

Factors Contributing to the Successful Promotion of Persons with Disabilities at Provincial Departments in South Africa

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Abstract – Persons with disability constitute about 15% of the world population, yet the official unemployment rate is at least twice that of persons without disabilities. The ILO reported that persons with disabilities are mostly underemployed in low-wage jobs with a lack of promotions and poor working conditions than their counterparts without disabilities in the workplace. Many studies conducted focus on the factors affecting the employment of persons with disabilities in general and very few on their successful promotion to higher positions. This paper aims to identify the factors contributing to the successful promotion of persons with disabilities at the selected Limpopo Provincial Department in South Africa. The study is exploratory and adopts a qualitative approach. It focuses on the Department of Social Development (DSD) and the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) where eighteen respondents were purposively sampled, nine persons with different disabilities and nine human resource officials. Semi-structured interviews were conducted using an interview guide to allow respondents to disclose their thoughts and feelings about promotional experiences. Some interviews were conducted face-to-face and virtually due to time and financial constraints. Data was collected using secondary information such as government policies, reports, prescripts, and publications. Thematic analysis was used, and themes were induced from the interview data. Data was presented in the form of tables and percentages. The study recommends that provincial departments promote a culture of inclusion where persons with disabilities feel valued, respected, and supported in various ways.

Keywords – Successful Factors, Promotions, Persons with Disabilities, Government Departments

1 Introduction

The employment and promotion of persons with disabilities have been a challenge over the last few decades in both developing and developed countries. In most developed countries, the official unemployment rate for persons with disabilities of working age is at least twice that of persons without disabilities, and in developing countries between 80% and 90% of persons with disabilities are unemployed (Wilson & Shishiwa, 2023). Persons with disability constitute about 15% of the world population (United Nations, 2018) and only a few countries have disability-specific legislation. Several international laws have been introduced to make changes to the employment of persons with disabilities. The United Nations 'Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities' (UNCRPD) recognises the right of persons with disabilities to perform duties, on an equal basis with others (United Nations, 2006). This includes the right to earn a living with free choice of admission to the labour market and an open, comprehensive, and accessible work environment for persons with disabilities (United Nations, 2006). In 2001, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) introduced the 'Code of Good Practice: Key Aspects on the Employment of People with Disabilities to assist governments and employers in creating a supportive legislative and social policy framework to promote employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. The South African government has developed several policies and frameworks to address the barriers that prevent people with disabilities from fully participating in society since 1994 (Tinta and Kolanisi, 2023). The promulgation of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) (Constitution), the Skills Development Act No. 97 of 1998 (SDA), the Employment Equity Act No. 55 of 1998 (EEA), the Labour Relations Act No. 55 of 1996 (LRA), the White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy (White Paper), Code of Good Practice: Key Aspects on the Employment of People with Disabilities (2002) (Disability Code), the Technical Assistance Guidelines on the Employment of Persons with Disabilities, 2005 (TAG) ensured the successful inclusion of persons with disabilities in the workplace. Furthermore, in 1994, a cabinet resolution was taken that the South African workforce should constitute 2% of persons with disabilities by 2005. This led to an increase in the number of persons with disabilities in the workplace including the South African public service. According to the Department of Women Youth and Persons with Disability (DWYP) report (2020), there were 1 215 057 employees in the Public Service of which 12 560 (1.03%) were employees with disabilities. Women were 6 607 (52.60%) and men were 5 953 (47.40%). Whilst some employers are transforming their workplaces in terms of hiring persons with disabilities, very few go beyond the 1.2 percent (Thejane, 2023). Internationally, persons with disabilities continue to face marginalisation and exclusion from the workforce (Morwane, Dada, & Bornman, 2021). The ILO (2019) reported that persons with disabilities are mostly underemployed in low-wage jobs with a lack of promotions and poor working conditions than their counterparts without disabilities in the workplace. Previous studies have shown that persons with disabilities have advanced to higher levels due to certain factors globally. However, there is a dearth of literature on the factors contributing to the successful promotion of persons with

disabilities in developing countries, including South Africa. Many studies conducted focus on the factors affecting the employment of persons with disabilities in general and very few on their successful promotion to higher positions. For instance, a study conducted in selected government departments in Zambia by Simatimbe, Moonga, Hambulo, Moonga, and Mbozi (2019) revealed that persons with disabilities were underrepresented, and promotions were not easy for them in the workplace. This shows that persons with disabilities are not fully considered for better promotional opportunities, and they are not accommodated like their counterparts without disabilities. A study by Molefe (2022) revealed that the South African Limpopo Provincial Government Departments neglected its commitment to employ 2% of persons with disabilities in each of the province's 11 departments as only a few met the target. It is crucial to check whether persons with disabilities in the establishment of the provincial departments are enjoying equal treatment and promotional opportunities as South Africa is celebrating 30 years of freedom this year 2024. This paper aims to identify the factors contributing to the successful promotion of persons with disabilities at the selected Limpopo Provincial Department in South Africa. The findings will assist government officials, private sector organisations, policymakers, persons with disabilities and human resource officials in improving employment opportunities, reviewing policies and creating promotional opportunities for persons with disabilities.

