

DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY EMPLOYEES LIVING WITH DISABILITIES AT A SELECTED CLUSTER IN THE ETHEKWINI MUNICIPALITY

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NOVEMBER 2024



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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
**MASTER OF MANAGEMENT SCIENCES
(MASTER IN BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION)**

**Business School
Faculty of Management Sciences
DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY**

NOVEMBER 2024

APPROVED FOR FINAL SUBMISSION

Supervisor (DUT): (signature)

Date: 19 August 2025

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore the challenges faced by employees with disabilities in a selected cluster of the eThekweni Municipality. The main objectives were to examine the factors hindering career progression for employees with disabilities; evaluate the municipal employment policy to identify obstacles to its implementation; analyse employees' perceptions of the challenges they face; and provide recommendations for enhancing employment opportunities for persons with disabilities within the municipality.

A qualitative case study design was adopted, using semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection method. Convenience sampling was applied to select participants who were readily available and willing to participate. Findings revealed that managing employees with disabilities presents significant challenges. Participants reported insufficient support from human resources, management, and colleagues, leading to feelings of marginalisation, unrealistic performance expectations, biased evaluations, and assumptions about their work capabilities. Career advancement was often hindered due to both the nature of their disabilities and perceptions of reduced performance. The study also found that the eThekweni Municipality lacks an effective employment policy to address these issues. Communication barriers, including the need for sign-language interpreters and accessible written materials, further complicated workplace inclusion.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the many people who have supported me throughout the process of completing this mini-dissertation.

First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisor, Professor Emem O. Anwana, for her invaluable guidance, patience, and encouragement throughout this journey. Your expertise and feedback were instrumental in shaping my research, and I am incredibly grateful for your unwavering support.

I am also profoundly grateful to my family and friends for their constant love, encouragement, and understanding during the long hours spent working on this dissertation. To my parents, thank you for your sacrifices and for instilling in me the value of education. To my friends, thank you for your encouragement and for keeping me grounded during moments of doubt.

I would also like to extend my appreciation to my colleagues and peers for their insightful discussions and advice, and for creating a supportive academic environment. Special thanks to the participants and my MBA group for your assistance and shared experiences.

This dissertation is the result of collective efforts, and I am forever grateful to everyone who contributed to its completion.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to me for enduring the long, hard journey to this point.

Through countless challenges, moments of doubt, and endless hours of effort, I remained committed to the process. This work is a testament to my resilience, determination, and belief in my ability to achieve what I set out to do.

I am proud of how far I have come and of the growth this journey has brought me.

I further dedicate this mini dissertation to everyone who supported me over this long and difficult journey.

To my family, your everlasting love and support provided me with the strength to get through the terrible times. Your support kept me going, even when I doubted myself, and I appreciate it.

Thank you, friends and colleagues, for your ongoing encouragement and drive during times of doubt.

Finally, this is dedicated to those who have inspired me along the journey.

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the mini dissertation submitted for the Degree of Master of Business Administration in the Faculty of Management Sciences at the Durban University of Technology is my original work and has not been submitted to any other institution. I further declare that all sources cited or quoted are indicated and acknowledged in the bibliography.

Date

_____ 18-November 2024 Charity Thandazile Xulu

LIST OF ACRONYMS

PLWD	People living with disabilities
PWDs	Persons with disabilities
EWD	Employees with disabilities
EEA	Employment Equity Act
DG	Disability Grant
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
PHC	Primary Health Care
CDT	Critical Disability Theory
ILO	International Labour Organization

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CHAPTER ONE

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

People living with disabilities face several challenges within society, according to McDonnall and Sui (2019). Due to various factors, they experience high unemployment rates and limited career progression, amongst other issues. Trani, Moodley, Anand, Graham and Maw (2020) state that, worldwide, most people living with disabilities (PLWD) encounter discrimination. Even those who are employed often face resistance, as some workers are reluctant to accept a disabled colleague as a member of their team. Stats SA (2021) reported that South Africa has a nationwide disabled population rate of 7.5%, with a higher prevalence of disability amongst females than males (8.3% compared to 6.5%). As of March 31, 2020, there were 1,215,057 employees in the Public Service, 12,560 (1.03%) of whom had some form of disability.

In this context, the study focused on people living with disabilities (PLWD) in the eThekweni Municipality. The municipality was divided into 10 clusters with various units. According to Stats SA (2021), the latest municipal headcount revealed that the municipality had 24,079 permanently employed staff and 3,566 temporary or contracted employees, resulting in a total of 27,645 employees. However, despite having such a large workforce, the municipality employed only 325 individuals living with disabilities. This raised concerns regarding the municipality's progress in meeting its Employment Equity targets and aligning with national policy commitments on disability inclusion.

Lezzoni, Rao, Ressalam, Bolcic-Jankovic, Agaronnik, Donelan, Lagu and Campbell (2021) state that physical accessibility to municipal buildings, social exclusion, a lack of assistive technology, and barriers to healthcare and career advancement are some of the most common difficulties experienced by people living with disabilities (PLWD) in the workplace. Environmental factors, such as structurally inaccessible buildings, significantly affect individuals with disabilities, particularly those who use wheelchairs (Lezzoni et al., 2021). Some municipal buildings are not owned by the municipality, and during load shedding, problems related to accessibility and power outages in the municipality have

increased. This situation poses a challenge for PLWDs, who may need to wait for electricity within the building before they can exit the municipal premises.

Emerson, Fortune, Llewellyn and Stancliffe (2021) postulate that people living with disabilities (PLWD) are more likely to experience social isolation at work, which carries its own set of health risks and can lead to emotional stress. Individuals with disabilities are more likely than those without disabilities to experience loneliness, a lack of social support, and social isolation. Additionally, they often lack the experience that municipal departments specify when posting job openings. Consequently, the municipality has set an unattainable target for increasing the proportion of employees living with disabilities. Furthermore, Coetzee, Ximba and Potgieter (2017) state that most people with disabilities face challenges in career advancement, particularly concerning promotion opportunities to senior positions. The lack of knowledge among managers and co-workers about disabilities adversely impacts the careers of individuals living with disabilities.

This study aims to uncover the barriers to career advancement that employees with disabilities (EWD) encounter and recommend solutions to improve the job prospects of people living with disabilities, thereby contributing to the discipline of Human Capital and Transformation in the municipality. Furthermore, organizations require a paradigm shift from simply satisfying Employment Equity Act requirements to developing a pleasant workplace that is accommodating to people living with disabilities, particularly in the eThekweni Municipality.

1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM

The primary research problem of this study examines the challenges encountered by individuals living with disabilities in both the workplace and the pursuit of employment. Recent literature on career advancement challenges for people with disabilities identifies several key issues. According to Hernandez, Keys and Balcazar (2018), the workforce comprising individuals who have declared disabilities predominantly occupies entry-level and semi-skilled positions, with few individuals attaining professional roles, which limits opportunities for advancement and promotion. Additionally, allocation, recruitment, and promotion opportunities tend to favor males, white individuals, and those without disabilities (Commission for Employment Equity, 2022). Furthermore, individuals with disabilities are frequently underemployed, facing restricted career advancement opportunities (Kaswa, 2022). Employers also show reluctance to hire individuals with disabilities, even when they meet all the specified requirements (Kaswa, 2022). Lastly, management perceptions often serve as a barrier to initiatives aimed at employing individuals with disabilities and providing reasonable accommodation for such employees (Hernandez et al., 2018).

According to Oskouie, Kashefi, Rafii and Gouya (2017), there is a significant need for more context-specific knowledge about disability stigma and discrimination, particularly in organizational settings rather than broader societal contexts. Studies focusing on stigma in the workplace are essential for enhancing the inclusion of people with disabilities (PWDs) in mainstream employment. Marumoagae (2012) notes that employers face the challenge of ensuring that people with disabilities have access to the labor market in response to the South African government's efforts to improve the levels and conditions of employment for PWDs.

Policy and legislation have been developed in South Africa to address the challenges faced by persons with disabilities (PWDs) in the labor force. However, practical implementation remains problematic. A study of the Top 100 companies in South Africa by Gida and Ortlepp (2007) revealed that the Human Resource Management departments of these companies lacked a strategy for employing PWDs. Marumoagae (2012) appears to align with this perspective, noting that insufficient progress has been

made to address the actual problems that PWDs face in the labor market, which is evidenced by the low absorption rate of PWDs (Statistics South Africa, 2014). South Africa has made significant advancements at the national policy level, but it now faces challenges with implementation. It is unclear whether the failure to implement policies is due to ignorance of the policies or because they are not suitable for the South African context. Further research is therefore needed to ascertain the reasons for the slow implementation.

1.3 AIMS OF THE STUDY

The study aims to examine the challenges experienced by employees living with disabilities at a selected cluster in the eThekweni Municipality.

1.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following are the research objectives of this study:

- To examine the factors hindering career progression for employees living with disabilities at a selected cluster in the eThekweni Municipality.
- To determine the factors hindering the implementation of the municipal employment policy at the selected cluster.
- To analyse the perceptions of employees living with disabilities on the challenges experienced by employees living with disabilities at a selected cluster in the eThekweni Municipality; and
- To provide recommendations on how to enhance employment opportunities for persons living with disabilities at the eThekweni Municipality.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The aforementioned research objectives can also be formulated as a set of research questions:

- What are the factors hindering career progression for employees living with disabilities at a selected cluster in the eThekweni Municipality?

- What factors hinder the implementation of the municipal employment policy at the selected cluster?
- What are the perceptions of employees living with disabilities on the challenges experienced by employees living with disabilities at a selected cluster in the eThekwini municipality?
- What recommendations can be made on how to enhance employment opportunities for persons living with disabilities at the eThekwini Municipality?

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study aims to identify the shortcomings and challenges in the implementation of the Employment Equity policy within the eThekwini Municipality. By highlighting the real-world experiences and challenges faced by PLWD, the study aims to inform future policy adjustments and interventions. It will also provide a deeper understanding of the perceptions of employers and employees regarding disability, equity policies, and the employment of persons with disabilities. By so doing, the study will contribute to existing research and knowledge on employment equity policy awareness, implementation, monitoring, and adherence, specifically concerning persons with disabilities in the eThekwini Municipality. Additionally, it will shed light on the barriers and facilitators associated with employing persons with disabilities in a selected area within the municipality. This localized focus will provide detailed insights into the specific conditions and factors at play, offering a nuanced understanding of how to better support and integrate persons with disabilities into the workforce.

1.7 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The study specifically focuses on employees living with disabilities within a selected cluster of the eThekwini Municipality, located in the KwaZulu-Natal province of South Africa. This geographical and organizational focus represents a significant limitation in the scope of the research. The cluster comprises four units within the eThekwini Municipality, namely: the eThekwini Municipal Academy, Human Capital, the Occupational Health and

Safety Unit, and Organisational Development and Change Management. By concentrating on a particular municipality within a single province, the study's findings may not fully reflect the experiences of employees with disabilities in other regions or sectors across South Africa. The challenges, policies, and workplace dynamics within the eThekweni municipality may differ from those in other municipalities or provinces, leading to variations in the experiences of individuals with disabilities.

1.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the introduction as well as the background to the study, a statement of the problem, aims and objectives, research questions, and the significance of the study. Chapter One concluded by highlighting the scope of the study. This chapter laid a solid foundation for the research and makes it easy to understand all the other aspects of this study. The next chapter study will provide a comprehensive literature review of the challenges experienced by employees living with disabilities as well as discuss the relevant municipal policies on employees living with disabilities, and factors hindering their implementation.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

According to McDermont (2020), the employment landscape for individuals living with disabilities is filled with challenges that can significantly affect their career opportunities, job satisfaction, and overall quality of life. Research has shown that people with disabilities often face various barriers in the workplace, including discrimination, a lack of accessibility, and inadequate support from employers. Disability, as defined by the World Health Organization (2011), is not merely a physical impairment but rather a complex interaction between individuals and their environment. This interaction can create unique challenges that vary based on the type of disability and the specific context in which an individual operates (Shakespeare, 2017). For example, the barriers faced by an employee with a physical disability may differ significantly from those encountered by someone with a cognitive or sensory impairment.

Hernandez et al. (2019) indicates that negative stereotypes and misconceptions about the capabilities of individuals with disabilities persist in many workplace settings, leading to discrimination during recruitment processes and hindering career advancement opportunities. Additionally, inadequate workplace accommodations often exacerbate these challenges as many employers fail to provide the necessary adjustments that would enable employees with disabilities to perform their jobs effectively (Gonzalez, De La Rosa and Campbell 2021). Moreover, the social model of disability emphasizes that societal barriers, rather than individual impairments, are the primary contributors to the challenges experienced by disabled employees (Oliver, 2013). This perspective highlights the need for organizations to foster inclusive cultures and implement policies that support the integration and advancement of employees with disabilities.

Nierling and Maia (2020) highlight the difficulties that employees living with disabilities experience, which form the context of this study. The research specifically examines the obstacles encountered during the implementation of the Municipality's disability policies and strategies, as well as how these policies accommodate employees living with disabilities. To create a workplace that is inclusive of people living with disabilities (PLWDs), organizations require a paradigm shift from merely fulfilling Employment Equity requirements. Bagenstos (2017) argues that disability is a complex concept, with its definition varying from country to country.

Guevara (2021) states that a complete definition of what constitutes disability could prevent organizations from recruiting candidates with “minimal disability” for the sake of equity targets and acknowledging competencies for people living with disabilities. While organisations may follow the right legislation in terms of Employment Equity and other regulations, the issue of employment, the difficulties in obtaining a job, the barriers to professional advancement within organisations or even just keeping their current job remain a challenge for disabled employees. In other cases, the work environment is not conducive for PLWD (Morwane, Dada and Bornman, 2021).

According to Shakespeare (2020), there has been much debate about what constitutes a disability and who can be described as "disabled". Disability is inherently contextual, and the experience of disability varies greatly among individuals due to the nature of their impairments and the influence of contextual factors (Shakespeare, 2020). Definitions of disability have evolved and differ across cultures, resulting in a range of definitions and approaches to understanding disability. Currently, these approaches are polarized between the social model on one hand and the medical model on the other (Oliver and Barnes, 2018). However, these two are by no means the only approaches, as the literature suggests (Goodley, 2017).

2.2 UNDERSTANDING THE CONCEPTS OF DISABILITY AND RELATED TERMS

Berger and Wilbers (2021) describe a disability as a condition or function that is severely impaired when compared to an individual's or group's normal standards. It can be caused by a variety of factors, including congenital issues, accidents, or illnesses, and can be physical, sensory, mental, or intellectual in nature. There are many terms related to disability in literature. Solomon (2020) states that the term "impairment" is also used to define disability in the sense that it refers to any loss or deviation from normal psychological, physiological or anatomical function. Although the term "handicap" is not used as frequently as it once was, it originally described the limitations or disadvantages that a person with a disability or impairment faced due to social, environmental, or mental barriers.

According to the World Health Organization (2019), PWD or Persons with Disabilities is a widely recognized abbreviation that refers to individuals who have disabilities. This terminology is utilized in various contexts, including legal, medical and social discussions, to enhance clarity and promote inclusivity when addressing the disability community. The use of PWD contributes to standardizing language and reinforces a person-first approach, which prioritizes the individual over their disability. This perspective is vital for fostering respect and acknowledging the complete identity of individuals, rather than defining them solely by their disability.

