, there are still misconceptions regarding the necessity and effectiveness of supervision, which results in exclusion (Burke et al., 2013). Inclusion and job satisfaction are also dependent on the workplace environment. Most organizations are not physically and digitally accessible, and their barriers may include the lack of ramps, elevators, and assistive technologies. Inclusive leadership, equality policies and awareness programs foster a sense of belonging and trust, and non-inclusive environments enhance stigmatization and decline morale (Jani et al., 2025). Employment is also influenced by societal perception. Disability is commonly considered to be a personal restriction instead of a systemic problem, which results in

the existence of discriminatory practices. Sensitivity training and awareness have been found to change attitudes towards inclusion (Ramzan et al., 2024).

Accessibility and Availability for PWDs in Workplaces

Job stability and job satisfaction among PWDs depends on accessibility at the workplace. Barrier-free pathways, ramps, and elevators make people independent and motivated. Universal design combined with assistive technology improves the level of safety, confidence, and commitment to the organization. Stress, absenteeism, and high turnover are caused by a lack of accommodations, though (Kim et al., 2020). The studies also point out the so-called accessibility paradox where organizations boast of inclusivity but they focus on productivity instead of providing meaningful accessibility. The PWDs tend to encounter the obstacles of unavailable digital resources, slow integration of the disabled, and embedded ablest stigmas that compel them to demonstrate their competence at all times (Marathe & Piper, 2025). To the visually impaired, the built environments usually do not provide tactile, auditory, and clear navigating appeals. Poor walking infrastructure, the lack of audio signs, and poor interior design make one more dependent and insecure. Accessibility and independence of visually impaired employees at workplaces can be significantly improved by the implementation of tactile paving, audible signals, and sensory cues.

Gaps Between Employment Policies and Implementation

Regardless of the legal requirements and the existence of quota systems to ensure inclusion, studies have shown that there is a big gap between policy on employment and the practice. An analysis of 16 government departments in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa showed that not a single department met the legal requirement of the job quota of 2% of the population with PWDs. The percentage of employed PWDs in most departments was less than 1 percent, indicating the presence of quota systems on paper only. The reasons include a bad attitude of the employer, ignorance regarding the potential of the PWDs, inaccessible job setups and poor surveillance mechanisms. Also, ineffective implementation of disability legislation and poor knowledge of the employment rights by employers and PWDs are obstacles to successful inclusion. Lack of physical accessibility and effective transportation also restricts the inclusion of PWD in the workforce (Arsh et al., 2019).

Methodology

To explore the Employment Issues and Challenges Experienced by Persons with Disabilities in Gilgit-Baltistan, this study utilized a quantitative research design through the use of a structured questionnaire. The quantitative method had been deemed suitable because it allowed systematizing the collection and analysis of numerical data to determine the main employment issues. The instrument was made of Likert-scale items, which aimed to address the perceptions of PWDs toward employment barriers, social challenges, issues with accessibility, and institutional support.

The 190 employed PWDs in Gilgit-Baltistan were sampled using a snowball technique to represent various employment backgrounds and employment sectors. The sample consisted of both males and females. The data were collected using self-administered questionnaires, and where there was a need to help participants, the researcher would be the one to facilitate collection to eliminate mistakes. The instrument has been designed following an extensive examination of the pertinent literature and would be confirmed by an expert in the Department of Special Education to ascertain that the content is correct and relevant. The last questionnaire had 37 closed-ended questions

organized into four dimensions, namely barriers and issues in employment, employers' attitudes, workplace environment, social perceptions, accessibility and availability in workplaces, and the gaps between existing employment policies and their actual implementation.

The collected data were processed with the help of the Statistical Package of the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, and mean scores) were used to interpret the responses and discover patterns and trends. In the research, all the ethical considerations were observed keenly. The purpose and scope of the study were explained to the participants, and their confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed. It was ensured that informed consent was taken before the participation and the respondents were provided with the option of withdrawing at any point. The research was restricted to Gilgit-Baltistan and was limited to the measurement of the employment-related issues in PWDs.