2 Literature Review

The literature review focuses on two theories that forms the theoretical foundation of this paper. It then focuses on the legal framework relating to the employment and promotion of persons with disabilities, competitive and non-competitive promotion, and empirical literature on employees and persons with disabilities.

2.1 The Social Capital Theory

The social capital theory (SCT) has been developed and expanded by various scholars and researchers such as Bourdieu (a French sociologist in the 1980s), Putman (an American political scientist in 2000), Coleman (an American sociologist in 1988) and Lin (a sociologist). Richard and Michael (2015) defined social capital as any feature of a social relationship that one has either formal or informal that yields reproductive benefits. The SCT refers to the resources and benefits that individuals can access through their social connections and the norms of reciprocity and trust that exist within those networks. The SCT further proposed that support from family, friends, neighbours, colleagues, associates, and other groups has value and benefits tangibly and measurably (Claridge, 2004). This theory means that individuals are employed based on who they know (their relationships with people who can influence the selection process) and focus less on what they know. Those disadvantaged in making or having social networks often lack access to networks connecting them to educational opportunities or jobs (Baumann and Utz, 2019).

Furthermore, Fetzner (2007), argues that building and maintaining a social network requires significant effort and regular, value-added correspondence. Semrau and Werner (2014) added that merely extending the size of one's network does not signify that the quality of those relationships will also be amplified.

2.2 The Career Capital Theory

Some of the key proponents of Career Capital Theory (CCT) include Newport (a computer science professor and author), Ibarra (a professor of organisational behaviour), Granovetter (a sociologist) and Cappelli (a management professor). Nevertheless, career capital theory, developed by sociologist Randall Collins, is a framework that highlights the importance of accumulating and leveraging various forms of capital (for example, skills, knowledge, reputation, and social connections) to advance one's career (Collins, 1979, Hall, 2002). According to Todd (2015), career capital refers to the stock of resources that increase the future impact of an individual's career. Influenced by CCT, DeFillippi and Arthur (1994) developed the Intelligent Career Framework (ICF) that interplay among three ways of knowing that broadly reflect an individual's values, motivation and identity. The three types of career-based investments and knowledge that individuals need to know are 'why we work' (knowing why), 'with whom we work' (knowing whom), and 'how we work' (knowing how) (Parker, Khopova and Arthur, 2009). Knowing why relates to the individual's identity, career-related choices and the motivation and energy which individual brings to their careers (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994; Inkson & Arthur, 2001). (Launikari, 2017). Knowing how relates to the skills, competence and expertise required for a particular occupational role and that are transferable to other professional contexts. Knowing who consists of social relations within and external to the organisation and within a professional network relevant to the career (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994, (Launikari, 2017). A study by Mohajan (2019) found that knowledge is considered the basis for developing sustained long-term competitive advantage for every organisation. Moreover, knowledge sharing is a crucial factor that turns individual knowledge into group organisational knowledge.

2.3 The Legal Framework Relating to Employment and Promotion Persons with Disabilities

The United Nations in the early 1980s declared the period 1983-1992 the Decade of Disabled Persons, where Member States had to implement the World Programme of Action Concerning People with Disabilities (PACAD, 2002). This initiative brought awareness of how potential employers could utilise the services of persons with disabilities for the benefit of all parties. Several UN conventions and codes have been introduced such as the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (UNCPRD) and the Code of Good Practice: Key Aspects on the Employment of People with Disabilities. Several countries have since promulgated prescripts related to the employment of persons with disabilities. For instance, the United Kingdom promulgated the

Disability Discrimination Act (1995), the United States of America introduced the American Disability Act (1990), and the Republic of Kenya promulgated the Persons with Disability Acts (2003) to name a few. Despite the legislation, persons with disabilities continue to face disproportionately high rates of underemployment, unemployment, and work instability compared to the overall community (Beatty, Baldrige, Boehm, Kulkarni and Colella, 2019)