Based on the study, the researcher also used the term 'employees living with disabilities' or 'employees with disabilities' (EWD) when referring to individuals with disabilities within the Municipality. Understanding these terminologies and their complexity is critical for developing a more inclusive and accessible society because it allows for effective communication as well as the formulation of laws and practices that respect the rights and dignity of people with disabilities, hence they form part of the study.

2.3 A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF THE DISCRIMINATION OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY DURING APARTHEID

Historically, South Africa's post-apartheid journey has been marked by a wide range of advancements, honors, and challenges. This study discusses the historical background of disability discrimination during apartheid, the developments brought about by the South African Constitution, and the policy and legal frameworks regarding the inclusion and recognition of the rights of persons with disabilities. Petersen (2021) reveals that during the apartheid era in South Africa, the experiences of people living with disabilities varied from person to person. Individuals with disabilities in what would become the KwaZuluNatal province faced discrimination based on factors such as race, class, and gender, especially concerning access to resources. The state's involvement in addressing the needs of South Africans with disabilities during the apartheid era was limited, which compelled families to take an active role in meeting the needs of these individuals.

Bagenstos (2017) alludes to the fact that Apartheid's racist laws resulted in the development of separate and unequal facilities for people with disabilities, thereby supporting a broader discriminatory system. During apartheid, people with disabilities faced numerous hurdles, including limited access to education, healthcare, and employment opportunities.

Cruz, Lee, Aylward and Kramarczuk Voulgarides (2020) note that schools for children with disabilities were often underfunded and under-resourced, contributing to a cycle of limited educational options and economic prospects for individuals with disabilities. Moreover, discriminatory employment practices further disadvantaged people with disabilities as they were frequently excluded from job opportunities and faced prejudice and stigma. In addition, Kett, Cole and Turner (2020) assert that discriminatory policies extended to public settings make it more difficult for people with disabilities to access basic services and participate in society. The lack of accessibility to infrastructure and transportation systems imposed additional barriers, limiting the movement and independence of individuals with disabilities.

Access to healthcare was also restricted and people with disabilities were often subjected to inadequate medical treatment and rehabilitation programs. Discrimination also included the denial of necessary assistive devices and accommodations, making it difficult for people with disabilities to live healthy and independent lives in the country (Ojilere, 2022). After 1994, South Africa's democratic government implemented several programs aimed at improving the lives of people with disabilities. This study additionally evaluates the experiences of people with disabilities post-apartheid and examines whether the lives of individuals with physical disabilities have improved after apartheid.

2.4 SOUTH AFRICAN LEGISLATION ON PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN THE WORKPLACE

According to Richardson (2021), following the first democratic government elections in 1994, the South African government enacted legislation to address past workplace inequalities faced by individuals from designated groups (black individuals, women, and people with disabilities) to transform all organisations to be representative of the entire South African workforce demographics. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (SA, 1996); the Employment Equity Act, No. 55 of 1998 (SA Department of Labour, 2015); and the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act, No. 4 of 2000 (SA Department of Justice, 2000) are legislation aimed at eliminating employment disparities experienced by these designated groups, particularly people with disabilities. A brief discussion of these laws follows.

2.4.1 The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (SA 1996)

The Constitution of South Africa serves as a comprehensive framework designed to redress, prohibit, and eliminate any form of unfair discriminatory policies and practices, thereby promoting equality across all sectors of society. It embodies the principles of justice, fairness, and human dignity, ensuring that all citizens are afforded equal protection under the law. As the supreme law of the land, the Constitution mandates that any law or conduct inconsistent with its provisions is invalid, emphasizing its overriding authority and

the fundamental rights that it enshrines. “This Constitution is the supreme law of the Republic. Law or conduct inconsistent with it is invalid, and the obligations imposed by it must be fulfilled” (SA, 2016).

The Constitution also establishes key institutions, such as the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) and the Constitutional Court, which play critical roles in upholding and interpreting the rights enshrined therein. These institutions are tasked with ensuring that the principles of equality and non-discrimination are actively promoted and enforced throughout the country. Furthermore, the Constitution specifically addresses the needs of marginalized groups, including people with disabilities, by recognizing their right to equal treatment and access to opportunities in all areas of life, including employment, education, and public services.

2.4.2 The Employment Equity Act, No. 55 of 1998

The Employment Equity Act, No. 55 of 1998, aims to promote the constitutional right of equality, eliminate unfair discrimination, and redress employment disparities in workplaces by promoting equal opportunities in the workplace and implementing affirmative action measures (SA Department of Labour, 2015).

The Department of Labour (2015) prioritizes the equitable representation of designated groups in all occupational categories and levels in workplaces. The Act defines people with disabilities as “people who have a long-term or recurring physical or mental impairment which substantially limits their prospects of entry into, or advancement in, employment”. The EEA has an ambiguous definition of disability because it lacks factors that constitute disability. The amended Employment Equity Act, No. 47 of 2014 (SA Department of Labour, 2014) states that it is unfair discrimination by employers to differentiate the terms and conditions of employment for employees doing the same work, similar work, or work of equal value (Commission for Employment Equity, 2022). This added provision strengthens the Act’s alignment with the International Labour Organization (ILO)’s mandatory principles, which include: freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining, elimination of forced or compulsory labour, abolition of child labour, and the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation

(ILO, 1998). By embedding the principle of equal pay for work of equal value, South Africa's legislation supports the ILO's core standard on non-discrimination and fair treatment in the workplace. This demonstrates the country's commitment to promoting equitable employment practices in line with globally recognized labour rights.

2.4.3 The Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act 4 of 2000 (SA)

The Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act 4 of 2000 (SA Department of Justice, 2000) is constitutional legislation enacted to promote constitutional rights and equality and to prohibit unfair discrimination based on the grounds of disability. According to PEPU (2000c:8), unfair discrimination constitutes:

- denying or removing from any person who has a disability, any supporting or enabling facility necessary for their functioning in society.
- contravening the code of practice or regulations of the South African Bureau of Standards that govern environmental accessibility; and
- failing to eliminate obstacles that unfairly limit or restrict people with disabilities from enjoying equal opportunities or failing to take steps to reasonably accommodate the needs of such persons.

The legislation and remedial measures are enacted to transform South Africa so that the needs of all citizens, regardless of their biographic variables, are met and they actively participate in socio-economic activities of which they were deprived (Selby & Sutherland, 2006). Mayer, Oosthuizen and Tonelli (2019) assert that South Africa should integrate EE and skills advancement plans to enable efficient workforce diversity initiatives and that large South African corporations that receive lucrative government contracts must be expected to transform their organizations to be representative of their workforce demographics in terms of race, gender, and disability. The South African government introduced the Code of Good Practice: Key Aspects on the Employment of People with Disabilities (SA Department of Labour, 2002) to be part of the broader equality agenda for people with disabilities to have their rights recognized in the labor market where they

experience high levels of unemployment, often remaining in low-status jobs or earning lower than average remuneration.

According to the Code of Good Practice: Key Aspects of the Employment of People with Disabilities (SA Department of Labour, 2002), ignorance, fear, and stereotypes are the barriers that have led to unfair discrimination towards people with disabilities in society and employment. The code states the grounds on which the workforce with disabilities is unfairly discriminated against as follows:

- Unfounded assumptions about their abilities and job performance.
- Unjust advertising and interviewing arrangements that limit their career prospects.
- Discriminatory selection tests.
- Inaccessible workplaces; and
- Inappropriate training.

2.5 CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY EMPLOYEES LIVING WITH DISABILITIES

Suich and Schneider (2022) found that individuals living with disabilities face challenges in career advancement due to the perceptions or attitudes of others. The beliefs that people hold about the abilities of individuals with disabilities serve as the primary barrier to their empowerment (Occupational Health Risk, 2005). Political will can help dispel myths and preconceived notions about people with disabilities through diversity sensitization programs. This section discusses some of the challenges that people with disabilities most commonly encounter in the workplace. These challenges include discrimination, attitudinal barriers, psychological factors, lack of job opportunities, inadequate transportation, lack of education and skills, poverty, the growth of the disability grant program, and issues related to the physical work environment.

2.5.1 Discrimination

According to Nielsen (2021), “disability discrimination is a human rights issue.” Originating in the apartheid era, disabled persons enjoyed limited socio-economic rights, including the right to employment and education. They were excluded from society on the grounds of being sick or in need of care and were not treated as equal human beings with full

rights. Although legislation has been developed to eliminate discriminatory behavior in work environments, there is insufficient evidence to demonstrate that these laws have been successfully implemented to improve the lives of persons with disabilities. The CEE Report of 2010 primarily provides insight into improvements regarding racial nondiscrimination. However, there is still no evidence that stereotyping and prejudice have been effectively eliminated for people with disabilities. Arguably, this will continue to pose a challenge to their entry into the work environment.

2.5.2 Attitudinal Barriers

Sharma and Tanwar (2021) state that several attitudinal approaches can affect the employment opportunities of individuals with disabilities and explain that societal support plays a significant role in determining an individual's employment status. Their findings suggest that the acceptance of disability remains problematic in the workplace. Disability is a challenging topic for many to confront, leading to conflicting emotions because it both intrigues people and at the same time repels them. Steyn, Tinta and Vermaas (2020) mention that disability often evokes anxiety and fear, not only due to uncertainty about how to interact with individuals with disabilities but also because such individuals have come to be viewed as different, "unwanted" and "undesirable". Many people feel a sympathetic response when faced with disability and believe they must acknowledge the "bravery, sweetness, and tragic fate" of the individual.

Rustad and Kassah (2021) state that social contributions through participation in meaningful work-related activities and the assumption of accompanying responsibilities remain a vital need for individuals with disabilities. Employment provides an opportunity for social inclusion and the receipt of respect and dignity. However, this is often hindered by various factors that affect the personal motivation of individuals with disabilities, including low self-esteem, lack of world experience, and shyness. Therefore, Morwane, Dada and Bornman (2021) mention that the emotional state of a person with disabilities acts as a barrier to employment, just as inaccessible physical environments do. Additionally, social attitudes and prejudices can exacerbate the medical and psychological challenges faced by individuals with disabilities.

According to Rustad and Kassah (2021), discrimination and stereotyping have caused individuals with disabilities to live in fear of being judged when they disclose their status.

Similarly, when applying for employment positions, disclosing a history of impairment can lead to preconceived biases that negatively affect their applications, particularly when employers are concerned that future accommodation may be necessary if they hire a person with a disability.

2.5.4 Lack of Job Opportunities

Unemployment in South Africa has been discussed and poses a significant barrier to the employment of persons with disabilities (Tinta and Kolanisi, 2023). Since 2000, the economy has been growing at approximately 4.5%. One would assume that economic growth would lead to greater employment opportunities. However, Du Toit (2020) states that in the current economic climate, employers are becoming increasingly scarce. The rise in unemployment figures seems to relate to the rise in Disability Grant (DG) applications. Approximately ten million social grants, making up three percent of the gross domestic product (GDP); are paid out monthly to beneficiaries. Between 2000 and 2004, DGs rose from 600 000 to 1.3 million. Changes within the DG system led to its being used as a method for alleviating poverty (Kingdon and Knight, 2005). Although the DG was not intended to be a poverty relief mechanism, the high unemployment rate has resulted in many households depending on it for income.

2.5.5 Lack of Transportation

Mawonde (2024) states that unavailable and unaffordable transportation is one of the main barriers that individuals with disabilities face in their everyday lives, leading to their exclusion from various opportunities to enhance their quality of life. In terms of employment, this is a significant concern as they are unable to travel to and from work. Schmidt and Smith (2007) indicated that the lack of awareness amongst employers and employment programs (training or education) regarding transportation challenges further exacerbates the employment barrier faced by individuals with disabilities.

2.5.6 Difficulties in training and skills enhancement

According to Mezzanotte (2022), inclusion remains one of the most pressing challenges in global education, particularly for people living with disabilities. In South Africa, before the end of Apartheid in 1994, the education system was fragmented into 18 separate departments, each enforcing its policies on access to education and special needs provision. These policies were often exclusionary, and many departments did not cater to learners with disabilities. As a result, large segments of the population, especially those living with disabilities, were marginalized and left without adequate educational support (Department of Education, 2001). From the 1960s onward, the government began developing specialized schools for learners with disabilities. However, this approach further entrenched segregation not only by disability but also by race and culture, placing immense financial strain on the state and contributing to systemic exclusion. The legacy of this separation and negative categorization severely undermined the self-esteem and developmental prospects of children living with disabilities (Donohue & Bornman, 2014).

In the post-Apartheid era, South Africa has committed to transforming its education and training systems to promote inclusion and equity. Policies such as the *White Paper 6 on Special Needs Education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System* (Department of Education, 2001) emphasized the need to integrate learners with disabilities into mainstream education and expand access to skills development opportunities. Despite these policy advancements, significant challenges remain.

2.5.7 Poverty and Disability

According to Carew, Groce, Deluca, Kett and Fwaga (2020) state that it is important to consider economic and social development for disability and its implications for poverty. Poverty is both a cause and an effect of disability. They further stated that poverty prevents individuals from pursuing opportunities that could enhance their income potential and consequently improve their quality of life. This situation can arise from negative contextual factors such as a lack of proper nutrition, education, access to healthcare, and knowledge of disease prevention. Mitra, Palmer and Kim (2021) state that families with

disabled members have been found to experience lower levels of employment and income, making them more susceptible to poverty. Furthermore, it has been suggested that such families tend to be less informed about substance abuse, violence, and deviant sexual behavior, all of which contribute to their increased vulnerability to disability.

2.6 HEALTHCARE BARRIERS FACING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Although this study focuses on the challenges faced by employees with disabilities in the workplace, healthcare barriers are directly relevant because they have a significant impact on employees' ability to participate fully and effectively in employment. Access to adequate healthcare, assistive devices, medication, and rehabilitation services is essential for maintaining functional capacity, preventing deterioration of health conditions, and enabling productivity.

In the South African context, where healthcare barriers are heightened by systemic inequalities, poverty, and inadequate support services, employees with disabilities may face increased absenteeism, reduced work performance, and limited career progression. These healthcare challenges, therefore, intersect with workplace participation, retention, and accommodation practices. Addressing workplace challenges without considering the broader health-related barriers would provide an incomplete understanding of the lived realities of employees with disabilities.

Across the globe, people with disabilities face challenges in all aspects of life, including access to healthcare services, devices, necessary medications, and support. According to Ned, McKinney, McKinney and Swart (2020), these challenges are compounded in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) where factors such as poverty, poverty-related diseases, inefficient healthcare systems, inadequate training and equipment, inaccessible transportation systems, corruption, political instability and negative attitudes toward disability prevail. These healthcare challenges exacerbate the existing health conditions of many South Africans with disabilities. Mutwali and Ross (2019) state that there are multiple layers of inequality resulting from the apartheid era, which further compound the daily difficulties faced by people with disabilities. Furthermore, Schierenbeck, Johansson,

Andersson and van Rooyen (2013) note that despite the establishment of democracy in 1994, many black individuals with disabilities continue to be multiply disadvantaged on multiple levels, with black disabled women experiencing triple levels of discrimination based on their race, gender, and disability.