Result and Analysis

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 190)

Variable	Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	97	51.1
	Female	93	48.9
Age	Below 25	100	52.6
	25–34	64	33.7
	35–44	16	8.4
	45–54	9	4.7
	55 and above	1	0.5
Educational Level	Primary education	125	65.8
	Secondary education	52	27.4
	Bachelor's degree	10	5.3
	Master's degree or higher	3	1.6
District	Gilgit	38	20.0
	Skardu	26	13.7
	Astore	30	15.8
	Shigar	14	7.4
	Kharmang	11	5.8
	Ghizer	11	5.8
	Ghanche	16	8.4
	Hunza	21	11.1
	Nagar	13	6.8
	Diamer	10	5.3
Employment Status	Full-time employed	108	56.8
	Part-time employed	82	43.2
Monthly Household Income	Below 25,000	72	37.9
	25,001–50,000	109	57.4

Variable	Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
	50,001–75,000	5	2.6
	75,001–100,000	3	1.6
	Above 100,000	1	0.5
Place of Residence	Urban	102	53.7
	Rural or Remote	88	46.3
Work Area	Urban	102	53.7
	Rural or Remote	88	46.3
Working Sector	Private	87	45.8
	Government	103	54.2

Table 1 represents the demographic information of 190 respondents who work in various districts of Gilgit-Baltistan. The study consisted of 51.1 males and 48.9 females, indicating that the gender balance was almost even. The age distribution was that the majority (52.6) of the population were young, and 33.7 in between the ages of 25-34 years. Most of the respondents had primary level education (65.8 percent), and a very low percentage (5.3 percent) of the respondents was bachelor holders, and an even lower percentage (1.6 percent) was master holders. Gilgit (20%), and Astore (15.8) had the greatest number of respondents. Over fifty percent (56.8) of the respondents were full-time, and 57.4% of them earned a household income of 25,001-50,000 PKR per month. A greater number of respondents resided in urban areas (53.7) compared to rural or remote areas (46.3). In terms of the employment sector, 54.2 percent were in the government sector, and 45.8 percent in the private sector.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Respondents' Opinions on the Employment Challenges Faced by Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) in District Gilgit

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	M	SD
Employers show negative attitudes toward hiring PWDs	5 (6.2%)	9 (11.1%)	12 (14.8%)	37 (45.7%)	18 (22.2%)	3.67	1.14
Workplaces are not physically accessible for PWDs	4 (4.9%)	6 (7.4%)	10 (12.3%)	39 (48.1%)	22 (27.2%)	3.86	1.09
PWDs face discrimination during job selection	6 (7.4%)	8 (9.9%)	11 (13.6%)	34 (42.0%)	22 (27.2%)	3.72	1.12
There are limited job opportunities for PWDs in Gilgit	3 (3.7%)	5 (6.2%)	10 (12.3%)	40 (49.4%)	23 (28.4%)	3.93	1.03
Employers believe PWDs are less productive	8 (9.9%)	12 (14.8%)	14 (17.3%)	33 (40.7%)	14 (17.3%)	3.51	1.18
Workplaces lack proper accommodations for PWDs	5 (6.2%)	9 (11.1%)	8 (9.9%)	42 (51.9%)	17 (21.0%)	3.69	1.07

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	M	SD
PWDs experience social stigma at the workplace	6 (7.4%)	7 (8.6%)	11 (13.6%)	38 (46.9%)	19 (23.5%)	3.70	1.10
Lack of awareness among employers about PWDs' capabilities	5 (6.2%)	10 (12.3%)	9 (11.1%)	41 (50.6%)	16 (19.8%)	3.66	1.08
Transportation barriers limit PWDs' employment	7 (8.6%)	8 (9.9%)	12 (14.8%)	36 (44.4%)	18 (22.2%)	3.62	1.13
PWDs are not given fair promotions or recognition	6 (7.4%)	11 (13.6%)	13 (16.0%)	35 (43.2%)	16 (19.8%)	3.55	1.15
Society underestimates the abilities of PWDs	4 (4.9%)	7 (8.6%)	9 (11.1%)	41 (50.6%)	20 (24.7%)	3.82	1.06
Lack of government support programs for PWD employment	3 (3.7%)	8 (9.9%)	10 (12.3%)	37 (45.7%)	23 (28.4%)	3.85	1.04