In 1994, the newly elected non-racial democratic Government of National Unity inherited a South African Public Service with discriminatory legislative frameworks, policies, and practices. The challenge was to restructure the South African Public Service and introduce a legislative framework that would support those people who had been unfairly disadvantaged such as women, Blacks (Africans, Coloured and Indians), and persons with disabilities. Chapter 2, Bill of Rights, section 9 of the new Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) has a clause on equality. The Employment Equity Act No. 55 of 1998 (as amended) section 6 mentioned the grounds that people should not be discriminated against including persons with disabilities. The Labour Relations Act No. 66 of 1995 (as amended) protects employees against unfair dismissals. The Skills Development Act No. 97 of 1998 (as amended) aims to develop and improve the skills of the South African workforce by providing opportunities for internships and other training programmes. Section 2(1) (e) states that the purpose is to improve the prospects of persons previously disadvantaged by unfair discrimination and to redress those disadvantages through training and education. Persons with disabilities should be involved in job-related training like any other employees to increase their chances of career advancement and promotion. The state has published several white papers based on the Employment Equity Act such as the White Paper on Human Resource Management in the Public Service (1997), the White Paper on Affirmative Action in the Public Service (1998), and the White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service (1995). These white papers aim to meet the imbalances of the past including persons with disabilities, and at the same time, not compromise service delivery improvement.

2.4 The Work Profile of Persons with Disabilities in South Africa

South Africa has made progress in addressing the challenges of discrimination against people with disability at three levels, namely, policy, legislative, and administrative through developing and implementing related frameworks as stated above. The South African government gave a mandate to the Department of Employment and Labour to regulate the labour market through policies and programmes which are developed in consultation with social partners in order to provide adequate social safety nets to protect vulnerable workers. Nonetheless, the 19th Commission for Employment Equity Annual Report 2018/19 on employment equity progress amongst designated employers observed a slow improvement in the employment of persons with disabilities in both the public and private sectors. Table 1 below shows the workplace profile by occupational level and disability between 2016 and 2018. It must be noted that both public and private sector organisations submitted reports on the status of the employment of persons with disabilities.

Table 1: Workplace profile by occupational level and disability between 2016 and 2018

TOP MANAGEMENT	2016	2017	2018
Senior Management	1.2%	1.3%	1.2%
Professionally qualified	0.9%	1.3%	1.1%
Semi-skilled level	0.9%	0.9%	0.9%
Unskilled level	0.8%	1.0%	1.1%
Average Trend across all levels	0.8%	1.0%	1.0%

Source: Employment Equity Report 2018/19

Table 1 above shows the fluctuation in the employment of persons with disabilities at the senior management level between 2016 and 2018. One can state that the representation of persons with disabilities at the Senior Management level remains negligible at 1.2%. It must be mentioned that in senior management, persons with disabilities are largely represented by the White population group with males at 40.1% and females at 17.1%. For persons with disabilities who are professionally qualified (workers in various sectors such as mining, catering, agriculture, and manufacturing), the table shows a minor increase from 0.9% to 1.1%, again represented by the White population group. The African Population Group representation is higher in Limpopo Province (85.6%) which affects the representation and workforce profile of persons with disabilities. However, with semi-skilled occupational level, the employment rate remained at 0.9% for the period mentioned. Persons with disabilities remain relatively low at the semi-skilled level. The increase was from 0.8% to 1.1 at the unskilled occupational level. The majority of persons with disabilities employed at this level are from the African Population Group with males at 44.7.% and females at 35.7% and are the highest representative group across all provinces at the unskilled level. The overall trend across all levels shows an increase in the employment of persons with disabilities from 0.8% to 1.0%. Significantly employment of persons with disabilities remains low as this designated group is neglected in terms of affirmative action, according to the Employment Equity Report 2018/19. It is noticeable from the trend analysis on the representation of Persons with Disabilities over the past three years that little progress is being made in increasing the representation of persons with disabilities in the workforce across all occupational levels. Therefore, the CEE urges all designated employers to prioritise and increase the representation of persons with disabilities in their workplaces across all occupational levels (Employment Equity Report 2018/19).

People with disabilities can have highly successful jobs and can act as mentors and role models for others in the workplace (Noonan., Gallor, Hensler-McGinnis, Fassinger, Wang, & Goodman, 2004). Moore, et al (2020) argued that factors such as personal motivation, performance, perseverance,

adaptability, and willingness to help others make employees with disabilities successful. Successful persons with disabilities, through their resilience in overcoming the challenges of their disabilities, bring a positive change to their teams through their character and outstanding performance (Moore, Hankins, and Doughty, 2020).