2.6.1 Inaccessibility of Services and Transport

According to Eide, Mannan, Khogali, Van Rooy, Swartz, Munthali, Hem, MacLachlan and Dyrstad (2015), a disability audit of primary healthcare (PHC) clinics in KwaZulu-Natal revealed that only half of the facilities had essential features such as ramps, doors and toilets that provide wheelchair access. Almost none of the clinics offered information in Braille or provided sign language interpretation. Hunt, Carew, Braathen, Swartz, Chiwaula and Rohleder (2017) assert that a lack of accessible transportation is a significant barrier to accessing healthcare services for people with disabilities in South Africa. Railway networks are not accessible to wheelchair users; no assistance is provided to help disabled passengers access and use trains; and disabled passengers feel vulnerable due to safety concerns. Furthermore, Nellums and Armitage (2020) indicate that there are no telecoil (TTY) facilities available for passengers using hearing aids, and many stations have poor signage and unclear loudspeaker systems.

Fobosi (2013) mentions that the informal minibus taxi industry is the primary provider of public transport in South Africa due to its availability and affordability. However, individuals with disabilities face many challenges, including a lack of assistance in getting into and out of a taxi; the requirement to lift and carry their wheelchairs on board; being charged an extra fare for their wheelchairs; and safety concerns.

2.6.2 Unaffordability of services

Hanass-Hancock, Nene, Deghaye and Pillay (2017) emphasize that individuals with disabilities encounter additional financial burdens associated with their disabilities, such as the need for specialized transportation, extra care, and support services, which worsen their already precarious financial situations. Despite the existence of disability grants

designed to alleviate these expenses, they often fall short of covering the actual costs, leaving individuals with disabilities in a state of economic vulnerability.

According to Mitra et al. (2021), the economic challenges are further exacerbated by limited employment opportunities, which hinder income generation and contribute to higher poverty rates within this population. Additionally, Banks, Kuper and Polack (2017) argue that the financial strain is intensified by inadequate access to healthcare services, resulting in additional out-of-pocket expenses. The intersection of disability-related costs and poverty remains a critical issue that necessitates more comprehensive policy interventions to ensure equitable support for people with disabilities.

2.6.3 Negative attitudes and discrimination

Hussey, MacLachlan, and Mji (2017) indicate that healthcare staff may have negative attitudes and discriminate against individuals with disabilities. Healthcare workers often lack the skills and training necessary to accommodate the needs of people with disabilities, as medical training remains insufficient. Ned et al. (2020) state that in South Africa, triage policies regarding who qualifies for ICU admission and ventilator access currently discriminate against people with physical disabilities. The current healthcare triage policy aligns with the Frailty Assessment Score.

Accordingly, a person with a Frailty Assessment Score above 4 (including anyone classified as 'mildly frail' to 'severely frail') will be excluded from ICU access as well as ventilators if they become ill and resources are scarce. They will only receive oxygen therapy and urgent palliative care. This exclusion, based solely on the category of impairment, raises questions about the value and worth placed on the lives of people with disabilities.

2.6.4 Lack of access to information on health and health services

Andersson, Schierenbeck, Strumpher, Krantz, Topper, Backman, Ricks and Van Rooyen (2013) have shown that people with disabilities in South Africa often lack knowledge of treatment options and suitable assistive devices, which leads them to avoid seeking services. Their understanding of impairments may be limited, as screening and diagnosis

are not routinely integrated into primary healthcare (PHC). Additionally, Chetty and Hanass-Hancock (2015) note that information barriers are particularly challenging for individuals with specific types of impairments, such as hearing loss, due to a frequent lack of interpretation services.

Boldrini, Garcea, Bricchetto, Reale, Tonolo, Falabella, Fedeli, Cnops and Kiekens (2020) state that current healthcare policy dictates that patients may not be accompanied by friends or family when accessing healthcare. While this is generally a sensible practice, it poses a significant obstacle for many individuals with disabilities. Many deaf individuals use sign language as their primary means of communication and are unable to converse with healthcare workers without interpreters. For those who rely on lip reading, such as the first author, understanding healthcare workers who are wearing N95, and surgical masks is impossible. Additionally, providing a patient's history or signing consent may be a significant hurdle, and is at times impossible for someone with severe intellectual or psychosocial disabilities, or those on the autism spectrum.

2.6.5 Widespread Gaps in the Availability of Disability-Specific Care

Ned, Tiwari, Buchanan, Van Niekerk, Sherry and Chikte (2020) report that South Africa has 7,937 registered physiotherapists, which equates to 137 per million people, a figure that is less than half the number found in countries like the USA and Australia. Other generalist rehabilitation services, such as speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, ear and hearing services, ophthalmology, and psychiatry, are also not widely available in South Africa. These services are not only scarce, particularly outside the private sector, but they are also inequitably distributed, with rural areas being the most deprived (Vergunst, Swartz, Hem, Eide, Mannan, MacLachlan, Mji, Braathen and Schneider, 2017).

2.7. EMPLOYMENT AND DISABILITY IN ETHEKWINI MUNICIPALITY

The *Employment Equity Act* (No. 55 of 1998) and the *Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act* (PEPUDA) of 2000 are two key pieces of legislation in South Africa aimed at combating workplace discrimination, including that

based on disability. These laws are intended to promote equal opportunity, fair treatment, and the full inclusion of persons with disabilities in the labour market. Despite these legal protections, employees living with disabilities in the eThekweni Municipality continue to face significant barriers to career advancement.

Hernandez et al. (2019) observe that people with disabilities often struggle to move beyond entry-level positions, despite possessing the necessary qualifications and experience. According to Khayatzadeh-Mahani, Wittevrongel, Nicholas, and Zwicker (2020), the career progression of disabilities tends to be complex, non-linear, and often disrupted by systemic and social barriers. In the context of the eThekweni Municipality, such progression is further constrained by limited mentorship, inaccessible training programs, and workplace cultures that do not fully embrace inclusivity.

Khayatzadeh et al. (2020) further emphasize that discriminatory attitudes toward people with disabilities are often subtle and difficult to detect. These microaggressions and implicit biases can undermine confidence, restrict opportunities, and foster exclusion, even within institutions that outwardly claim to support diversity. As employees living with disabilities are entitled to an environment that supports their growth and does not disable them through structural or attitudinal bigotry, the eThekweni Municipality must work proactively to identify and dismantle these hidden forms of discrimination. Doing so requires not only policy compliance but also practical implementation measures such as disability sensitization, accessible leadership pipelines, and individual support mechanisms to enable meaningful career development.

Hernandez et al. (2019) assert that the workforce with declared disabilities mainly occupies entry-level and semi-skilled positions, with restricted opportunities to advance or be promoted. Few disabled people occupy positions deemed professional. Moreover, many people with disabilities are unemployed or occupy positions with low wages and little or no chance for advancement. Rural areas are a barrier to the employment of people with disabilities. People with disabilities in rural areas earn less and have high unemployment rates compared to people with disabilities in urban areas. People with disabilities in rural areas also have limited employment opportunities and hold low-paying and unskilled jobs (Statistics South Africa, 2014).

According to Wilson-Kovacs et al. (2008), career advancement for disabled professionals is precarious due to their exclusion from decision-making processes, unconstructive performance feedback, and the lack of opportunities to perform. Misconceptions and pity become barriers to possible career advancement opportunities for people with disabilities, which lead to questions about their competency and subsequently jeopardize their advancement (Beatty, 2012).

Beatty (2012) states that employees with disabilities experience career plateaus because they often remain in the same position for so long that progression to a higher level seems impossible. According to Mogensen (2022), people with disabilities, predominantly those occupying semi- and unskilled positions, have restricted opportunities for upward movement to senior positions. People with disabilities also do not advance to occupy management positions in the Public Service, even though black people and women (as part of the designated groups) have gradually improved their representation.

Furthermore, Trezzini, Schuller, Schüpbach and Bickenbach (2021) state that factors such as a lack of training, architectonic barriers, and discrimination based on functional potential are the difficulties that hinder the progress of people with disabilities in the labor market. Gida and Ortlepp (2007) state that ignorance, fear, and stereotypes are the reasons for the low representation of people living with disabilities in the workplace.

2.8 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

Numerous theories and models attempt to explain and deal with disability. However, each provides a different viewpoint on the experiences of people who live with disabilities. This study discusses two theories/models of disabilities, namely the Social Model and Critical Disability Theory.

2.8.1 The Social Model

The Social Model of disability, as articulated by Barnes (2012), is derived from societal attitudes rather than from attributes inherent to the individual. Oliver (1996) asserts that the social model of disability has been embraced more wholeheartedly by individuals with

disabilities. This embrace facilitates a more profound personal connection, underpinning the rationale for phenomenological study and the exploration of individual consciousness (Hegel, 1977). Early advocates such as Mike Oliver, who was the first professor of disability studies in the United Kingdom, grounded the model of social disability in the environmental context in which individuals reside, highlighting the failure to provide appropriate services rather than focusing on the limitations of the individual. Given the clarity of the definition provided by Barnes (2012), the term “societal attitudes” will be utilized. Oliver (1996) concludes that the social model of disability encompasses all factors that impose restrictions on individuals with disabilities (Figure 2.1). Such restrictions may vary from individual prejudice to institutional discrimination and issues of inaccessibility.

According to Sztobryn-Giercuskiewicz (2017), the Social Model of Disability posits that disability is a socially constructed phenomenon, emerging not from the human body itself but rather from how the social environment is structured. This social environment encompasses the attitudes of non-disabled individuals within society, the accessibility of buildings, governmental actions, and the legislation developed to protect individuals with disabilities within the societal framework.

Figure 2.1: The Social Model of Disability



Source: Inclusion London (2019) Adapted

2.8.2 Critical Disability Theory

Critical Disability Theory (CDT) critically examines the social and ontological challenges encountered by individuals with disabilities in contemporary society. This theoretical framework analyzes disability as a cultural, political, and social phenomenon (Hall, 2019). According to Hall (2019), CDT encompasses a diverse and interdisciplinary range of theoretical approaches, which are elaborated upon herein. These approaches primarily emphasize the environmental context in which individuals exist. It is crucial to recognize that Critical Disability Theory is considered a methodology rather than merely a subject area of study (Schaik, 2017).

Critical Disability Theory not only investigates physical or mental impairments but also analyzes the social norms that categorize certain characteristics as impairments. Furthermore, this theory explores the social conditions that perpetuate stigmatized traits within specific populations. CDT challenges its assumptions (Hosking, 2008) that shape societal perceptions of individuals with disabilities. Hosking (2008) further argues that CDT juxtaposes liberal ideals with the actual lived experiences of those with impairments.

2.9 PERCEPTIONS OF CO-EMPLOYEES ON PLWD IN THE WORKPLACE

2.9.1 Stereotypes and Prejudices

April, Dharani, and April (2023) argue that society often overlooks the potential contributions of people with disabilities due to prejudice and uninformed assumptions. This mindset extends into the workplace, where co-employees may unconsciously reinforce these stereotypes. While some employers assign PLWD to roles with limited growth potential, many excel in professional careers despite these biases. According to McElvaney (2022), the level of exposure and knowledge co-employees have about disability strongly influences their perceptions. Informed colleagues are more likely to challenge myths and support inclusion, whereas uninformed ones may perpetuate damaging stereotypes.

Shamrock (2022) notes that many misconceptions stem from fear or discomfort often from individuals who fear becoming disabled themselves. Friedman (2020) adds that such stigma leads to fewer job offers and higher unemployment rates for PLWD. Trani et al.

(2020) stress the importance of examining the attitudes of co-workers, as they can either enable or hinder inclusion. Some colleagues believe accommodating PLWD is costly or that they will underperform, despite evidence to the contrary. According to Gupta and Priyadarshi (2020), this apprehension is often due to limited disability literacy among recruiters and peers. Johansson et al. (2024) found that discomfort or awkwardness among co-workers around disabled colleagues can result in exclusion or reduced collaboration. Furthermore, due to fear of prejudice, some employees conceal invisible disabilities, especially when they lack authority in the workplace.

2.9.2 Lack of Awareness Among Co-Employees

The Department of Women, Children, and People with Disabilities (2013) highlights that many South Africans are unaware of the rights and capabilities of persons with disabilities. Within workplaces, this ignorance manifests in co-workers who may unintentionally offend, exclude, or undermine PLWD. Many co-employees lack the necessary sensitization to engage respectfully and inclusively with disabled colleagues, often due to limited training or exposure.

Podzo and Phasha (2023) suggest that creating inclusive environments in educational institutions can have long-term benefits, as graduates carry these inclusive attitudes into the workplace. However, without such preparation, many co-workers enter the labor market without an understanding of how to work alongside PLWD. This ignorance reinforces stereotypes and creates uncomfortable or non-collaborative environments. Mehrotra and Gulyani (2020) note that in both South Africa and countries like India, educational and workplace settings have failed to foster inclusive attitudes, especially when co-workers do not actively engage in disability awareness programs. The lack of understanding leads to marginalization, gossip, or passive exclusion of PLWD by their peers.

2.9.3 Workplace Culture and Social Perceptions

Workplace culture is shaped by both formal structures and informal social interactions. Otty (2021) points out that social barriers such as negative perceptions and exclusionary behaviors often emerge from co-workers who view disability through a deficit lens. This behavior includes avoiding collaboration with disabled colleagues, making assumptions about their abilities, or questioning their legitimacy in the workplace.

Nicolaides and Shozi (2021) argue that adopting a social model of disability within the workplace requires reshaping not only policies but also interpersonal dynamics among employees. Co-employees often unconsciously reflect a medical model of disability viewing colleagues with disabilities as problems needing "fixing" or special treatment rather than as professionals who thrive in an inclusive environment. Zaks (2023) states that unless social perceptions among co-workers change, PLWD will continue to face exclusion, not because of their impairments, but because of how they are treated or perceived by others in the organization.

2.9.4 Gendered Perceptions Toward Women with Disabilities in the Workplace

Perceptions held by co-employees are often shaped not only by disability but also by gender, which can lead to double discrimination against women with disabilities. Heera and Maini (2019) argue that such perceptions contribute to the low employment and advancement rates of women with disabilities. In many workplaces, colleagues view disabled women as less capable of handling demanding roles, thereby relegating them to supportive or administrative functions regardless of their qualifications or potential.

Chen (2023) supports this by stating that co-employees who hold negative beliefs about the professional abilities of women with disabilities may consciously or unconsciously exclude them from meaningful tasks, mentorship, or leadership opportunities. In some cases, these perceptions are reinforced by broader gender stereotypes that portray women as dependent or emotionally fragile assumptions that are intensified when the woman in question has a disability.

Reuter et al. (2020) add that women with disabilities often face more hostile or precarious work environments than their male counterparts. Co-employees may either overprotect or isolate them, stemming from either pity or discomfort. This limits professional engagement and undermines team cohesion. In contrast, some studies suggest that disabled men may be treated less favourably in manual or physically intensive roles, reflecting a different but equally harmful stereotype of masculinity and ability.

2.9.5 Patriarchal Attitudes and Co-Employee Biases

Patriarchal values embedded in workplace culture further shape how co-employees perceive persons with disabilities, particularly women. Chisale (2023) notes that patriarchy in the context of disability manifests in subtle power dynamics, where men are often assumed to be more competent or leadership-ready than their disabled peers. Within such environments, co-workers may unconsciously replicate these gendered and ableist hierarchies.

For instance, a male colleague might feel discomfort taking instructions from a disabled female supervisor, or employees might question the credibility of a disabled woman's input during decision-making processes. These dynamics contribute to a culture of marginalization, where persons with disabilities, especially women, are viewed as burdens rather than assets to the team. Furthermore, as Chisale (2023) emphasizes, sheltered or segregated work settings reinforce the belief that PLWD should work in isolated, low-demand environments. This mindset influences co-employee attitudes in open labor markets, where individuals with disabilities may not be offered the same collaborative opportunities or support as their non-disabled peers.