Table 2 displays the descriptive statistics of opinion of respondents regarding the employment concerns of persons with disabilities (PWDs) in Gilgit-Baltistan. The results show that most of the respondents reported that PWDs are experiencing a massive challenge at the labor market. The average scores (between 3.51 and 3.93) are high and indicate that the employment of PWDs is affected by issues such as low employment opportunities, inaccessibility at workplaces, social stigma, and a lack of government help. Another factor that led to exclusion was cited as negative attitudes of employers, and lack of knowledge about the abilities of PWDs among employers. Overall, the findings show that structural, social and attitudinal barriers negatively impact the inclusion of PWDs in the Gilgit-Baltistan work-force.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of Employees' Workplace Support toward Persons with Disabilities

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	M	SD
Co-workers in Gilgit-Baltistan have a positive attitude toward hiring persons with disabilities.	22 (11.6%)	37 (19.5%)	26 (13.7%)	65 (34.2%)	40 (21.1%)	3.34	1.21
Co-workers believe that persons with disabilities can perform job tasks efficiently.	22 (11.6%)	36 (18.9%)	35 (18.4%)	58 (30.5%)	39 (20.5%)	3.29	1.19
Persons with disabilities are treated equally with other employees in the workplace.	24 (12.6%)	20 (10.5%)	47 (24.7%)	60 (31.6%)	39 (20.5%)	3.37	1.22
Supervisors and managers understand the needs of employees with disabilities.	28 (14.7%)	31 (16.3%)	44 (23.2%)	56 (29.5%)	31 (16.3%)	3.16	1.18

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	M	SD
There are awareness or training programs promoting disability inclusion in workplaces.	17 (8.9%)	25 (13.2%)	45 (23.7%)	64 (33.7%)	39 (20.5%)	3.44	1.16
Co-workers in workplaces are supportive toward employees with disabilities.	27 (14.2%)	32 (16.8%)	40 (21.1%)	56 (29.5%)	35 (18.4%)	3.21	1.17
Co-workers often underestimate the abilities of persons with disabilities.	26 (13.7%)	17 (8.9%)	41 (21.6%)	69 (36.3%)	37 (19.5%)	3.39	1.23
The workplace environment in Gilgit-Baltistan is welcoming and comfortable for persons with disabilities.	18 (9.5%)	36 (18.9%)	44 (23.2%)	50 (26.3%)	42 (22.1%)	3.33	1.20
Public awareness about the abilities of persons with disabilities is improving in Gilgit-Baltistan.	21 (11.1%)	22 (11.6%)	31 (16.3%)	68 (35.8%)	48 (25.3%)	3.53	1.14

Table 3 illustrates how the respondents perceive the support that is given to persons with disabilities (PWDs) in the workplace in Gilgit-Baltistan. The results suggest that the level of agreement (mean values 3.16-3.53) is medium that there is general positivity in attitudes and supportive behaviors of the employees towards PWDs. However, many respondents have also noted that there are still many colleagues and managers who remain unaware and unfamiliar with disability-specific needs. There are training and awareness programs that are offered but do not appear to be exercised. The overall conclusions refer to the fact that, despite the fact that the workplaces in Gilgit-Baltistan become more inclusive, more work should be conducted to facilitate the equality of treatment and awareness of disabilities among the employees.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics of Accessibility and Accommodation for Persons with Disabilities in Workplaces

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	M	SD
Most workplaces in Gilgit-Baltistan are physically accessible for persons with disabilities.	17 (8.9%)	19 (10.0%)	38 (20.0%)	56 (29.5%)	60 (31.6%)	3.65	1.18
Office buildings have ramps, lifts, and accessible washrooms for employees with disabilities.	22 (11.6%)	27 (14.2%)	35 (18.4%)	60 (31.6%)	45 (23.7%)	3.42	1.19
Public and private workplaces provide suitable facilities for persons with mobility impairments.	15 (7.9%)	24 (12.6%)	28 (14.7%)	76 (40.0%)	47 (24.7%)	3.61	1.13