2.5 Promotion and Persons with Disabilities

Promotion or career advancement is a process through which an employee of a company is given a higher share of duties, a higher pay scale or both (Rehman, Zaheer & Sufwan, 2007). It boosts the morale of promoted employees, increases their productivity and improves the overall growth and development of business organisations (Arthur, Kaphova & Wilderon, 2005, Ansah, 2017). Employees must understand the models for employee promotion. Berman, Bowman, West and Wart (2010) broadly categorised the models into non-competitive and competitive. Promotions are based on the standard set of achievements and accomplishments of employees are known as non-competitive promotions (Ansah, 2017). In such promotions, employees are promoted once they reach a certain milestone in their career journey, irrespective of variable features like performance and dedication (Berman et al., 2010). A competitive model of promotion is a method in which employees have to prove their worth to employers in order to be promoted to a higher rank or position (Berman et al., 2010). Unlike the non-competitive method, this method takes into account employee performance, productivity, skills, experience, knowledge and other such factors (Ansah, 2017). Furthermore, Mangkunegara (2012) mentioned several indicators considered in the promotion process such as honesty, discipline, work performance, cooperation, skills, loyalty, leadership, education and communication.

Organisations have policies and are aware of different mechanisms to boost the employment and promotion of persons with disabilities. Yamin, Sakawati, Putri, (2019) emphasised the importance of organisations having a job development programme. They argued that employee development through job promotion programs is intended to provide experience in carrying out management functions at a higher structural level than before. Job promotion programs can be implemented if there are positions that have not been filled or there are vacancies as well as the re-evaluation of old positions (Yamin, et al, 2019). The opportunity to fill a position is first given to those who have fulfilled all the requirements regarding the implementation of the promotion (Yamin, et al, 2019). However, persons with disabilities advance into leadership positions at a lower rate than persons without disabilities (Bebbington & Özbilgin, 2013, Turcotte, 2014). Furthermore, persons with disabilities receive lower wages, less job security, and less training at work in comparison to persons without disabilities (Schur Kruse, Blasi, & Blanck, 2009).

2.6 Empirical Literature on the Promotion of Employees

Previous researchers pointed out that employees tend to be excited about their duties and even do more when they are promoted or when promotion is

in view (Suparina, 2018; Madugu, & Ogundeji, 2023). Turner (2020) wrote a chapter on the psychology of work and employee engagement pointed out that employees succeed in promotions because of factors such as dedication, good performance, and the ability to handle additional responsibilities. Tripathy (2020) pointed out that for employees to succeed, they have to upgrade their hard skills and polish their soft skills so that they can be in careers with high salaries and better opportunities for career development. It was further found that soft skills play a significant role in building careers for employees. They should change their attitude, attention, and commitment to work (Tripathy, 2020). Furthermore, they should develop other abilities like effective communication skills, teamwork, leadership qualities, stress management, emotional intelligence, and so on (Tripathy, 2020). Therefore, this shows that developing hard and soft skills is a crucial factor for employees to succeed within the workplace. A study by Koekemoer (2014) on South African organisations revealed the factors that impact the career success of managers were internal and external factors that made managers succeed. The internal factors include individuals' personal attributes, skills, and education. On the other hand, the external factors include political and economic climate and business environment.

A study by Setyawati, Woelandari, and Rianto (2022) revealed that promotional activities improve the standard of living of employees within the workplace for the better. With motivation, persons with disabilities will compete healthily. This is considered an effective motivation apart from a salary increase. Promotions motivate employees to improve their performance and create employment stability within the organisation (Setyawati, et al, 2022). Samosh (2021) conducted a study that generates contributions to several pieces of literature, including research on stakeholder theory, leadership, careers, and disability and work and found that persons with disabilities used three sets of facilitators such as career self-management strategies, social networks, and organisational and social factors to overcome obstacles and progress their careers to leadership positions. A paper by Gupta and Priyadarshi (2020) studied factors that contribute to the rise of successful persons with disabilities who can acquire professional qualifications and successfully reach senior managerial positions. They found that factors such as individual, organisational, societal, and family contributed to the success of persons with disabilities.

3 Research Methodology

The study is exploratory and adopts a qualitative approach. It focuses on the Department of Social Development (DSD) and the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) where eighteen respondents were purposively sampled, nine persons with different disabilities and nine human resource officials. It is important to understand the demographic profile of persons with disabilities as the study focuses on their promotion experiences within the provincial department in Limpopo Province, South Africa. Twenty-three per cent of the respondents had certificates, 11% had Grade 12

certificates, twenty-two per cent (22%) had a degree, 22% had an honour degree and 11% had a master's as the highest qualification. The disability status showed that 78% of the persons with disabilities had a physical impairment, 11% had albinism and 11% had a hearing impairment. The persons with disabilities positions within the Limpopo Provincial Department were foreman, HR Clerk, Registry Clerk, Senior Personnel, Social Worker, Assistant Director, and Deputy Director. With years of experience, 45% had between 11 and 15 years of experience and 22% had between 16 and 20 years of experience.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted using an interview guide to allow respondents to disclose their thoughts and feelings about promotional experiences. Some interviews were conducted face-to-face and others virtually due to time and financial constraints. Data was collected using secondary information such as government policies, reports, prescripts and publications. Thematic analysis was used and themes were induced from the interview data. Data was presented in the form of tables and percentages. The gatekeeper's letter was obtained from the provincial department and ethical clearance from the University of Limpopo was granted.