2.10 MANAGERIAL COMPETENCIES AND PLWD

According to Hernandez et al., (2019), top management buy-in on issues concerning the workforce with disabilities is important because management is often biased against a workforce with disabilities. Barnes (2012) asserts that people deny that they discriminate against employees with disabilities, but the ILO and its signatory countries found that

employer perceptions create barriers for the workforce with disabilities to access the labor market (Marumoagae, 2012). In contrast, Lindsay, Cagliostro, Leck, Shen and Stinson (2019) found that employers and co-workers of employees with disabilities are pleased with the contributions and dedication displayed by the workforce with disabilities. Employers and colleagues are comfortable working with employees with disabilities and claim that there is a positive atmosphere without negative perceptions in a workplace that caters to their special needs.

Hernandez et al. (2019) attest that employers are reluctant to hire people with disabilities. It is the perceptions held by management that lead it to disregard the underrepresentation of the workforce living with disabilities and the laws enacted to prohibit disability discrimination. Some managers think that recruiting people with disabilities would result in an increase in supervisory time, low productivity, and frequent absences (Hernandez et al., 2019).

Canton, Hedley and Spoor (2023) concede that employing people with disabilities may be beneficial but also acknowledge challenges facing people with disabilities in the workplace, such as ignorance and biases held by potential employers. According to Man, Zhu and Sun (2020), the under-representation of people with disabilities at work is due to employers' perceptions that the work may not be suitable for employees with disabilities and that accommodating them will cause undue hardship and cost implications for the business.

2.10.1 The integration of candidates with disabilities in the workplace

According to Finstad, Giorgi, Zaffina, Foti, Arcangeli and Mucci (2022), this poses challenges such as the recruitment of applicants with disabilities; the provision of reasonable accommodation to meet their special needs; and disability sensitization of the current staff. Various authors contend that people with disabilities are the victims of negative stereotyping and are considered unproductive and dependent. Giermanowska, Raław and Szawarska (2019) further state that colleagues and supervisors of the workforce with disabilities are the greatest sources of these discriminatory practices because negative stereotypes or prejudices form invisible barriers that limit their potential

and adversely influence their self-esteem. Disability affects employees' productivity at work and its effect is determined by the extent of disability and the job responsibilities.

Thus, Finstad et al. (2022) mention that an employer providing reasonable accommodation for disabled employees may equate an individual's productivity to those without disability, and they stress that attitudes directed towards females with disabilities should be mitigated to dismantle the prejudices they face within their sub-group.

2.10.2 Organizational Culture

According to Iwanaga, Chan, Ditchman and Tansey (2021), an organizational culture that is amicable toward people with disabilities enables an organization to attract, hire, and keep employees with disabilities. Nevertheless, efforts to create a harmonious and inclusive workplace are hampered by employers who treat employees with disabilities as special people.

Kulkarni and Lengnick-Hall (2014) emphasize the importance of fostering a genuinely inclusive culture that goes beyond mere compliance with legal requirements and actively promotes the participation and integration of employees with disabilities in all aspects of organizational life. Furthermore, Vornholt, Uitdewilligen and Nijhuis (2013) argue that organizational culture plays a significant role in shaping attitudes and behaviors toward employees with disabilities, with a positive and inclusive culture leading to higher levels of job satisfaction, engagement, and retention.

Additionally, Schur, Kruse and Blanck (2021) highlight the importance of leadership commitment in cultivating an inclusive culture, noting that organizations in which leaders prioritize disability inclusion tend to implement more effective policies and practices. These organisations are also more likely to engage in continuous learning and improvement, ensuring that the needs and contributions of employees with disabilities are fully recognized and supported.

2.10.3 Traditional Culture Influence on Disability

According to Deku (2002), culture profoundly shapes how people with disabilities are perceived, often leading to their marginalization and exclusion from mainstream society. In many cultures, disability is not only viewed through a medical lens but is also influenced by socio-cultural and economic factors that dictate what is considered "normal" or "deviant". This perception can result in people with disabilities being seen as outsiders or as individuals who do not fully belong within their communities, thus reinforcing social isolation and limiting their access to opportunities and resources.

Priestley (2023) argues that cultural beliefs and practices significantly impact the lived experiences of people with disabilities, influencing everything from community acceptance to policy implementation. In some cultures, disabilities may be viewed as a form of divine punishment or as a source of shame, which can lead to stigmatization and discrimination. Furthermore, Goodley (2017) states that socioeconomic factors are deeply intertwined with cultural perceptions of disability. Societies with strong socioeconomic disparities may exacerbate the challenges faced by people with disabilities, as cultural and economic barriers compound to restrict access to education, employment, and healthcare.

2.10.4 Attitudinal change

Amanze and Nkhoma (2020) state that attitudinal change is complex, but disability sensitizations could change the negative attitudes that are born from society's lack of knowledge about people with disabilities. The provision of a community-based rehabilitation program could help fight stigma because stereotypes have behavioral effects that are challenging, discriminating, derogatory, limiting, negative, cynical, doubting and excluding (Moloto, Brink and Nel, 2014). Stereotypes most prevalent in workplaces are related to race, age, gender and occupational levels (Moloto et al., 2014).

Smith and Stein (2020) advocate that prejudices, stereotypes, marginalization and segregation are barriers created by society that limit the inclusion of people with disabilities in participating in education and employment. Pinilla-Roncancio and Caicedo (2020) claim that disabled employees working for state institutions are regarded as incompetent because they believe that people with disabilities cannot work and should

not work. This creates self-stigma, which is a feeling of shame and lowered self-esteem, or public stigma linked to social participation restrictions and discrimination.

2.11 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented a thorough review of the literature addressing the challenges encountered by employees with disabilities within the eThekweni Municipality. The discussion began with an analysis of the legislative and legal framework, providing insights into the policies and laws that influence the rights and employment conditions of individuals with disabilities in South Africa. It included an in-depth examination of the legislation that directs local government operations and municipal practices, emphasizing the role that these regulations play in shaping the workplace environment for employees with disabilities. In accordance with the legal framework, this chapter examined the theoretical literature pertaining to disability and employment. Various theories were explored to establish a conceptual foundation for comprehending the complexities associated with the employment of individuals with disabilities, particularly in the public sector. The discussion encompassed models of disability that shape societal views and interactions with individuals with disabilities, along with an analysis of how these perceptions impact workplace dynamics and career advancement.

The chapter evaluated the recruitment and employment policies of the eThekweni Municipality, focusing on the municipality's strategies for integrating employees with disabilities into the workforce. It was observed that while inclusive policies are in place, numerous barriers continue to hinder the career advancement of employees with disabilities. These barriers are complex and include societal stereotypes and stigmas that marginalize individuals with disabilities, as well as practical challenges such as inadequate accessible infrastructure and restricted opportunities for professional development and skills training. The next chapter will expand upon this foundation by delineating the research design and methodology utilized in the study. It will provide a comprehensive overview of the methods employed to collect and analyze data from the chosen cluster within the eThekweni Municipality.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The study aims to examine the challenges experienced by employees living with disabilities at a selected cluster in the eThekweni Municipality. Therefore, this chapter will provide a detailed discussion of the research methodology and design applied in the study, along with supporting theories. This chapter begins with a presentation of research philosophy, research design, methodology, research paradigms, as well as the research strategy. The target population will then be discussed, along with the sampling strategy, data collection instrument, and pilot study. The focus of the discussion will then shift to how data was analysed, the trustworthiness of the study, the study's limitations, how bias was eliminated from the study, and the ethical considerations for the study.

3.2 RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY

Research philosophy can be defined as how the collected data about the research questions is analyzed and used to answer such questions. In addition, Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) define the research philosophy as beliefs and assumptions that form the basis on which knowledge in research is developed and established. A research philosophy establishes the theoretical foundation for the phenomenon under study and provides a view of what constitutes reality and how knowledge is generated and justified. There are two major types of research philosophies, namely positivism and interpretivism (Kumar, 2021: 75).

3.2.1 Positivism

According to Corry, Porter and McKenna (2019), positivism stems from the assumptions and beliefs of the natural scientist established in the notion that human behaviour can only be assessed and accurately understood through the application of numeric or

statistical methods and tools. This kind of philosophy supports studies based on quantitative research methodologies. In the positivist philosophy, the value of the researcher is detached from the study to ensure that the researcher is objective.

3.2.2 Interpretivism

Adom, Yeboah and Ankrah (2016:2) describe interpretivism as a research philosophy rooted in the subjective opinions and views of the target population from which truth and reality are formed. The interpretivism philosophy encapsulates the beliefs and values of the researcher with the development of knowledge and what is true, thereby making it difficult to separate one from the other. The interpretivism philosophy formed the foundation for this study. The motivation behind following this philosophy was that it not only underpinned the qualitative research methodology selected and applied in the study, but it allowed findings from the study to be based on the subjective interpretation of the employees of the organization under study.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

According to Zikmund, Babin, Carr and Griffin (2015:66), a research design is the total strategy chosen for integrating all the components of a study in a seamless and orderly manner. It details how data will be collected, evaluated, and analysed in a manner that ensures that the research questions are answered, and the objectives of the research are met. Some variations of research design are discussed below. Research design is a strategy for resolving a research problem and it provides the overall structure for the procedures, the collection of data, and the data analysis (Leedy and Ormrod, 2019). According to Kumar (2011), a research design is a plan, structure, and investigation approach through which answers to research questions or problems are obtained.

3.3.1 Exploratory Research Design

An exploratory research design refers to a research design in which the research problem is deeply explored to obtain an in-depth understanding of the problem in an environment

that is not controlled. The design tests the influence of one variable on another where clarity on such influence is needed (Sauro, 2015).

3.3.2 Explanatory Research Design

Stentz, Clark and Matkin (2012:4) state that an explanatory research design is a form of research in which an explanation is sought for the reason for the occurrence of an event. A description of the event is part of an explanatory research design.

3.3.3 Descriptive Design

According to Yazdani, Shirvani and Heidarpoor (2021), a descriptive research design is a theory-based design aimed at clarifying the research problem by providing a comprehensive description of the problem and the relationship between the variables being tested. Descriptive research is often implemented after exploration research has been conducted. An exploratory research design was used in the study because it supported the in-depth probing of respondents in an interview in a way that provided a deeper understanding of the practices at the organization under study, as well as how the practices impacted the performance of the employees and the organization. The design was also suited for the qualitative research methodology chosen for the study.

3.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Based on the chosen research philosophy, a suitable research methodology was chosen to ensure that the study was implemented in an orderly and scientific way. There are three main research methodologies known to exist in research, namely, quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods (Punch, 2014).

3.4.1 Quantitative Methodology

According to Alase (2017), quantitative research is an approach in which statistical methods and tools are used to understand human behaviour or an ongoing phenomenon.

In a quantitative research approach, quantitative data is collected using a questionnaire as a tool. Questions on the questionnaire are structured and closed-ended. Samples for the study are drawn using statistical methods.

3.4.2 Qualitative Methodology

Fischler (2015) describes a qualitative research approach as being focused on exploring the phenomenon under study to provide a deeper understanding of the problem in cases where little is known about the phenomenon being studied. This is done through the collection of qualitative data. While the quantitative research approach is regarded as objective, the qualitative research approach is regarded as subjective, as it considers the subjective opinions, views, and interpretations of the members of the organization under study. The opinions and views are gathered through in-depth interviews. In contrast to the quantitative research approach, samples for the study are selected using a non-statistical approach and a process using qualitative analysis approaches and tools. Unlike the quantitative research approach, where findings are presented using tables and graphs, findings in qualitative study are presented in a narrative form or thematically.

Crossman (2019) states that qualitative research uses non-numerical data to interpret meaning from a certain demographic or location. This study will employ the qualitative method to support a better understanding of the challenges experienced by employees living with disabilities at a selected cluster in the eThekweni Municipality. This methodology allows for the collection of comprehensive and detailed data through interviews, focus groups, and observations, shedding light on the lived experiences of these employees. The strength of the qualitative method lies in its capacity to capture the subtleties of individual perspectives, facilitating the identification of specific barriers and enablers within the workplace environment.

3.5 RESEARCH PARADIGM

The different paradigms that inform any study are basic principles that guide the actions undertaken during the research (Guba and Lincoln, 2005). They provide the general philosophical underpinnings of the research (Creswell, 2014). A research paradigm

informs the researcher as to what questions are significant for the investigation and what processes to follow to ensure that answers to the questions asked are suitable (Du PlooyCilliers, Davis and Bezuidenhout, 2014). Thus, a research paradigm is a lens that the researcher uses to identify, interpret, or describe the reality of the inquiry, which, in the current context is the challenges experienced by employees living with disabilities at a selected cluster in the eThekweni Municipality. It embodies a philosophical stance that informs the methodology of the research and guides the research process.

According to Davies and Fisher (2018), a research paradigm is the viewpoint from which a scholar conducts the inquiry. It includes the ontological foundation, which embraces the idea of socially constructed knowledge (Kelly, 2011). Epistemology refers to the theory of knowledge and the study of how researchers come to accept that the research findings are valid. Axiological suppositions present the things that are valuable to the researcher and how to reveal them in a meaningful way, while the methodological dimension sets out the procedures used in the research to arrive at the results.

There are many designs available in research. In the current study, a descriptive paradigm was used, the aim of which is to understand human nature, focusing on examining the challenges experienced by employees living with disabilities at a selected cluster in the eThekweni Municipality, South Africa. The axiological assumption of constructivism is that there are multiple subjective realities (Mertens, 2009), including the perspectives of examining the challenges experienced by employees living with disabilities at a selected cluster in the eThekweni Municipality. Creswell (2014) states that it is an ontological assumption that there are multiple socially constructed realities (and the experience and understanding of the participants helped to construct the meaning of the phenomenon being studied). Constructivism posits that there are as many intangible realities as people constructing them (Wagner et al., 2012), while the epistemological assumption of this paradigm is that knowledge is subjective because it is socially constructed. The researcher relies on participants' understanding, opinions, and experiences to describe the phenomenon, embedded in phenomenology, ethnography, symbolic interaction, and naturalistic methodology. The methodological assumption of this paradigm is dependent

on the choice of design, the behaviour of participants, and the research problem (Wagner et al., 2012). The present study used individual interviews as data collection instruments.

3.6 RESEARCH STRATEGY

A research strategy is a blueprint that provides a step-by-step description of how an entire study will be implemented, starting from how samples are selected to how data is collected and analysed, and how the findings from the study are presented. This is done with consideration of answering the research questions and meeting the research objectives. Some types of research strategies are discussed below.

3.6.1 Grounded Theory

According to Corbin and Strauss (2015), Grounded Theory is a research strategy rooted in the idea of developing theories from the collected primary data after the data has been analyzed. The data is then analysed further to further develop the theory. Grounded Theory is suitable for research that relates to epistemology, post-positivism, and constructivism.

3.6.2 Case Study

Coombs (2022) describes case study research as research that focuses on understanding an organization or an object in-depth. In the case of an organization, members of the organization are interviewed to gather their views and opinions on the ongoing phenomenon under study. This study adopted a qualitative case study research strategy in the form of a semi-structured interview. Other types of research strategies include focus groups, action research, and ethnography.

In the case of this research, a case study strategy was followed. The reason for the choice lies in the fact that the case study helped focus on only the organization chosen to be studied.