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	M	SD
Persons with disabilities have equal opportunities to apply for jobs in both public and private sectors.	21 (11.1%)	24 (12.6%)	32 (16.8%)	62 (32.6%)	51 (26.8%)	3.52	1.17
Assistive technologies (e.g., screen readers, adaptive keyboards) are available in workplaces.	21 (11.1%)	21 (11.1%)	37 (19.5%)	62 (32.6%)	49 (25.8%)	3.51	1.15
Workplaces provide reasonable accommodations based on the specific needs of PWDs.	24 (12.6%)	18 (9.5%)	33 (17.4%)	77 (40.5%)	38 (20.0%)	3.46	1.18
Persons with disabilities can easily use transportation to reach their workplaces.	19 (10.0%)	13 (6.8%)	40 (21.1%)	62 (32.6%)	56 (29.5%)	3.65	1.14
There are special provisions for emergency safety and evacuation for PWDs in workplaces.	26 (13.7%)	24 (12.6%)	28 (14.7%)	73 (38.4%)	39 (20.5%)	3.39	1.22
Employers make necessary adjustments in work schedules for persons with disabilities when required.	17 (8.9%)	18 (9.5%)	26 (13.7%)	74 (38.9%)	55 (28.9%)	3.69	1.16

Table 4 shows the perception of respondents on the accessibility and accommodation of persons with disabilities (PWDs) in Gilgit-Baltistan work places. The average scores (3.39 to 3.69) show that the agreement concerning the existence of physical access, assistive technologies, and reasonable accommodation of PWDs is moderate to slightly high. The majority of respondents admitted that transportation opportunities and flexible working hours tend to be available, whereas emergency safety provisions and access to ramps or lifts demonstrated slightly lower rates of agreement. In general, the results demonstrate that although workplaces are taking steps in the direction of accommodating PWDs, more effort should be invested to make work areas fully accessible and inclusive.

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics of Policy Implementation and Institutional Support for Disability-Inclusive Employment

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	M	SD
Employers in Gilgit-Baltistan follow the disability employment quota system set by the government.	16 (8.4%)	22 (11.6%)	48 (25.3%)	59 (31.1%)	45 (23.7%)	3.50	1.18
Government agencies take action against organizations that do not follow disability	23 (12.1%)	30 (15.8%)	24 (12.6%)	79 (41.6%)	34 (17.9%)	3.37	1.22

employment policies.							
The current employment policies effectively support the inclusion of persons with disabilities.	17 (8.9%)	22 (11.6%)	47 (24.7%)	64 (33.7%)	40 (21.1%)	3.46	1.15
Government support programs (training, grants, or job placement) are accessible to persons with disabilities.	20 (10.5%)	27 (14.2%)	36 (18.9%)	67 (35.3%)	40 (21.1%)	3.42	1.16
NGOs and private organizations play an active role in supporting disability-inclusive employment.	20 (10.5%)	23 (12.1%)	31 (16.3%)	71 (37.4%)	45 (23.7%)	3.52	1.17
Policies promoting PWD employment are sufficient but not properly enforced.	17 (8.9%)	14 (7.4%)	43 (22.6%)	61 (32.1%)	55 (28.9%)	3.65	1.19
There is a need for stronger policy enforcement to ensure equal job opportunities for PWDs.	12 (6.3%)	27 (14.2%)	41 (21.6%)	58 (30.5%)	52 (27.4%)	3.58	1.14

Table 5 shows the perceptions of the respondents on the policy implementation and institutional support on employing disability-inclusive in Gilgit-Baltistan. The mean scores (3.37-3.65) indicate the moderate agreement on the issue of employers and institutions implementing policies and offering support to persons with disabilities (PWDs). According to the respondents, even though certain progress has been registered (including adherence to employment quotas, the presence of support programs, and the participation of the NGOs), the enforcement of the policies and institutional commitment are rather inconsistent. The results emphasize the necessity of having stricter enforcement and monitoring practices to make sure that PWDs get fair employment opportunities and inclusive working practices.