4 Results

The findings were analysed and presented in the form of tables which listed the themes and the frequency of responses. Anecdotes were also presented without tables in order to introduce the exact responses of the respondents. To identify factors that contribute to the successful promotions for persons with disabilities, 4 questions were asked. The researcher addressed this objective for both persons with disabilities and HRM officials to share their thoughts. However, some questions were directed to persons with disabilities only.

4.1 Succeeding in a position

The first question asked respondents to state how persons with disabilities succeeded in the positions they are currently occupying. This question was directed to persons with disabilities only. The themes and responses can be seen in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Succeeding in a promotion.

Themes	Frequency of Responses
Studying further	3
Internship	2
Meeting the minimum requirements	2
No promotion but redeployment	2

Table 2 above shows that 33% (n=3) of the respondents indicated that they succeeded in getting promoted because of furthering their studies. Respondent 3 noted, "*I applied, I went to school to study as a Social Worker I also had*

a bursary and I got distinctions". Respondent 8 said, "My studies contributed, and my work experience contributed too. But it was just a straightforward promotion, as I am saying I don't think my disability status contributed to my career". Two respondents (22%) mentioned that they succeeded in getting promoted because they started with internships. Respondent 7 pointed out that she "started with a learnership then the posts came out and I applied then they considered me, and I got appointed". Twenty-two (2) respondents pointed out that they met the minimum requirements of the post, hence they were successful. Respondent 6 stated, "I was meeting the minimum requirements". Two respondents (22%) mentioned that they were never promoted but were redeployed for various reasons. One respondent pointed out that he moved to the position because he had to replace someone. Respondent 4 mentioned, "It was just a level I entered the workforce with. I have never moved to another level since I got here. I am still waiting for them to move me to another level".

4.2 Promotional assistance

The second question asked the respondents about the kind of assistance they received to get promoted. This question was directed to persons with disabilities only. The themes and responses can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3: Assistance to a promotion

Themes	Frequency of Responses
No assistance	6
Family	2
Training and workshops	1
Supervisor	1

The majority of the respondents (60%) indicated that they never got any assistance when it came to applying for promotion and advancing to higher levels (see Table 2 above). Respondent 7 noted, *"Me, getting promoted has nothing to do with any assistance"*. Respondent 8 further stated *"None, as I am saying it was based on the work experience and academic qualifications"*. Twenty percent (n=2) of the respondents stated they received assistance from family members. Respondent 1 pointed out *"Since well my family is not working and not familiar with where I was working, they supported me at all costs"*. Ten percent (n=1) indicated that assistance was received from the supervisor. Respondent 1 added, *"My supervisor who was equipping me and giving me information on how to do things or work better.... this is the assistance that I can say I received from my supervisor who was monitoring me"*. It must be noted that the same respondents mentioned two points, family and supervisor. One respondent (10%) stated that training and workshops attended assisted in getting a promotion. Respondent 9 continued *"I wouldn't say assistance per se but the training and the workshops that we attended as we were working, they develop and upskill you"*.

4.3 Successful factors

The third question asked the respondents about the factors that lead to successful promotion of persons with disabilities. This question was posed to persons with disabilities and HRM officials from both provincial departments. Therefore, there are two separate tables, one indicates persons with disabilities perspective, and the other one is the HRM officials' perspective.

Factors leading to successful promotions of Persons with Disabilities from Persons with Disabilities' Perspective

It must be noted that some of the respondents mentioned more than one successful factor when responding to this question. The respondents' answers are tabulated in Table 3 below.

Table 4: Successful Factors from Persons with Disabilities

Themes	Frequency of responses
Personal motivation (attitude and positivity)	4
Organisational support (colleagues, supervisors, management)	4
Education	3
Family support	2
Dedication (competency and hard work)	2

From Table 4 above, it can be seen that five themes emerged with sub-themes from the responses received from the respondents.