3.7 TARGET POPULATION AND SAMPLING STRATEGY

According to Martínez-Mesa, Gonzalez-Chica, Duquia, Bonamigo and Bastos (2016), a population constitutes the entire collection of elements or groups on which inferences must be drawn, while sampling involves the process of drawing a suitable representative subset from the overall population. The target population for this study comprises staff members living with disabilities at the eThekweni Municipality office in the KwaZulu-Natal province of South Africa.

3.7.1 Sampling method

According to Alvi (2016), probability sampling and non-probability sampling methods are the two main categories of sampling strategies. In probability sampling, random techniques are used to select a representative sample. Examples of these techniques are the simple random sampling and stratified random sampling methods. On the other hand, non-probability sampling techniques do not use random techniques for selecting samples. Examples of this method include convenience sampling, quota sampling and judgmental sampling. This study adopted the convenience sampling method because of its ability to enable the selection of participants who are freely available and willing to be part of the study.

3.7.2 Sample Size

Sampling is the drawing of a sample from a target population using appropriate tools and techniques (Malterud, Siersma & Guassora, 2015). The main sampling approaches are the probability and non-probability sampling approaches, which are discussed briefly below. By using the non-probability sampling method, a sample of 15 employees were selected from the organization under study. Mhelembe and Mafini (2019) state that a minimum sample size of 10 participants is ideal for a qualitative research study. The study will prioritize achieving data saturation to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the participants' experiences. This approach aligns with best practices in qualitative research, where the focus is on the richness of the data rather than on a fixed sample size. A sample of 15 employees living with disabilities, including 10 employees and 5 managers, was selected from the organization under study. Table 3.1 below indicates the selected groups

that make up the sample size selected from the overall population of employees living with disabilities at eThekwini Municipality.

Table 3.1: Sample Size

UNITS WITHIN THE CLUSTER	TOTAL POPULATION
Human Capital Unit	5
eThekwini Municipal Academy	4
Occupational Health and Safety Unit	3
Organisational Development & Change Management Unit	3
Total	15

The sample size indicated in Table 3.1 excludes the 2 participants who were used for the pilot study.

3.8 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT

In the study, an interview schedule was used for the collection of primary data. It also supported the collection of qualitative data as the study was based on a qualitative research methodology. The interview schedule also supported the use of a structured interview, which was carried out for primary data collection purposes. This made the interview guide more suitable for the collection of primary data for this study. The most often utilized research instruments included structured interviews, observations, and questionnaires. In this study, the researcher used structured interviews as the main tool to collect qualitative data. The research instrument was constructed by formulating questions that aligned with the research objectives. The first section consisted of demographic questions, followed by structured interviews in line with the aim of the study (i.e., to examine the challenges experienced by employees living with disabilities at a selected cluster in the eThekwini Municipality).

The interview guide was administered in face-to-face interviews for participants who had granted consent to be interviewed by signing the consent form provided before the commencement of the interviews. This procedure was designed to ensure the anonymity, confidentiality, and comfort of the interviewee. Additional interviews were conducted using the Zoom and MS Teams applications for participants who preferred to be interviewed in the comfort of their homes and had agreed to the recording of the interview. Each interview was scheduled for 35 to 40 minutes, and all digital files containing the interviews were password-protected, while hard copies were securely stored to prevent unauthorized access. All data collected will be destroyed after five years.

3.9. DATA ANALYSIS

Willemse and Nyelisani (2015) describe data analysis as a systematic way of analysing collected data and providing interpretations that help make sense of the data using logical reasoning and analytic tools. They further stated that thematic analysis is a qualitative analysis method in which emerging themes from the overall data are identified and evaluated. In analysing the collected primary data for this study, the thematic analysis approach was used. The first step was to get familiar with the collected data, followed by the second step in which the coding of the data was carried out and specific codes were created. In the third step, the identification of emergent themes and their relationships was established.

A review of the identified themes was then carried out in the fourth step, which resulted in the classification of sub-themes under the relevant themes to which they were related. The defining and naming of the themes took place in the fifth step, and the themes' names were linked to the parts of the primary data with which they were related. In the sixth and final step, the discussion of the themes was presented and discussed. The motivation behind using the thematic analysis approach was that it was found to be well-suited for the analysis of voice, videos, text interviews, and qualitative research in general. The NVIVO qualitative analysis software application was used for analysing the primary data collected.

3.10. PILOT STUDY

Ngcamu and Teferra (2015) view a pilot study as a mini study conducted before the actual study. A pilot study was often carried out to test the suitability and accuracy of the primary data collection tool. Two employees of the organization under study were recruited into a pilot study. Overall, the pilot respondents understood the study and the questions. The two participants in the pilot study were not allowed to participate in the main study.

3.11. TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE RESEARCH DATA COLLECTION

According to Justice, Johnson and Parry (2016), trustworthiness in qualitative research refers to the study's credibility, dependability, transferability, and conformability, which relate to the data collection tool used in the study, as well as to the final findings. Rose, Harmon and Dunlap (2018) emphasized the importance of ensuring the credibility of a qualitative study. In addition, Rose et al. (2018) stress that if trustworthiness is to be attained for a qualitative study, all the elements that pertain to making the study trustworthy must be addressed. According to Babbie (2020: 141), the use of reliability and validity relates to the positivist research approach and the quantitative research methodology, while the construct of trustworthiness is applied in qualitative studies. The elements of trustworthiness are discussed briefly below.

3.12 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY OF THE MEASURING INSTRUMENT

The validity and reliability of research instruments are of vast importance to the outcomes of any scientific research (Alshenqueeti, 2014). Reliability denotes how consistent a set of measurements within an instrument is, whilst validity describes how well an assessment measures what it is intended to measure. The terms' reliability and validity are essential criteria for quality. In quantitative concepts. In qualitative concepts, the terms credibility, neutrality, or confirmability, dependability, and transferability are the important criteria for quality (Golafshani, 2003).

3.12.1 Validity

Validity is regarded as one of the most fundamental indices of measurement that can obtain true values (Mohammadbeigi, Mohammadsalehi & Aligol 2015). Shepard (2016) defines validity as the degree to which data and theory correlate with the test scores' clarification for the suggested usage of testing measurements. Welman and Kruger (1999) state that validity measures the extent to which a study succeeds in determining the proposed values and the degree to which the variances found reflect the true measures and/or differences amongst the respondents. The different types of validity are further explained in Table 3.2 below.

Table 3.2: Types of Validity

Face validity	The extent to which an instrument appears valid.
Content validity	The extent to which the instrument covers the complete content of the study it is intended to measure in the study
Construct validity	How well the theory in the instrument can be measured by different groups of related items, and the relationship between constructs.
Criterion validity	Whether an instrument measures what it is supposed to measure.

Source: Creswell (2014). Adapted

The qualitative methodology requires the research instrument to be trustworthy. Trustworthiness is the ability to represent the experiences of participants correctly (Streubert and Carpenter 1999). Streubert and Carpenter (1999) state that trustworthiness in qualitative research is also evaluated based on several principles developed from Gubas' model, which includes the following: dependability, credibility, confirmability, and suitability (transferability).

3.12.2 Reliability

Reliability can be defined as the extent to which a research instrument measures a concept in the same way whenever it is used in the same environment with the same respondent (Awung, 2015). In conjunction with the term 'reliability' in qualitative research, Lincoln and Guba (1985) use 'dependability' in qualitative research, which closely corresponds to the concept of "reliability" in quantitative research (Golafshani, 2003). For the qualitative pre-testing, participants requested open-ended written interviews instead of face-to-face semi-structured interviews. The rationale was that participants believed they would have more time to reflect on the open-ended questionnaire prior to responding to questions. Moreover, these pre-test participants stated that a posted open-ended questionnaire (written interview) will provide for privacy, confidentiality and anonymity.

3.12.3 Credibility

According to Patton (2015), credibility refers to the level of accuracy of the study's findings. To attain credibility in a qualitative study, it is mandatory to ensure that the methodology chosen and used for the study, the size of the data collected, as well as the data collection approach, are justified and all the elements are aligned (Patton, 2015). In the study, credibility was maintained by ensuring that the size of the sample collected for the study was representative of the target population and that the sampling method aligned with the research methodology used in the study. A pilot study was also conducted to ensure that the research instrument used for the data collection was reliable and accurate, and relevant questions were posed. The collected data will be protected, and no unauthorized access to the collected data will be granted.

3.12.4 Transferability

Transferability refers to the extent to which a study's findings apply to a population that is similar or the same, as well as a similar situation and context (Creswell, 2013). According to Peel (2020), in establishing the transferability of a study, questions relating to how aligned the research methodology is to the research data regarding making the study transferable are pertinent. The study's transferability was ensured by being transparent and by documenting all processes, strategies, and assumptions relating to the data

collection tools and methodology used in the study, in a manner that showed their linkage adequacy and the strengths and weaknesses of this linkage in answering the research questions and arriving at the findings

3.12.5 Dependability

Riazi, Rezvani and Ghanbar (2023) describe dependability in qualitative research as the extent to which data used in reaching findings in the study are reliable when the passage of time is considered. Kakar, Rasheed, Rashid and Akhter (2023) postulate that to ensure the dependability of a qualitative study, the respondents' demographic attributes must be clearly stated, and the respondent selection criteria and underlying principles should also be made clear. This would help in the assessment of the study's level of dependability as well as its transferability. The researcher should also assess the process used in analysing the data against acceptable standards for the chosen research design, to ensure conformance (Kakar et al. 2023). In this study, dependability was ensured by making sure that the steps in the thematic analysis were followed according to the qualitative research design and analysis standards. Audit trails of the entire research process will also be created to enable an effective peer review of the study.

3.12.6 Conformability

Kakar et al. (2023) define conformability as how objective the findings of a study are. It focuses on the extent to which the study is void of bias and how truly the opinions of the respondent have been represented in the findings, where the problem under study is concerned. The study ensured conformability by ensuring that participants in the study were all members of the organization under study, and that records of the interviews, both in electronic and hardcopy, were kept safely as audit evidence. Words used by participants were used directly, where applicable, in the discussion of the findings.

3.13. LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

The delimitation of a study refers to limitations deliberately introduced into the study by the researcher, such as limiting the scope and objective of the study to enable the attainment of the research objectives and the answering of the research questions. The delimitation of a study is usually within the control of the researcher (Welman and Kruger, 1999). The study is limited to employees living with disabilities in a selected cluster within the eThekweni Municipality. The main limitation of this study is that it specifically focuses on one municipality in the KwaZulu-Natal province, which is situated within the South African context. Therefore, the findings from this study cannot be generalized to other municipalities in South Africa. Furthermore, this study did not employ a quantitative research method. Therefore, this limits the study to the behavioral or perspective nature of results based on the opinions or views of the participants during the interviews (Welman and Kruger, 1999).

3.14. ELIMINATION OF BIAS

According to Gardenier and Resnik (2002), bias within the context of research refers to any kind of impartiality that enters the research process at any point of the study that fosters prejudices in the research or influences the nature of the research questions in a way that promotes prejudice. Bias was eliminated from the study in different ways. Firstly, it was ensured that all gender types were free to participate in the study. The study avoided the use of any word or phrase that might directly or indirectly have promoted stereotypes and discrimination against participants' religious beliefs, tradition, race, or ethnic background. Secondly, questions were tested in a pilot's study to ensure that any question found to promote bias was removed. Thirdly, participants were allowed to answer the questions posed to them with their own honest opinions, and leading questions were avoided. Finally, it was ensured that findings from the study were reported strictly on the opinions of the respondents without manipulation or fabrication.

3.15. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethics within the context of research can be described as carrying out research in a responsible manner and conduct, particularly where participants from vulnerable groups are concerned (Sobottka, 2016). Some of the ethical issues considered in the study are discussed below.

3.15.1 Informed consent

According to Dunn and Jeste (2001), informed consent can be described as a process in research where information is exchanged between the participants and the researcher. Adequate and clear information is provided to the participants in a manner that is understood to help them make an informed decision about whether or not to partake in the study. Participants should also possess the capacity to make such a decision for consent to be valid.

In the study, the consent of the participants was solicited through a consent form that provided all information relating to the study, its aim, and objectives. The consent form also included details on how the anonymity and confidentiality of the participant would be protected, and the participants had the freedom to exit the study at any time they deemed fit, while participating in the study was completely voluntary.

Furthermore, participants were also informed of what was required of them during their participation in the study and of the duration of the study. On signing the consent form, participants granted their consent and were allowed to take part in the study.

3.15.2 Ensuring no harm comes to participants

Alexander, Pillay and Smith (2018) identify some harm that participants can be exposed to when participating in a study, including physical harm, psychological harm, legal harm, and social harm. The study ensured that none of the types of harm mentioned came to participants in the study by first making sure that the questions posed to participants did not evoke negative emotions that resulted in psychological problems. Secondly, while the study was not an experimental one, no physical activity that might have resulted in injury was carried out in the study. During the interview process, the researcher ensured that

no questions posed in the study, or description provided in the report, resulted in the participants being socially shamed or embarrassed. Furthermore, it was also ensured that information provided by the participants was not used in a manner that resulted in any litigation against them.

3.15.3 Anonymity and Confidentiality

Confidentiality has been described as not divulging information provided by the respondent to anyone for use for any other purpose, while anonymity refers to making sure that the identity of the respondent is concealed (Creswell, 2014). In the study, the participants' anonymity was ensured by designing the interview schedule in a way that ensured that no personal information, such as the home address of the participants, their contact details, or names, was gathered or revealed during the reporting and publication of the study. Similarly, the confidentiality of participants was ensured by making sure that the information collected was password-protected and hard copies were locked away. Interviews were also conducted on an individual basis and not in groups to ensure that each participant's information was not available to the next participant.

3.15.4 Ensuring that Permission is Obtained

Permission was obtained from the organization under study by sending a letter to management requesting permission to conduct the study. The letter detailed the aims and objectives of the study, how the organization would benefit from the study, and the need to interview employees of the organization, as well as details of the interview and questions. The study will only commence after permission has been granted by the organization's management.

3.16 Conclusion

The research philosophy and the methodology used in this research assisted in examining the impact of change management on the organizational performance of the company under study. This chapter presented the research strategy and types of methodology undertaken by the researcher to obtain data as accurately as possible to authenticate the

study. The chapter adequately clarified the target population, research instrument, data collection method, pilot study, ethical concerns, and data analysis used for this study. The research design and approach of the study were predominantly qualitative, cross-sectional, and descriptive. The sample size of the study comprises 15 members of staff from various sections of the organization under study. The research instrument used was scheduled interviews. Scheduled formal interviews were conducted by the researcher based on the voluntary availability of the staff members who formed part of the sample size. A pilot study will be conducted with 2 staff members from the company under study.

The data will be analysed in the following chapter, and the findings of the research study will be presented in the same chapter.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to present the results of the analysis of the interview data collected by this study on the challenges experienced by employees living with disabilities at a selected cluster in the eThekweni Municipality. Therefore, the following section will present findings from the main themes, which include perceptions on challenges faced by PLWD and knowledge of municipal policies and strategies emanating from the analysis.

4.2 DEMOGRAPHICS

The demographic composition of the participants of this study is hereby presented in terms of their department, ethnicity, academic qualification, gender, age, marital status, and length of service.