Table 6: Independent Samples t-Test Results for Gender Differences on Key Factors Related to PWD Employment

Variable	Gender	Mean	t-value	df	p-value	95% Confidence Interval
Issues and Barriers	Male	3.43	0.10	188	0.918	-0.15, 0.17
	Female	3.42				
Employers' Attitudes, Workplace Environment, and Social Perceptions	Male	3.42	1.66	188	0.097	-0.03, 0.35
	Female	3.26				
Accessibility and Availability	Male	3.68	2.52	188	0.013	0.06, 0.50
	Female	3.40				

Variable	Gender	Mean	t-value	df	p-value	95% Confidence Interval
Policies and Implementations	Male	3.58	1.45	188	0.149	-0.06, 0.36
	Female	3.42				

Table 6 provides the data of independent samples t-tests that investigate the differences in perception regarding major factors influencing employment of persons with disabilities (PWDs) in Gilgit-Baltistan according to gender. The findings have shown that both male and female respondents tended to report the same perception on the four factors, i.e. Issues and Barriers, Employers Attitudes, Workplace environment and Social Perceptions, Accessibility and Availability and Policies and Implementations. The statistically significant difference was only in the case of Accessibility and Availability ($t = 2.52$, $p = 0.013$), where men had a slightly higher mean score than women, which can be interpreted as men having a better opinion of the workplaces as more accessible. The other differences were not statistically significant, and there were generalized similarities in perceptions regarding PWD employment issues and workplace support in Gilgit-Baltistan between the genders.

Table 7: Independent Samples t-Test Results for Place of Residence Differences in Workplace Perceptions in Gilgit-Baltistan

Variable	Place of Residence	Mean	t-value	df	p-value	95% Confidence Interval
Issues and Barriers	Urban	3.45	0.76	188	0.449	-0.10, 0.22
	Rural or Remote	3.39				
Employers' Attitudes, Workplace Environment, and Social Perceptions	Urban	3.32	-0.40	188	0.690	-0.23, 0.15
	Rural or Remote	3.36				
Accessibility and Availability	Urban	3.43	-2.11	188	0.037	-0.46, -0.02
	Rural or Remote	3.67				
Policies and Implementations	Urban	3.45	-0.95	188	0.343	-0.31, 0.11
	Rural or Remote	3.56				

Table 7 presents the independent samples t-test results comparing workplace perceptions of respondents based on their place of residence in Gilgit-Baltistan. The analysis shows that for most factors—Issues and Barriers, Employers' Attitudes, Workplace Environment, and Social Perceptions, and Policies and Implementations—there were no statistically significant differences between urban and rural or remote respondents ($p > 0.05$). However, a significant difference was observed in Accessibility and Availability ($t = -2.11$, $p = 0.037$), indicating that rural or remote respondents perceive higher accessibility and availability in workplaces compared to urban respondents. Overall, this suggests that place of residence has limited influence on most workplace perceptions, except in matters related to accessibility.

Table 8: Independent Samples t-Test Results for Working Sector Differences in Workplace Perceptions in Gilgit-Baltistan

Variable	Working Sector	Mean	t-value	df	p-value	95% Confidence Interval
Issues and Barriers	Private	3.41	-0.46	188	0.650	-0.20, 0.13
	Government	3.44				
Employers' Attitudes, Workplace Environment, and Social Perceptions	Private	3.29	-1.02	188	0.310	-0.29, 0.09
	Government	3.38				
Accessibility and Availability	Private	3.46	-1.33	188	0.185	-0.37, 0.07
	Government	3.61				
Policies and Implementations	Private	3.42	-1.39	188	0.165	-0.36, 0.06
	Government	3.57				

The results of Table, t-test indicate that there are no significant differences between the employees of the private and government sectors in Gilgit-Baltistan in terms of workplace perceptions such as workplace issues and barriers, employer attitudes and accessibility as well as the policy implementation. It implies that there is no significant difference in the perceptions of the employees of both industries regarding disability-inclusive practices.

Summary

This paper has discussed the employment issues and challenges of persons with disabilities (PWDs) in Gilgit-Baltistan, and the barriers that limit the inclusion of people with disabilities in the labor market. Based on the data of 190 employed PWDs and a quantitative research design, the authors concluded that negative employer perceptions, lack of employment opportunities, inaccessible workplaces, and social stigma are the primary contributors to employment inequality. Although inclusiveness can be reflected in some workplaces, the majority of them do not have sufficient facilities, including ramps, lifts, and assistive technologies. It was also found that government policies and disability employment quota systems are not enforced well, and as a result, the institutional support of disability employment and accountability is minimal. The paper highlights that the systemic cause of employment exclusion of PWDs is not an individual constraint. There were few differences in the perceptions of gender, place of residence and employment sector implying that there are no specific barriers as they are prevalent in all groups. The study recommends that the existing policies should be reinforced, workplaces made more accessible, employers sensitized, and concerted institutional responses to enable inclusive employment. Gilgit-Baltistan can take a step towards social justice, economic empowerment, and meaningful inclusion of persons with disabilities in all spheres of working life through the development of fair and attainable working environments.