An equal number of respondents four each (27% each), mentioned that personal motivation and organisational support contributed immensely to their successful promotion. Respondent 1 stated that *"turn the weak points to the strength so that when you have made a mistake and somebody comes to you and tells you that you were supposed to do this and that, take it positively with a good heart because it will build you and make you a better person when time goes by. I didn't take it as if somebody is belittling me, I took it as advice that makes me a better person"*. Respondent 7 pointed out that *"For me being where I am in terms of still standing here without caring about how the employer thinks of me, it is.... my attitude. If you can't work with me because of this disability, then you are not meant to work with me because I am here to work"*. Respondent 9 further pointed out that *"The percentage for persons with disabilities and also the support from management"*. Twenty percent (n=3) mentioned education as a successful factor in their promotion. Respondent 7 commented *"Another thing that assisted me is that when everything happened, I already had qualifications and work experience. So, what I am doing now is I no longer need someone to mentor me. I am improving myself as I am working. I told myself that I have kids and they must not see me as somebody who is struggling due to this"*. Thirteen percent (n=2) mentioned family support and another two respondents (13%) mentioned dedication as the factor contributing to their successful promotion. Respondent 3 said, *"Family*

support, Colleagues support, and Supervisor support". Respondent 7 stated *"Family's support and dedication Nobody put me here, but God did. He put me for a purpose to serve people and I will continue serving, and I believe that he will strengthen me to be able to do things. I am in this position because I have the capabilities, my hearing has nothing to do with my capabilities"*. Respondent 8 further noted that *"Being a hard worker, doing my work with passion contributed"*.

Promoted persons with disabilities and factors leading to successful promotions of Persons with Disabilities from Human Resource Management Officials' Perspectives

From the HRM officials' side, it must be noted that most respondents mentioned more than one successful factor when responding to this question. The respondents' answers are tabulated in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Promoted Persons with Disabilities and Successful Factors from Human Resource Management Officials

Themes	Frequency of respondents
Do not remember anyone/ Do not know any person being promoted	5
Organisational support (training, mentorship, coaching).	3
Education	2
HR ringfenced position	1
Performance	1

From Table 5 above, the respondents (n=5) stated that they do not remember, know or could not think of one person with a disability who got promoted. Respondent 1 said, *"I don't remember anyone at the district level, maybe at the provincial office they might have"*. Respondent 4 further pointed out that *"I don't know anyone"*. Other respondents pointed out that persons with disabilities have been promoted. Twenty-five percent (n=3) of the respondents mentioned that organization support such as training, mentoring and coaching contributed to the successful promotion of persons with disabilities in their departments. Respondent 8 pointed out that *".... They need to be coached, and mentored, and so ... interventions are not only for training someone, you can find out that this person is good but needs to be coached here and there"*. Two respondents (20%) were of the view that education contributed to the successful promotion of persons with disabilities. Respondent 5 *"Some of them register with their own money because they don't want to wait for the department to register for them.... They develop themselves rather than the department developing them"*. Respondent 2 said, *"He was promoted due to the following aspects: qualifications, commitment, competency, knowledge and skills"*. One respondent (10%) indicated that a post was ringfenced for a person with a disability and that contributed to successful promotion. Respondent 6 stated, *"Yes, it is because they were targeting persons with disabilities... So that could be the reason why they were appointed or promoted"*.

Ten percent (n=1) of the respondents mentioned performance as another successful factor that contributed to the promotion of a person with a disability. Respondent 8 added that *“intervention mechanisms are needed and contributed to perform outstanding...it becomes easy for them to get promoted to senior positions”*.

4.4 Motivational Factors for Persons with Disabilities

The last question of the interview guide asked the respondents from the Limpopo Provincial Departments about the advice they can give to motivate persons with disabilities who want to succeed in their careers and get promoted. This question was posed to persons with disabilities only. The respondents provided various factors. Respondents to this question mentioned perseverance, self-introspection, personal development (education), hard work, self-confidence (self-love, self-reliant, being fearless), taking responsibility, fighting for your rights, performing, taking risks, knowledge sharing, equal treatment and respecting self and other aspects of successful promotion for persons with disabilities. Respondent 1 noted that *“Perseverance is the mother of success. Tell yourself, you have a mission or objective. What is it that you want to achieve in life? So, once people see something negative in you, have self-introspection so you know how better you can deal with negative things. Do self-introspection and check that indeed you were doing this thing in the right or wrong way. Then if you find that those people are trying to build you to be a better person in future, take it in a positive way or a good spirit, it will build you”*. Respondent 3 remarked *“You can develop yourself. Do other courses to get knowledge, do management courses so that you can apply when they advertise a management position”*. Respondent 4 commented *“The advice I can give to someone is that you should work hard at least.... but to survive in this department you need perseverance”*. Respondent 5 stated *“Register and study other courses and further studies”*.