4.2.1 Department

Table 4.1: Department Categories

Department	Frequency	Percentage
eThekweni Municipal Academy	4	27%
Human Capital Department	5	33 %
Occupational Health & Safety	3	20%
Organisational Development Department	3	20%
Total	15	100%

Table 4.1 demonstrates that 33% of respondents are employed in the Human Capital Department, 27% in the eThekweni Municipal Academy, 20% in the Occupational Health & Safety Department, and 20% in the Organisational Development Department. This distribution highlights the presence of employees with disabilities across several key departments, showcasing their contributions to various areas within the organization. The

significant representation in the Human Capital Department implies a strong commitment to inclusivity and diversity initiatives in this area. Furthermore, the equal distribution of employees with disabilities in both the Occupational Health & Safety and Organisational Development Departments indicates their involvement in roles that impact workplace safety and the organization's growth.

4.2.2 Ethnicity

Table 4.2: Different Ethnic Groups

Ethnicity	Frequency	Percentage
African	9	60 %
Asian	2	13 %
White	1	7 %
Coloured	3	20 %
Total	15	100%

Table 4.2 illustrates that 9 out of 15 respondents (60%) identified as African; 2 out of 15 respondents (13%) identified as Asian; 1 out of 15 respondents (7%) identified as White; and 3 out of 15 respondents (20%) identified as Coloured. This data highlights that most employees with disabilities are African, indicating a significant representation of this demographic within the organization. The presence of diverse racial groups amongst the respondents reflects the organization's commitment to inclusive employment practices. However, the variations in representation may also point to opportunities for enhanced diversity and inclusion initiatives.

4.2.3 Qualification

Table 4.3: Level of Qualification of Respondents

Qualification	Frequency	Percentage
N4, N5, N6	1	7%

Diploma/ bachelor's degree	9	60%
Postgrad/Honours Degree / B. Tech	4	27%
Master's degree	1	6%
Total	15	100.0%

Table 4.3 demonstrates that a significant proportion of respondents (60%) possess either a Diploma or bachelor's degree. Additionally, 27% hold a Postgraduate/Honors Degree or B. Tech, while 7% have qualifications at the N4, N5 or N6 level. Moreover, 6% of respondents have attained a master's degree. These findings indicate that most employees with disabilities are highly educated, which can positively influence their job performance and enhance opportunities for career advancement. The elevated educational qualifications among the respondents suggest that the organization effectively attracts and develops skilled individuals with disabilities. Furthermore, the presence of advanced degrees within the workforce underscores the potential for leadership and specialized roles.

4.2.4 Gender

Table 4.4: Gender Category of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	8	53 %
Female	7	47%
Total	15	100%

Table 4.4 presents the frequency distribution of gender amongst the overall sample. Most participants identified as male (53%, or 8 out of 15), while females accounted for 47% (7 out of 15). This distribution indicates that employees with disabilities are nearly evenly represented across genders within the organization. Such a balance implies that the organization demonstrates inclusivity in its hiring practices, ensuring representation of

both genders. Furthermore, this nearly equal distribution may promote a broader range of perspectives and experiences within the workplace, thereby fostering a more equitable work environment.

4.2.5 Age

Table 4.5: Age Distribution of respondents

Age group	Frequency	Percentage
18- 25	4	27%
26 - 33	4	27%
34 - 41	5	33%
42 - 49	2	13%
Total	15	100%

Table 4.5 illustrates the frequency distribution of the participants' age category. Most participants were between 34-41 years (33%), followed by 26-33 and 18- 25, which were equal at 27%, with the lowest being 42-49 (13%). This indicates that the municipality employees with disabilities are relatively young and very few are in the mature age group in the organisation.

4.2.6 Marital status

Table 4.6: Marital status of respondents

Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage
Single	9	60%
Married	5	33%
Divorced	1	7%
Total	15	100%

Table 4.6 indicates that most respondents (60%) identify as single, indicating that a substantial proportion of participants are not in a marital relationship. A smaller yet noteworthy segment (33%) is married, suggesting that approximately one-third of the participants have established family lives, which may impact their work-life balance, job satisfaction, and long-term commitment to their roles. Additionally, only one respondent (7%) is divorced, reflecting that divorce is relatively infrequent amongst this group.

4.2.7 Length of service

Table 4.7: Length of service of respondents

Length of service	Frequency	Percentage
1 - 5	2	14%
6 - 10	6	40%
11 - 15	7	46%
Total	15	100%

Table 4.7 presents the frequency distribution of the participants' length of service (employment period). The highest frequency percentage for the length of service category was 11-15 years (7 participants = 46 %), followed by 6-10 years (6 participants = 40%), and 1- 5 years (2 participants = 14%). This indicates that nearly half of the participants are in the mid-stage of their careers, having accumulated significant experience in their roles, and a significant portion of the participants are in the early-mid stage of their careers, likely possessing a solid foundation of experience but still in the process of further professional development. This further suggests that fewer participants are in the early

stages of their careers, possibly indicating either lower recruitment rates in recent years or a focus on retaining more experienced staff.

4.3 THEME 1: PERCEPTIONS OF CHALLENGES FACED BY PLWD

Employees and managers provided various insights into the challenges faced by individuals with disabilities within the organization. These challenges encompassed subjective experiences, career-related obstacles, and limitations regarding opportunities. These findings align with those of previous studies, such as Saxe (2018), which similarly identified the career and opportunity challenges encountered by individuals with disabilities in organizational settings.

4.3.1 Sub-theme 1: Subjective Challenges

According to Trani, Moodley, Anand, Graham and Maw (2020), subjective challenges pertain to the internal difficulties individuals encounter, which can differ significantly based on personal perceptions, experiences, and contexts. In the context of individuals with disabilities, these challenges frequently intersect with broader societal attitudes, environmental barriers, and personal experiences of discrimination or exclusion. Puar (2017) states that individuals with disabilities may struggle with self-perception, particularly in societies where ableism discrimination in favor of able-bodied individuals is prevalent. Internalized ableism can lead to feelings of inadequacy and a diminished sense of self-worth.

The employees described the challenges experienced by people living with disabilities in their organization as mainly personally related. The employees mostly indicated the following factors: “negative attitudes, stereotyping from colleges and managers, accommodation problems, lack of collaboration, social exclusion, and lack of support”. Similarly, the managers also described the challenges experienced by people living with disabilities in their organization as mainly personally related. All the managers mostly indicated the following factors: communication barriers and a lack of support services.

For instance, Manager 1 stated that: *“Managing employees with disability can be challenging. Through my years as a manager, I have realized that employees with disabilities in my office tend to take more leave days than their co-workers. This is because they are scheduled for assessment as and when their specialist needs to do some assessment, depending on their disability status. Another challenging factor is performance; the perception they have is that they should not be performing the same duties as their co-workers while they have the same job description or even the same job title. The mentality is that management should be lenient in giving tasks, and they should be given fewer tasks than their colleagues because of their disability status. Manager 4 indicated that a primary challenge involves reconciling equitable treatment with operational flexibility. Although providing reasonable accommodation is essential, certain employees with disabilities may anticipate preferential considerations that could disrupt team cohesion. Furthermore, there is an absence of standardized metrics to assess performance objectively while maintaining optimal productivity levels.*

Manager 2 stated: *“Yes, communication barriers: Effective communication is key in any workplace, but it can be more complex when employees have different communication needs. For example, as a manager, I had to arrange for sign language interpreters or provide written materials in alternative formats for employees with visual or auditory impairment. Moreover, it is the social dynamic in the workplace. As a manager, I have also encountered challenges related to social dynamics and attitudes towards disability in the workplace, including addressing stereotypes or biases, ensuring that all team members are treated respectfully, and fostering a culture of inclusion”* while Manager 3 added *“Accessibility, it is difficult to ensure that the workplace is physically accessible for employees with disabilities. This involves adjusting the workspace, providing assistive technologies, or offering flexible working arrangements. Also addressing attitudes and stereotypes that exist within the workplace toward people with disabilities has been an ongoing challenge”*.

On the other hand, Employee 1 indicated the following challenges being experienced: *“Negative attitudes, bias, and stereotyping from colleagues, managers, or clients;*

exclusion from events, team-building activities, or networking opportunities.” Employee 2 stated: “My work becomes physically and mentally exhausting without the right support from my employer. On top of that, facing both gender and disability discrimination limits my opportunities and reinforces unfair stereotypes.” Employee 3 said: “There is difficulty in getting around, performing tasks, and even participating in meetings because the workplace is not user-friendly for disabled individuals; without proper accommodations from the employer, it can be physically and mentally draining to keep up with work demands”.

Employee 4 also mentioned: *“There is insufficient support from HR, management, or coworkers, leading to feelings of marginalization, as well as managing caregiving duties while pursuing career advancement.”* Employee 5 added: *“There is insufficient support from HR, management, or coworkers, leading to feelings of marginalization, along with unrealistic performance expectations, bias in evaluations, or assumptions about their work capabilities”.* Employee 6 reiterated: *“That the absence of proper accommodation from the employer makes it very taxing, physically and mentally, to meet the demands of their job.”*

Employee 7 indicated: *“The absence of adequate support from HR, supervisors, and colleagues has contributed to feelings of exclusion. This situation is further exacerbated by inconsistent performance expectations, perceived biases in evaluations, and misunderstandings regarding my capabilities”.* Lastly, Employee 8 stated: *“I face a glass ceiling or am tokenized, which limits career advancement opportunities, while also managing caregiving duties while pursuing career advancement; there is inadequate provision of reasonable accommodations and support for career development”.* Employee 10 mentions that: *“Despite my efforts, I encounter subtle biases and exclusion from key projects that hinder my progress. Balancing work demands with personal responsibilities is challenging, especially since formal support systems and accommodations are inconsistent or lacking.”*

4.3.2 Sub-theme 2: Career challenges

Employees described the challenges experienced by people living with disabilities in their organization as being mainly career-related. All the employees indicated the following factors: unsupportive work environment, feeling undervalued at work, bias, limited exposure, lack of training, gender bias, limited promotion opportunities, biased performance assessment, and limited networking opportunities. Similarly, the managers described the challenges experienced by people living with disabilities in their organization as mainly career-related. The managers mostly indicated the following factors: limited access to training and development opportunities, fear of disclosure, and feelings of failure.

For instance, Manager 1 stated that: *“It affects them in a sense when it comes to performance. They are not considered for high positions obviously, because of the nature of the disability, but mostly their performance is questionable if they can manage employees. The fact that they complain about tasks at their level makes it difficult for them to be considered for senior positions in the municipality.* Manager 2 also stated: *“It does in a sense that PLWD face barriers to accessing the same career advancement opportunities as their non-disabled peers. Lack of training and development, as they may have limited access to training and development opportunities that are essential for career advancement. This is due to assumptions about their abilities or a lack of inclusive training programs”,* and Manager 3 added: *“Career advancement challenges can significantly affect PLWD in several ways, such as fear of disclosure. PLWD fear disclosing their disability in the workplace due to concerns about stigma or discrimination. This reluctance to disclose limits access to accommodations and support that could facilitate career advancement. If PLWD is not promoted in the workplace, it can have several negative effects on them such as feelings of frustration and disappointment: PLWD who are passed over for promotion may experience feelings of frustration, disappointment, and failure. They may have worked hard and demonstrated their capabilities, only to be overlooked for advancement opportunities”. Manager 5 indicated that the absence of specialized professional development programs constitutes a significant barrier for employees with disabilities. The lack of targeted opportunities discourages many from pursuing promotions or additional responsibilities, as they perceive the workplace environment as*

insufficiently equipped to accommodate their specific needs, thereby impeding their career advancement. Employee 9 reports that: “experiencing implicit biases associated with their identity, which frequently result in their contributions being undervalued, thereby impairing recognition of their skills and constraining their opportunities for professional advancement.”

On the other hand, employee 1 indicated the following challenges experienced: *“Experiencing gender and disability bias, leading to fewer opportunities and stereotyping, being seen as less capable or competent due to gender and liability stereotypes”*. Employee 2 indicated: *“Exclusion from networking limited my professional connections and opportunities, difficulty in socializing and collaborating with colleagues, can make it harder to build relationships and networks at the workplace that are crucial for career growth”*. Employee 3 stated: *“Struggling to engage socially and work collaboratively with colleagues makes it challenging to form the professional networks needed for advancement. Being ignored or undervalued by co-workers further reduces my chances for promotion”*. Employee 4 also stated: *“Exclusion from important connections and career guidance, the constant challenges led to feelings of being undervalued, marginalized, and invisible in the workplace, being overlooked for promotions and projects, assuming I couldn’t handle demanding tasks due to my disability”*. Employee 5 added: *“Missing out on career guidance and meaningful professional links, coupled with hesitation to advocate for personal needs because of cultural expectations and internalized stigma”*.

Employee 6 also added: “Limited ease in social interactions and teamwork has made it difficult to create strong workplace relationships and networks, which are vital for career development. Employee 7 indicated: Feeling disconnected from influential networks and lacking mentorship, while finding it hard to speak up due to prevailing societal attitudes and personal doubts shaped by ableism”. Employee 8 also indicated: *“Making assumptions about my abilities, which led to reduced responsibilities and opportunities, being overlooked for promotions and projects, assuming I couldn’t handle demanding tasks due to my disability, exclusion from important connections and career guidance”*. Employee 10: *“states that restricted access to peer engagement and informal workplace*

interactions has impeded the development of a robust professional network, subsequently hindering career advancement opportunities.”

4.3.3 Sub-theme 3: Opportunity Challenges

According to Mason and Scior (2004), opportunity challenges for people with disabilities refer to the systemic and societal barriers that limit their access to education, employment, healthcare, and social participation. These challenges are often exacerbated by structural barriers such as inaccessible environments, discriminatory practices, and inadequate support systems, which can significantly hinder their ability to seize opportunities that others might take for granted. Addressing these challenges requires inclusive policies, practices, and community support to ensure that people with disabilities have equal opportunities to participate fully in society.

The employees described the challenges experienced by people living with disabilities in their organization as mainly a lack of career opportunities. All the employees unanimously indicated a lack of career advancement opportunities. Similarly, the managers also described the challenges experienced by people living with disabilities in their organization as mainly being a lack of opportunity. The managers mostly indicated the following factors: lack of networking opportunities, lack of counseling services, and lack of promotion decisions by management.

For instance, Manager 1 stated that: *“It affects them in a sense when it comes to performance. They are not considered for high positions obviously, because of the nature of the disability, but mostly their performance is questionable if they can manage employees. The fact that they complain about tasks at their level makes it difficult for them to be considered for senior positions in the municipality.”* Manager 2 also stated: *“It does in a sense that PLWD face barriers to accessing the same career advancement opportunities as their non-disabled peers. Lack of training and development, as they may have limited access to training and development opportunities that are essential for career advancement. This is due to assumptions about their abilities or a lack of inclusive training programs”,* and Manager 3 added: *“Career advancement challenges can significantly*

affect PLWD in several ways, such as fear of disclosure. PLWD fear disclosing their disability in the workplace due to concerns about stigma or discrimination. This reluctance to disclose limits access to accommodations and support that could facilitate career advancement. If PLWD is not promoted in the workplace, it can have several negative effects on them, such as feelings of frustration and disappointment. PLWD who are passed over for promotion may experience feelings of frustration, disappointment, and failure. They may have worked hard and demonstrated their capabilities, only to be overlooked for advancement opportunities”.

Manager 4 indicated that “a significant proportion of employees with disabilities are reluctant to disclose their conditions due to concerns regarding potential responses from managerial staff and colleagues. This reluctance impedes access to essential accommodation and career development opportunities.” Manager 5: “Note that the stigma associated with disability frequently leads employees to refrain from initiating conversations regarding their specific needs. This avoidance inhibits their access to developmental opportunities and may impede their career advancement.”