Discussion

The results of this research indicate that people with disabilities (PWDs) in Gilgit-Baltistan still experience a considerable set of issues with employment acquisition and maintenance, even though

the international and national documents state the need to be inclusive. In line with international studies (Brouwers et al., 2024; Ananian & Dellaferrera, 2024), the findings indicate that the employment gap between PWDs and non-disabled people is still large, mainly caused by attitudinal, structural, and institutional factors. This data show that negative attitude of employers and ongoing social stigma are still significant barriers. PWDs remain seen as less productive by many employers or as being more expensive to accommodate, as previous research by Burke et al. (2013) and Abbas et al., (2019) found. These misperceptions lead to discriminatory recruitment, promotion and unequal treatment in the workplace. Social exclusion is also a result of this negative perception since PWDs are usually underrated by their co-workers and other members of the community at large. Though the research has discovered that co-workers tend to show moderate support and positive attitudes, there is still lack of awareness programs and disability-sensitivity training that will significantly cause a change in behavior.

Another serious issue that was found in this study was that of accessibility in the workplace. The mean values of moderate in Table 4 indicate that although some of the workplaces have provided ramps, lifts, and assistive technologies, a number of them still do not possess complete features of accessibility. This is consistent with Kim et al., (2020), who point out that access is not merely a physical concern but also an attitudinal one as its influence on the confidence and autonomy of PWDs. The scarcity of emergency services and adaptive equipment brings to the fore the fact that accessibility interventions are usually cosmetic in nature as they only focus on what can be seen but overlook the deeper requirements in the system. The area of policy implementation and institutional support became weak too. Even though the government of Pakistan has implemented a disability employment quota and support system, the respondents indicated that they are not well implemented. This fact is consistent with Arsh et al. (2019), who discovered that the legal quota of the PWDs is under-met in the majority of the public departments. The absence of accountability and coordination between the institutions permits the policy promises to be symbolic but not transformational. Furthermore, most PWDs do not know their employment rights, thus, restricting their involvement in the labor market.

The t-tests results indicate that gender differences and sectorial differences are not significantly different in their perception of employment challenges, which suggests that both male and female with disabilities face the same issues. But the result that rural respondents indicated a higher positive rate of perceptions of accessibility than urban respondents could be due to the close-knit social networks of rural communities, in which informal support and accommodations might be more widespread. The study makes the case that the primary obstacles to PWDs employment in Gilgit-Baltistan are institutionalized, not personal. Ignorance, laxity in enforcement of the policies, poor availability and stereotypes generate a cycle of exclusion. A multi-level approach is required to overcome this cycle, which is collectively a policy reform, employer training, workplace redesign, and public awareness campaigns. The inclusion of PWDs into the work environment by collaboration between government institutions, NGOs, and the private sector can help in creating a more inclusive work environment where the PWDs are not seen as a cost to the organization, but as a potential productive member of the society.

Findings

The research found some significant results on the employment problem and challenges of persons with disabilities (PWDs) in Gilgit-Baltistan.

1. Constant Employment Barriers:

The analysis revealed that PWDs are still experiencing considerable barriers to employment. These are low employment opportunities, poor employer attitudes and discriminative employment behavior. Most respondents attested that employers tend to underestimate the potential of PWDs and assume that they are less productive or hard to accommodate.

2. Absence of Workplace Accessibility:

Most of the respondents claimed that work places in Gilgit-Baltistan are not accessible. The presence of poor infrastructure including ramps, lifts and available washrooms constrain the involvement of persons with mobility challenges. Despite some achievements in the provision of assistive technologies and transportation facilities, accessibility to them is not yet uniform throughout the districts.

3. Social Stigma and Negative perceptions:

Misconceptions about disability and social stigma were major challenges. Most PWDs are discriminated at work and feel isolated in the society. Society still treats disability as a personal constraint and not a structural problem, which has a harmful impact on confidence and inclusion.