5 Discussion

When persons with disabilities were requested to state how they succeeded in the position they are occupying, they mentioned studying further, internships, and meeting the minimum requirements. The findings are in line with Gupta and Priyadarshi (2020) who stated that acquiring professional qualifications contributes to the rise of successful persons with disabilities. Mangkunegara (2012) emphasised the importance of formal education for employees which must be according to job specifications. More persons with disabilities in internships can be employed based on their educational qualifications and have a chance of being absorbed into the establishment or competing for vacant positions. However, for those who have not received any promotion, it is crucial to understand the promotion model utilised by the organization. For instance, the competitive model used by the Limpopo Provincial Department is a competitive promotion which requires employees including

persons with disabilities to prove their worth to employers to be promoted to a higher rank or position (Berman et al., 2010).

Concerning promotional assistance, 60% of persons with disabilities indicated they received no assistance at all from their employer. There is only one respondent with a disability who received assistance and that respondent was on internship. This is in contravention of the SDA (97 of 1998) Section 2(1) (e) which aims to improve the prospects of persons previously disadvantaged groups including persons with disabilities through training and education. If the department ensured that persons with disabilities were involved in job-related training their chances of career advancement and promotion would have increased. Persons with disabilities are not benefiting from the CCT which highlights the importance of accumulating and leveraging various forms of capital such as skills, knowledge, reputation, and social connections to advance one's career. It is possible that persons with disabilities are not aware of how to prepare themselves for promotion. They might believe that by having a disability, they will automatically be promoted. Persons with disabilities must invest in their careers and be guided by the intelligent career framework. They must know 'why we work', 'with whom we work', and 'how we work' (Parker, et al, 2009). In addition, organisations must make the environment conducive for persons with disabilities to be involved in every forum where decisions that affect them are made, including promotional opportunities. Applying the principles of career capital theory to the promotion of persons with disabilities involves creating inclusive and supportive workplace environments. Employers, in this provincial department, need to provide reasonable accommodations and support to ensure that persons with disabilities have equal opportunities to develop their skills and build career capital. Employers can play a role in creating inclusive environments that facilitate networking opportunities for all employees, including those with disabilities. Providing training and development opportunities for persons with disabilities is essential for helping them enhance their skills, knowledge, and career capital. In the case of provincial departments, management should offer accessible training programmes and resources to support the professional growth of persons with disabilities. By promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives, the provincial department can create a more supportive and inclusive environment for persons with disabilities to thrive and advance in their careers.

Persons with disabilities and HRM officials using their experiences were requested to state the factors that lead to the successful promotion of persons with disabilities. The results reveal different experiences between the two. First, persons with disabilities mentioned that personal motivation, organisational support, education, family support and dedication contributed to their successful promotion. The results of this study are in line with a study by Gupta and Priyadarshi (2020) who found that successful persons with disabilities acquired professional qualifications due to factors such as individual support, organisational support, social support, and family support. Furthermore, the findings are in line with the SCT stated that individuals can be successful because support from family, friends, neighbours, colleagues, associates, and other groups has value and benefits tangibly and measurably (Claridge, 2004). However, one can state that persons with disabilities are not fully

benefiting from the SCT. The social capital theory can be applied to persons with disabilities in various ways, emphasising the importance of social networks, relationships, and community resources in promoting their well-being, inclusion, and empowerment. First, supportive relationships help mitigate the challenges and barriers they face, foster a sense of belonging and inclusion, and promote overall well-being. At the Limpopo Provincial Departments, persons with disabilities receive support from family members, colleagues, supervisors and management. Second, by connecting with others who share similar experiences and goals, persons with disabilities can amplify their voices, advocate for their rights, and work towards creating more inclusive and accessible environments. However, it is not clear whether persons with disabilities are supporting each other. Persons with disabilities need to organise themselves to speak with one voice. Lastly, building networks with employers, educators, mentors, and peers can help persons with disabilities navigate the job market, access training programmes, and build skills necessary for success. One can state that building networks with employers, mentors and peers to navigate the market is lacking as most respondents are still in the positions, they were promoted to some time ago. However, the contribution factors to successful promotion are well articulated by persons with disabilities at the Limpopo Provincial Departments.