On the other hand, employee 1 indicated the following career challenges experienced: “Insufficient mentorship and guidance from peers or management can hinder my professional development, while the absence of reasonable accommodations can impact my performance and, in turn, reduce my career opportunities.”. Employee 2 indicated: “Without reasonable accommodations, my work performance can suffer, which in turn may limit the career opportunities available to me.” Employee 3 stated: “A shortage of supportive colleagues or supervisors and the lack of mentorship make it harder for me to progress in my career.”

Employee 4 also stated: “Facing these ongoing challenges has taken a toll on my mental health, leading to anxiety, depression, and burnout. Additionally, the lack of reasonable accommodations affects my performance and limits my career opportunities.” Employee 5 added: “The absence of necessary workplace adjustments can hinder how well I perform, ultimately reducing my prospects for advancement.” Employee 6 also added: “These combined difficulties have harmed my mental well-being, resulting in feelings of

anxiety, depression, and exhaustion.” Employee 9 reported: ‘that the absence of clearly defined career development pathways and accessible skill enhancement programs impedes their professional Growth. The lack of structured support mechanisms results in a persistent sense of stagnation and uncertainty regarding opportunities for advancement.’

Employee 7 indicated: “The absence of disabled individuals in leadership positions may make it difficult for me to envision a successful career path, Inadequate physical accessibility in the workplace may limit my participation”, and Employee 8 also indicated: “Not having reasonable accommodations in place affects my ability to perform at my best, leading to fewer opportunities for growth.” Employee 10 reported that, despite seeking guidance, inconsistent communication and limited accessibility of mentors with relevant expertise impede their professional development and job performance.

4.4 THEME 2: KNOWLEDGE OF MUNICIPAL POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

The employees and managers gave several descriptions of the knowledge of employment policies and strategies in their organization. These included policy availability and policy barriers. These findings are similar to those of existing studies. For example, Hashim and Wok’s (2014) studies reported that some of the knowledge of employment policies and strategies in their organization by people living with disabilities also includes policy availability and policy barriers. This theme is categorized into two sub-themes: policy availability and policy barriers. These sub-themes examine the existence of relevant policies within the organization, as well as the challenges or obstacles that employees encounter in accessing or implementing these policies.

4.4.1 Sub-theme 1: Policies Availability

All the employees indicated that they were aware of the municipal employment policy, strategies or initiatives implemented by their organization to assist PLWDs. This indicates that the municipality displays sensitivity and a high sense of responsibility for the plight of persons living with disabilities within the municipality.

Manager 1 stated: *“My analysis of the effectiveness of the municipality's employment policy does not outline fair and transparent recruitment and hiring practices, including procedures for job postings, candidate selection, and evaluation criteria. It should aim to minimize bias and promote diversity in hiring”*. Manager 2 also stated, *“Yes, it does, but it does not address the workplace accommodations and support services that are needed by employees living with a disability. Furthermore, there is no monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of the employment policy to evaluate its impact on employee satisfaction, retention, diversity metrics, and compliance with legal requirements. This may involve collecting data, conducting surveys, and soliciting feedback from employees”*, and Manager 3 added, *“No, it does not have an effective employment policy. This is because it is not aligned with Legal requirements: The policy should comply with relevant labor laws and regulations. This includes provisions related to recruitment, hiring, equal opportunities, non-discrimination, and employee rights. At this point, the municipality has not met the Employment Equity threshold”*.

4.4.2 Sub-theme 2: Policies Barriers

The employees described several factors that prevent the municipality from implementing disability policies and support programs for PLWDs in the workplace. The employees mostly indicated the following factors: other priorities, bias, lack of knowledge and training, inaccessibility, outdated technology, lack of resources, legal issues, unwillingness to adopt change, and lack of funds. Similarly, the managers also described several factors that prevent the municipality from implementing disability policies and support programs for PLWDs in the workplace as a lack of resources. All the managers mostly indicated the following factors: lack of awareness, resistance to change, lack of funds, and lack of resources. For instance, employee 1 indicated the following factors that prevent the municipality from implementing disability policies and support programs for PLWDs in the workplace: *“Insufficient funding to implement and sustain support programs, Limited knowledge about disabilities and their impact on employees”*. Employee 2 indicated: *“Preconceived notions about people with disabilities and their abilities, concerns about potential legal issues or complaints related to disability accommodations”*. Employee 3

stated: *“A lack of adequate funding makes it difficult to establish and maintain support initiatives, while limited awareness of disabilities and their workplace impact further hinders inclusion”.*

Employee 4 also stated: “Biases and stereotypes about the capabilities of people with disabilities, combined with a lack of data to assess the success of disability programs, and worries about possible legal disputes or complaints regarding accommodations”.

Employee 5 added: “The shortage of funding for long-term support measures, along with a general lack of understanding about disabilities and how they affect staff, poses ongoing barriers.”

“Employee 6 also added: “Stereotypical views about what people with disabilities can do, along with fears of legal challenges or complaints related to providing accommodations, remain key concerns.” Employee 9 reports a significant deficiency in proactive communication regarding available resources and support mechanisms for employees with disabilities, resulting in increased feelings of isolation and uncertainty concerning how to access assistance.

Employee 7 indicated: “Limited knowledge about disabilities and their impact on employees, Reluctance to adopt policies and practices to accommodate employees with disabilities”, and Employee 8 also indicated: “Restricted ability to adjust workplace policies and practices for employees with disabilities, along with a reluctance to put such accommodations into action.” Employee 10 stated that: “despite the existence of policies, enforcement and implementation are frequently insufficient, leading to delays or inadequacies in providing requested accommodation, which in turn results in increased frustration and diminished motivation.”

4.5 CONCLUSION

The results of the analysis of the interview data collected from the participants of this study on the challenges experienced by employees living with disabilities at a selected cluster in the eThekweni Municipality found the following: Most employees with disabilities are of

colored origins, are relatively young and well educated, and are almost evenly distributed across gender lines in the organization. Employees with disabilities are almost evenly distributed in terms of marital status in the organization and are long-serving employees. The challenges experienced by people living with disabilities in their organization include subjective challenges, career challenges, and opportunity challenges. Their knowledge of employment policies and strategies in their organization includes policy availability and policy barriers. The main recommended strategies for overcoming career advancement and other challenges faced by PLWDs in the workplace in their organization include mentorship and training.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The results of the analysis of the interview data collected from the participants of this study on the challenges experienced by employees living with disabilities at a selected cluster in the eThekweni Municipality were presented in the previous chapter. The study was conducted to examine the challenges experienced by employees living with disabilities. Therefore, this chapter will discuss the results of this study in comparison with related previous studies from existing literature. This chapter will also provide relevant recommendations emanating from this study based on its findings.

5.2 FINDINGS

This section is presented in line with the objectives of the study by highlighting the main findings of the study.

5.2.1. Objective 1: To examine the factors hindering career progression for employees living with disabilities at a selected cluster in the eThekweni Municipality.

Results from the analysis of the interview data on the challenges experienced by employees living with disabilities at a selected cluster in the eThekweni Municipality found the following factors hindering career progression for employees living with disabilities: subjective challenges such as negative attitudes, stereotyping from colleges and managers, accommodation problems, lack of collaboration, social exclusion, and lack of support; career challenges such as unsupportive work environment, feeling undervalued at work, bias, limited exposure, lack of training, gender bias, limited promotion opportunities, biased performance assessment, limited networking opportunities, and opportunity challenges such as lack of networking opportunities, lack of counseling services, and lack of promotion decisions by management.

5.2.2 Objective 2: To analyse the perceptions of employees living with disabilities on the challenges experienced by employees living with disabilities at a selected cluster in the eThekweni Municipality.

Results from the analysis of the interview data on the challenges experienced by employees living with disabilities at a selected cluster in the eThekweni Municipality found the following challenges experienced by employees living with disabilities: policy availability and policy barriers such as other priorities, bias, lack of knowledge and training, inaccessibility, outdated technology, lack of resources, legal issues, unwillingness to adopt change, lack of awareness, resistance to change, and lack of funds.

5.2.3 Objective 3: To provide recommendations on how to enhance employment opportunities for people living with disabilities at the eThekweni Municipality.

Results from the analysis of the data collected on the recommendations on how to enhance employment opportunities for persons living with disabilities at the eThekweni Municipality found the following recommendations:

provision of an inclusive working environment, provision of accommodation, equal opportunities, and accessibility to technology, provision of employee monitoring activities and practices, provision of career development and awareness programs, and provision of disability awareness training programs for PLWDs in the organization.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

This section presents the recommendations emanating from the findings of the current study. The following recommendations can be made to the entire cohort of stakeholders at the eThekweni Municipality for improvement on the challenges experienced by employees living with disabilities:

- This study revealed that a significant proportion of employees with disabilities belong to minority ethnic groups. Accordingly, it is recommended that stakeholders at the eThekweni Municipality consider expanding employment opportunities for

persons living with disabilities (PLWDs) from a broader range of ethnic backgrounds within the municipality.

- This study identified that a significant proportion of employees with disabilities are young and possess a strong educational background. Consequently, it is recommended that stakeholders at the eThekweni Municipality explore potential employment opportunities for qualified youth living with disabilities within the municipality.
- This study identified several challenges faced by individuals with disabilities within their organization, including subjective challenges, career-related challenges, and barriers to opportunities. It is recommended that stakeholders at the eThekweni Municipality provide support to employees with disabilities in managing these challenges and create additional opportunities for persons living with disabilities to attain their career goals and aspirations within the municipality.
- This study also found that knowledge of employment policies and strategies in their organization includes policy availability and policy barriers. Therefore, it is recommended that stakeholders at the eThekweni Municipality introduce more friendly policies for assisting employees with disabilities within the municipality.
- This study recommends that stakeholders at the eThekweni Municipality introduce relevant training activities to assist employees with disabilities, as well as provide guidance and support initiatives for those living with disabilities.
- Fostering inclusive leadership will encourage leaders and managers to lead by example and demonstrate inclusive behaviours in their interactions with persons living with disabilities (PLWDs). It is essential to provide leadership training on inclusive management practices and strategies for creating an inclusive work environment.

- Celebrate diversity and inclusion by recognizing and appreciating the contributions of people living with disabilities (PLWDs) to the organization's success. Highlight success stories, showcase diverse talent, and foster a culture where all employees feel valued and respected. Collect data and monitor progress by regularly gathering information on the representation, retention, and career progression of PLWDs within the organization. Use this data to track progress, identify areas for improvement, and hold leaders and managers accountable for advancing disability inclusion goals.
- Ensure physical and technological accessibility in workplaces and promotional opportunities and establish a committee to oversee disability inclusion initiatives and advise on policy and program development.
- It is suggested that the municipality provide disability awareness training. Offering these training programs would raise awareness amongst all employees about disability issues, including misconceptions, biases, and the importance of creating an inclusive workplace culture.
- The study identified gaps in the availability of policies and the presence of policy barriers. It is recommended that stakeholders at the eThekweni Municipality develop and implement more disability-friendly policies that effectively support employees with disabilities.

5.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter began by presenting a summary of the main findings of the current study on the challenges experienced by employees living with disabilities. The study has provided a comprehensive examination of the challenges faced by employees living with disabilities within a selected cluster of the eThekweni Municipality. The findings underscore the multifaceted barriers that these employees encounter, which range from negative attitudes and social exclusion to limited career advancement opportunities and policy

obstacles. Despite these challenges, the study also highlights the potential for positive change through targeted recommendations aimed at fostering an inclusive and supportive work environment. By implementing these recommendations, stakeholders at the eThekweni Municipality can significantly enhance employment experience and career prospects for individuals living with disabilities, contributing to a more equitable and diverse workforce. The insights gained from this study represent a crucial step towards understanding and addressing the needs of employees with disabilities, ultimately promoting greater inclusivity and equality within the organization.

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APPENDIX A: Ethics Clearance



Institutional Research Ethics Committee
Research and Postgraduate Support Directorate
2nd Floor, Berwyn Court
Gate 1, Steve Biko Campus
Durban University of Technology

P O Box 1334, Durban, South Africa, 4001

Tel: 031 373 2375 Email:

lavishad@dut.ac.za

http://www.dut.ac.za/research/institutional_research_ethics

www.dut.ac.za

17 April 2024

Ms C T Xulu
11 Hydrangea Place
Glen Hills
Durban North

4051

Dear Ms Xulu

Challenges experienced by employees living with disabilities at a selected cluster in the eThekweni Municipality

Ethics Clearance Number: IREC 008/24

The DUT-Institutional Research Ethics Committee acknowledges receipt of your notification regarding the piloting of your data collection tool.

Kindly ensure that participants used for the pilot study are not part of the main study.

In addition, the DUT-IREC acknowledges receipt of your gatekeeper permission letters.

Please note that **FULL APPROVAL** is granted to your research proposal. You may proceed with data collection.

Any adverse events [serious or minor] which occur in connection with this study and/or which may alter its ethical consideration must be reported to the DUT-IREC according to the DUT-IREC SOP's.

Please note that any deviations from the approved proposal require the approval of the DUT-IREC as outlined in the DUT-IREC SOP's.

It is compulsory for a student or researcher to apply for recertification on an annual basis. The failure to do so will result in withdrawal of ethics clearance. It is the responsibility of the researcher and the supervisor to apply for recertification.

Please note that you are required to submit a Notification of Completion of Study form together with an abstract to the DUT-IREC office on completion of your study.

Prof J K Adam
Chairperson: DUT-IREC

APPENDIX B: FRC Approval



27 November 2023

Student No:21240845

Dear Charity Thandazile Xulu

MASTERS OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

1. This serves to confirm the approval of your research proposal by the Faculty Research Committee, at its meeting on 27 November 2023, as follows:

Title: Challenges experienced by employees living with disabilities at a selected cluster in the eThekweni Municipality

Supervisor: Dr E. Anwana

Please note that any proposed changes in the thesis/dissertation title require the approval of your supervisor/s, the Faculty Research Committee, as well as ratification thereof by the Higher Degrees Committee.

2. Research budget to the amount of **R10000**

Please note that this funding is not a scholarship or bursary and is therefore not paid directly to you, but is controlled by the Faculty. Any proposed changes to the use of this funding allocation requires the approval of your supervisor and the Dean. Please note that funding will be reimbursed to you after the provision of receipts.

The Institutional Research Committee has stipulated that:

(a) This University retains the ownership of any Intellectual Property (patent, design, etc.) registered in respect of the results of your Masters/Doctors Degree in Technology studies as a result of the award and the provisions of the above Act;

(b) Should you find any of the terms above not acceptable then you are given the option to decline the Research budget award to your project in writing.

May we remind you that in terms of Rule G25(2)(b), if you fail to obtain the Masters/Doctors degree within the maximum time period allowed after first registering for the qualification, Senate may refuse to renew your registration or may impose any conditions it deems fit. You may apply to the Faculty Research Committee for an extension.

Please note that you are required to convert your registration from the informal to the formal course and re-register each year.

Please note that the following must be adhered to:

Registration:

1. Ensure formal registration has taken place (the onus is on the student and the supervisor to ensure registration takes place at the beginning of each year whilst the student is currently engaged with his/her Masters or PhD qualification)
2. Ensure that application for Conferment of Status has been made in the event of your undergraduate qualification being different to this application. Your attention is drawn to the fact that Conferment of Status is required for registration.
3. Ensure that your supervisor has submitted your proposal to the Faculty Research Officer (FRO) for IREC clearance (institutional research ethics committee). This is in the case of Ethics level 2 IREC and level 3 IREC (in the case of a study dealing with vulnerable populations). See guideline attached. It is the researcher's responsibility to check the Ethics requirements and submit to the relevant bodies irrespective of the reviewer's recommendation.