4. Lack of Policy Implementation:

The research established a clear gap between employment policies and their practical implementation. Although government quotas and disability employment policies are there, they are poorly implemented. The lack of monitoring and accountability is that most organizations do not follow the disability quota or offer the necessary accommodations.

5. Moderate Workplace Support:

The results showed that co-workers and supervisors tend to have moderate levels of support towards the disabled employees. Awareness programs have been introduced in some workplaces but not everywhere. This implies that there should be more organized training and sensitization programs to encourage inclusivity.

6. Lack of Institutional and Governmental Support:

Respondents pointed out the lack of effective institutional frameworks to help PWDs secure or maintain jobs. Available government programs, including job placement, training and financial programs are not accessible or publicized adequately. NGOs are supportive but cannot replace poor government intervention.

7. Gender and Sectoral Comparisons:

The further results of t-tests of independent samples were that there were no significant differences among genders with respect to perceptions of employment challenges. Both male and female respondents expressed comparable challenges of accessibility at the workplace, discrimination, and

institutional support. Similarly, the significant difference between the public and the private sector employees was not observed, which shows that challenges are similar in both sectors.

8. Differences in rural vs. Urban Accessibility:

There was also a major difference in the perception of the workplace accessibility as the rural respondents rated the accessibility a little higher than the urban respondents. This could be an indication of variances in the size of workplace, workplace settings or a social support structure.

Recommendations

According to the results of the study, the following recommendations are offered to enhance the employment opportunities and inclusion of persons with disabilities (PWDs) in Gilgit-Baltistan:

1. Enforcement of Policies:

The government ought to make sure that the disability employment quota of 2 percent is employed strictly and should put in place regular monitoring systems to check the compliance of the 2 percent quota in both the public and the private sectors. Those organizations that do not achieve the quota should be penalized and those who encourage inclusive employment should be encouraged through incentives like tax benefits or recognition prizes.

2. Improve access to Workplaces:

The universal design principles should be embraced by employers to make work places accessible physically. This incorporates the provision of ramps and lifts, textured pavements, accessible toilets and well-defined emergency clearing paths. Employees with diverse needs should also be accommodated using assistive technologies like screen readers, adaptive key boards and hearing aids.

3. Carry out Awareness and Sensitization Programs:

This should be done through continuous sensitization and training of employers, co-workers, and managers to minimize the stereotypes and cultivate positive attitudes towards disability. Training on inclusion and diversity ought to be included in organizational culture and employee orientation.

4. Encourage Vocational and Skills Training:

In Gilgit-Baltistan, special vocational training facilities should be opened to increase the employability of PWDs. The programs should emphasize on digital literacy, entrepreneurship, and technical skills in line with the market requirements. Relevance and sustainability of training through collaboration between government agencies, the NGOs and the private sector can be achieved.

5. Enhance Institutional Support and Co-ordination:

There must be high level of co-ordination between the government departments, NGOs and employers in order to see that PWDs are given access to employment support facilities including

job counseling, placement programs as well as financial support. We can have a central disability employment unit, which will handle data, keep track of progress, and refer job applicants to non-discriminatory employers.

6. Provide Equal Opportunities and Fair Treatment:

Employers are advised to implement transparent anti-discrimination policies to ensure that they recruit, promote, and compensate the PWDs fairly. Practices related to inclusion at the workplace (flexible work schedules, remote work) and modification of the tasks should also be implemented in order to consider the needs of individuals.

7. Increase Research and Data Collection:

Additional empirical research is needed to be done at the district and provincial levels to discover new barriers and trace changes in the employment patterns of the PWDs. High quality data may be used to make better policy decisions and to measure the effectiveness of inclusion programs.

8. Investigate and Educate PWDs by Representation:

The policy-makers, consultations, and planning regarding employment need to involve persons with disabilities actively. Their involvement will make interventions highly applicable, feasible, and based on lived experience.

9. Public Education and Media Activism:

Societal perceptions can be changed with the help of media campaigns that would emphasize the skills and success stories of PWDs. Media, education and public discourse can positively represent people and break stigma and foster acceptance among the wider community.

10. Establish a universal Disability Inclusion Model:

The Government of Gilgit-Baltistan is required to devise a provincial inclusion framework that incorporates employment, education, healthcare and access. This framework must correspond with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and national disability policies in order to achieve a coherent and long-term development.

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