Second, the study findings revealed that the majority of HRM officials do not remember anyone being promoted which proved the statement made by persons with disabilities earlier that there are limited opportunities, or they have never received another promotion after their last promotion. Human resource officials are responsible for the implementation of employment policies, procedures and programmes. They are unaware of the importance of workforce diversity, inclusion and representation of persons with disabilities in their departments. Instead, they should be aware of different mechanisms to boost the employment and promotion of persons with disabilities. The findings contradict Yamin, et al (2019) who emphasised the importance of having a job development programme in an organisation. Yamin, et al, (2019) argued that job promotion programs must be implemented if positions have not been filled and the opportunity should first be given to those who have fulfilled all the requirements regarding the promotion. The CEE Annual Report 2018/19 displayed that most Africans are occupying positions at unskilled and skilled levels where the representation of persons with disabilities remains negligible at 1%. Furthermore, the report states that the African population group representation is higher in the Limpopo Province at 85.6%. This makes the employment of persons with disabilities remain low and neglected in terms of affirmative action in the Limpopo Provincial Departments. Persons with disabilities advance into leadership positions at a lower rate than persons without disabilities (Bebbington & Özbilgin, 2013, Turcotte, 2014). In addition, this is in contravention of the SDA and the cabinet resolution is not taken seriously by the provincial departments. The findings confirm that persons with disabilities receive lower wages, less job security, and less training at work in comparison to persons without disabilities (Schur et al., 2009). What is interesting is that both persons with disabilities and HRM officials agreed that education and organisational support (training, mentorship, coaching, colleagues,

supervisors and management) are factors that contribute to persons with disabilities being successfully promoted.

On the advice that persons with disabilities can give to other persons with disabilities as motivational factors perseverance, self-introspection performance and other factors were mentioned. The findings are in line with Parker et al (2009) who mentioned factors such as hard work, taking responsibility and performing focusing on the three types of career-based investments and knowledge that individuals need to know. Once persons with disabilities know why they work, with whom they work and how they work, their performance will increase and they may succeed when they apply for promotion (Parker, et al, 2009). Turner (2020) also mentioned that soft skills play a significant role in building careers for employees to succeed in promotions because of factors such as dedication, good performance, and the ability to handle additional responsibilities which have been confirmed by the findings of this paper. The findings support a study by Moore, et al (2020) who argued that factors such as personal motivation, performance, perseverance, adaptability, and willingness to help others make employees with disabilities successful. The findings of the study show that persons with disabilities must develop themselves by working hard with passion and acquiring new knowledge in order to develop their skills. Koekemoer (2014) on South African organisations revealed that internal factors including individuals' personal attributes, skills, and education made managers succeed. The external factors include political and economic climate and business environment which is a challenge for persons with disabilities in the Limpopo Provincial Departments. If there are no promotional posts, no ringfencing of posts for persons with disabilities, and a lack of support from management and HR, their standards of living will remain the same. However, persons with disabilities mentioned that knowledge sharing contributed to their successful promotion. A study by Mohajan (2019) found that knowledge is considered the basis for developing sustained long-term competitive advantage for every organisation. Therefore, knowledge sharing is a crucial factor that turns individual knowledge into group organisational knowledge.

6 Conclusion

This paper aimed to identify the factors contributing to the successful promotion of persons with disabilities at the selected Limpopo Provincial Department in South Africa. The results show that persons with disabilities succeeded because they studied further, did internships and met the minimum requirements of the post. The results showed that the majority of persons with disabilities received limited assistance from HR in the provincial departments. However, the paper is limited to two provincial departments in only one of the nine provinces of South Africa. The Limpopo Province is also considered a rural province where skills emigration is high, therefore the results cannot be generalised to the whole country.

6.1 Theoretical Implications

The paper's findings show that South Africa has the best policies in the world, but if those policies are not implemented where they are needed, they are just a formal display to the world. Diversity and inclusion especially of persons with disabilities in the workplace cannot be overemphasised. The paper:

- Contributes to the body of knowledge concerning employment and promotional opportunities for persons with disabilities.
- Displays the gap in the development or existence of employment policies and the implementation of those policies relating to persons with disabilities.
- Highlights specific challenges faced by persons with disabilities in terms of career advancement opportunities.
- Provides motivational factors shared by persons with disabilities who succeeded in securing employment and promotion to other persons with disabilities to guide them in their career paths.

Persons with disabilities do not constitute 2% of the total workforce as per the cabinet resolution even after 30 years of democracy in South Africa. Government departments should be leading by example regarding the employment and promotional opportunities for persons with disabilities. However, future studies concerning factors contributing to the successful promotion of persons with disabilities can be conducted involving other organs of the state and the private sector companies.

6.2 Practical Implications

The following are practical recommendations for the provincial department:

- They must promote awareness, reasonable accommodation focusing on physical accommodation, flexible work arrangements, assistive technologies, and other support services that HR officials and management can provide.
- There must be a review and implementation of employment policies by provincial departments to incorporate the employment and promotion of persons with disabilities.
- Senior management commitment can boost the promotion of persons with disabilities and HR officials must ringfence positions and continuously monitor their performance.
- HR must design the employee development programme for persons with disabilities which will build capacity, skills and work experience to occupy positions once they meet the minimum requirements of the promotional posts.

As a result, all persons with disabilities will feel the organisational support, their performance will increase, and they will become mentors and role models for other persons with disabilities.

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