Dissertation submission for examination:

1. Ensure that you submit the intention to submit form (PG 5), signed by the HOD and Supervisor
2. Ensure that the signed checklist is submitted with the PG 5
3. Once your dissertation is submitted to the supervisor for examination purposes, communication from here on will only be with you supervisor and not with the faculty.
4. Your supervisor MUST nominate the examiners three months prior to submission of the dissertation/thesis for examination.
5. On submission for examination, please note that three ring bound signed copies must be submitted to your supervisor along with the completed and signed PG 7 form, FMS Checklist and Turn it in report.

6. Feedback will be provided to your supervisor regarding the examination result after the result is ratified by the Higher Degrees Committee (HDC).
7. In the event of a resubmission the reports will be submitted to the supervisor who will communicate with you for revision. Once revision has taken place your supervisor will submit to the FRO for resubmission to the examiners.
8. In the case where there is a discrepancy in examiners results, an Arbiter will be nominated via the HOD and supervisor and tabled at FRC and ratified at HDC. On completion of this process, the Arbiters report will be tabled at FRC and ratified at HDC.
9. Results of the Arbitration process will be communicated to your supervisor **Graduation requirements:**

1. Ensure that you submit a completed signed PG10 form
2. One hard bound dissertation/thesis with a pdf version on CD
3. Response to post graduate examination form
4. Completion of study form (IREC form)

Should you experience any problems relating to your research, your supervisor must be informed of the matter as soon as possible. If the difficulties persist, you should then approach your Head of Department and thereafter the Faculty Research Coordinator.

Please refer to the 2023 General Rule Book and the Postgraduate Students' Guide 2023 concerning the rules relating to postgraduate studies, which include inter alia acceptable minimum and maximum timeframes, submission of thesis/dissertations, etc. Please do not hesitate to contact this office for any assistance. We wish you success in your studies.

Kind regards,

Prof M Lourens o.b.o

For: Professor FG Netswera

Faculty of Management Sciences

APPENDIX C: TurnItIn Report

Challenges experienced by employees living with disabilities
at a selected cluster in the eThekweni Municipality Final.docx

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2023
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PROF E.O. ANWANA

27/11/2024

APPENDIX D: Gatekeepers Letter

PG 2a



ETHEKWINI MUNICIPAL ACADEMY

Shell House 221 Anton Lembede Street* Durban, 4000

Tel: 0313113192, Fax: 0313113292 www.durban.gov.za

For Attention:

Chair of Research Ethics Committee

Durban University of Technology (BSU) Durban

4000 08

March 2024

RE: LETTER OF SUPPORT TO C.T XULU, STUDENT NUMBER: 21240845 GRANTING PERMISSION TO USE ETHEKWINI MUNICIPALITY CORPORATE AND HUMAN CAPITAL CLUSTER AS A STUDY SITE.

The Corporate and Human Capital Cluster in eThekweni Municipality has considered a request from Miss Charity Thandazile Xulu to use eThekweni Municipality as a research study site to awarding of Masters of Business Administration (MBA) and for the purposes of undertaking a research study entitled: "CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY EMPLOYEES LIVING WITH DISABILITIES AT A SELECTED CLUSTER IN THE ETHEKWINI MUNICIPALITY."

We wish to inform you that this request has been accepted and hereby assure the student of our utmost cooperation in achieving her academic goals. We believe this outcome will help the municipality improve its recruitment policies. The student is reminded of ethical considerations when conducting the research.

Wishing the student all the best in his studies.

eThekweni Municipality
Corporate & Human Resource Cluster
221 Anton Lembede
11th Floor Shell House DBN

Ter. 031 311 3192 Fax: 031 311 3292 eThekweni Municipality Academy

34

Form PG 2a - 2022

Updated 02/05/2019

APPENDIX E: Proof of Registration



PROOF OF REGISTRATION To Whom It May Concern

06-Nov-2024

It is hereby confirmed that the under mentioned person is a registered student at DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY.

Surname: XULU
Student Number: 21240845
Registration Year: 2024
Block: POST-GRAD ANNUAL REGISTRATIONS
Department: BUSINESS SCHOOL

First Names: CHARITY THANDAZILE
Qualification: MBABS1 MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION
Offering Type: Durban Campus Part-time
Period of Study: Study period 2
Faculty: FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT SCIENCES

Subject	Description	PreReq/Exp	Block	Class Group	Offering Type	Exam Year	Exam Month	Cancel	Amount
RERE901	Registration Fees/Levies 21 SEMESTER 1 RESEARCH REPORT		21	A	D3	2024	6	N	3105.00
									49060.00
								Subtotal:	52165.00
								Total:	52165.00

* Subjects with Requisites will be cancelled if the requisite rules are not met in mid-year exams. Refer to Department handbook.
 Outstanding Balance: 110964.22

Please verify and rectify the above registration details with the Faculty Office to avoid academic and financial penalties before the dates published in the General handbook.

Faculty Officer

APPENDIX F: Letter Of Information



LETTER OF INFORMATION

Title of the Research Study: Challenges experienced by employees living with disabilities at a selected cluster in the eThekweni Municipality.

Principal Investigator: Charity Thandazile Xulu

Supervisor: Dr Emem O Anwana, Faculty Research Coordinator: Faculty of Management Sciences **Brief**

Introduction and Purpose of the Study:

Greetings, thank you for showing interest in this study. I am a student registered for the Master of Business Administration at the Durban University of Technology. I would like to invite you to participate in this study. The aim of this study is to establish the difficulties people with impairments experience in the workplace. The research specifically examines the obstacles encountered during the implementation of the municipality's disability policies and strategies as well as how they accommodate employees living with disabilities in terms of career advancement and other challenges within the Human and Corporate Cluster.

You should never feel uncomfortable participating in the study; it is entirely voluntary. I want to highlight that if you feel uncomfortable continuing to participate, you are welcome to withdraw from the study at any moment. I will provide you with a questionnaire to fill out as honestly and freely as you can as part of the process. I will be happy to help you through the questions if you want to go over them with me.

Participating in this study should not result in you experiencing any discomfort or significant risk. Therefore, there will be no discomfort or risk to you as a participant. Furthermore, there will be no negative consequences if you choose not to participate or withdraw participation in the survey. There will also be no expected injuries from participating in this study.

As mentioned earlier, you can choose to withdraw or stop participating in the study at any time without having to provide a reason. There will be no negative consequence if you decide to withdraw your participation. Kindly also note that we will withdraw you from the study if you do not follow the instructions given or decide not to honour your commitment.

Kindly also note that you will not be compensated for your participation in the survey. Your participation is voluntary and will inform policy-making and the academic literature. Further, it is important to also indicate that you will not incur any expenses by participating in this study.

The information collected in this study will be managed and stored in a manner that ensures that your confidentiality and anonymity is always maintained. Kindly avoid recording your personal and any other identifying information.

The results of this study will be published after the data has been thoroughly analysed. If any findings emerge during the research, we will make all respondents aware of such.

Please note that the data collected in this study will be stored in a manner that ensures that your confidentiality and anonymity are maintained. All completed questionnaires will be stored in my supervisor's office in a locked cupboard for a period of up to 5 years. Only myself and my supervisor will have access to the completed questionnaires.

Persons to contact in the Event of Any Problems or Queries:

In the event of any problem or query, please contact me at 082 368 9775 or Thanda.Xulu@durban.gov.za You can also contact my supervisor Dr Emem O Anwana at 084 942 5090 or Emema@dut.ac.za Alternatively, you can call the DUT-Institutional Research Ethics Administrator on 031 373 2375 or report complaints to the Acting Director: Research and Postgraduate Support on researchdirector@dut.ac.za

APPENDIX G: Consent Letter



Full Title of the Study: Challenges experienced by employees living with disabilities at a selected cluster in the eThekweni Municipality

Names of Researcher/s: Charity Thandazile Xulu

Statement of Agreement to Participate in the Research Study:

- I hereby confirm that I have been informed by the researcher, Charity Thandazile Xulu, about the nature, conduct, benefits, and risks of this study - Research Ethics Clearance Number: _____,
- I have also received, read, and understood the above written information (Participant Letter of Information) regarding the study.
- I am aware that the results of the study, including personal details regarding my sex, age, date of birth, initials and diagnosis will be anonymously processed into a study report.
- In view of the requirements of research, I agree that the data collected during this study can be processed in a computerized system by the researcher.
- I may, at any stage, without prejudice, withdraw my consent and participation in the study.
- I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and (of my own free will) declare myself prepared to participate in the study.
- I understand that significant new findings developed during the course of this research which may relate to my participation will be made available to me.

Full Name of Participant

Date Time

Signature/Right Thumbprint

I, Charity Thandazile Xulu herewith confirm that the above participant has been fully informed about the nature, conduct, and risks of the above study.

APPENDIX H: Data Collection Instrument

RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

TITLE: CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY EMPLOYEES LIVING WITH DISABILITIES AT A SELECTED CLUSTER IN THE ETHEKWINI MUNICIPALITY

EMPLOYEES LIVING WITH DISABILITIES ONLY

Sections A and B of the questionnaire deal with background and biographical information, respectively. Although I'm aware of the sensitivity of these questions, this information will help compare results from various groups of respondents. Once again, I assure you that your response will remain anonymous. Your co-operation is appreciated.

SECTION A – BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Which department/ Unit do you work at?

--	--

2. Which population group do you belong to?

African	
White	
Asian	
Coloured	

3. What is your highest level of education?

Never attended school	
Primary school	
High school	
Diploma	
Degree	
Postgraduate	

SECTION B - BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS OF THE RESPONDENT

1. Gender

Male	1
------	---

Female	2
Other	3

If 'Other' is selected, specify..... 2.
 Age in years

<18	1
18 – 25	2
26 – 33	3
34 – 41	4
42 – 49	5
50 & over	6

3. Marital Status

Single	1
Married	2
Divorced	3
Other	4

If 'Other' is selected, specify.....

4. Length of years in this Organization

0 – 3 years	1
4 – 7 years	2
8 – 11 years	3
12 – 15 years	4
16 – 19 years	5
20 – 23 years	6
24 and over	7

SECTION C – YOUR PERCEPTIONS ON CHALLENGES FACED BY PLWD

5. What challenges you have experienced in the workplace?

.....

6. How did the career advancement challenges adversely influence your career?

.....
.....
.....

7. How does your disability impact your career advancement opportunities in the Municipality?

.....
.....

..... **SECTION D:**
KNOWLEDGE OF MUNICIPAL POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

8. Are you aware of the municipal employment policy, strategies, or initiatives implemented by the organization to assist PLWDs?

.....
...
.....
.....

9. What are some of the factors that, in your opinion, prevent the municipality from implementing disability policies and support programs for PLWDs in the workplace?

SECTION D: RECOMMENDATIONS

10. What suggestions could you propose to municipal executive structures for overcoming the career advancement challenges you are currently facing due to your specific disability?

.....
.....

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION IN COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

TITLE: CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY EMPLOYEES LIVING WITH DISABILITIES AT A SELECTED CLUSTER IN THE ETHEKWINI MUNICIPALITY.

MANAGEMENT ONLY

Sections A and B of the questionnaire deal with background and biographical information, respectively. Although I'm aware of the sensitivity of these questions, this information will help compare results from various groups of respondents. Once again, I assure you that your response will remain anonymous. Your co-operation is appreciated.

SECTION A – BACKGROUND INFORMATION

4. Which department/ Unit do you work at?

--	--

5. Which population group do you belong to?

African	
White	
Asian	
Coloured	

6. What is your highest level of education?

Never attended school	
Primary school	
High school	
Diploma	
Degree	
Postgraduate	

SECTION B - BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS OF THE RESPONDENT

5. Gender

Male	1
Female	2
Other	3

If 'Other' is selected, specify.....

6. Age in years

<18	1
18 – 25	2
26 – 33	3
34 – 41	4
42 – 49	5
50 & over	6

7. Marital Status

Single	1
Married	2
Divorced	3

Other	4
-------	---

If 'Other' is selected, specify.....

8. Length of years in this Organization

0 – 3 years	1
4 – 7 years	2
8 – 11 years	3
12 – 15 years	4
16 – 19 years	5
20 – 23 years	6
24 and over	7

SECTION C – YOUR PERCEPTIONS ON CHALLENGES FACED BY PLWD

9. Have you ever experienced challenges managing employees with a disability? If yes, elaborate.

.....

10. In your opinion, how do career advancement challenges adversely PLWD?

.....

11. if disabled, how does your disability impact your career advancement opportunities in the Municipality?

.....

SECTION D: KNOWLEDGE OF EMPLOYMENT POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

12. In your opinion, does the organization have an effective employment policy?

.....

13. What are some of the factors that, prevent the municipality from implementing disability policies and support programs for PLWDs in the workplace?

SECTION D: RECOMMENDATIONS

14. What suggestions could you propose to executive and Human Capital for overcoming the career advancement and other challenges faced by PLWDs in the workplace?

.....

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION IN COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE

APPENDIX I: Request for Permission to conduct research



Shell House
221 Anton Lembede Street, Durban , 4001
Tel: 031 311 3192, Fax: 031 311 3292
www.durban.gov.za

To: Management

LETTER OF PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT THE ETHEKWINI MUNICIPALITY

My name is Charity Thandazile Xulu, I am a Skills Development Practitioner at the eThekweni Municipal Academy, service number is 21240845. I am registered for the MBA program at the Durban University of Technology (Business Studies Unit). I am currently studying through the municipal Assisted Education Scheme/ Bursary as a result one of the modules I am required to complete is the Business Research Report where I am required to conduct research.

I have chosen to undertake this research within your respective cluster which is Corporate and Human Capital with its units (Human Capital, eThekweni Municipality Academy, Occupational Health and Safety, and Organizational Development and Change Management), and my topic **Challenges experienced by employees living with disabilities at a selected cluster in the eThekweni Municipality.**

I have developed an interview guide with the questions for all participants and the respondents' details will be completely anonymous. The answering of these questions is totally on a voluntary basis.

I hope to receive a favorable consideration from the management.

Yours sincerely

Charity Thandazile Xulu

0823689775



Zertifikat
Certificat

Certificado
Certificate

Promouvoir les plus hauts standards éthiques dans la protection des participants à la recherche biomédicale
Promoting the highest ethical standards in the protection of biomedical research participants

Certificat de formation - Training Certificate

Ce document atteste que - this document certifies that



Charity Xulu

a complété avec succès - has successfully completed

Introduction to Research Ethics

du programme de formation TRREE en évaluation éthique de la recherche
of the TRREE training programme in research ethics evaluation

Release Date: 2023/08/28

CID : qphus8NDs

Professeur Dominique Sprumont
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[REV : 20220217]

APPENDIX K: Editors Letter

EDITOR'S LETTER

Researchers Beyond Borders (PTY) LTD
Umhlanga, Durban
South Africa
21 October 2024

To whom it may concern

Editing of Masters Dissertation: Charity Thandazo Xulu (Student number -21240045)

Title of dissertation: Challenges experienced by employees living with disabilities at a selected cluster in the eThekweni Municipality.

This letter serves as confirmation that the aforementioned dissertation has been language edited.
Any queries may be directed to the author of this letter.



Regards

Maleni Pillay
Researchers Beyond Borders
comms@researcherbeyondborders.com
www.researcherbeyondborders.com