

Worker roles in the open labour market: The challenges faced by people with intellectual disabilities in the Western Cape, South Africa

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Abstract.

BACKGROUND: Work holds great meaning and benefits beyond just monetary gain for people with intellectual disabilities. It gives these individuals the opportunity to engage in meaningful occupation.

OBJECTIVE: The purpose of the study was to explore challenges that people with intellectual disabilities (PWID) experience when adapting to their worker roles in the open labour market.

METHODS: The study used grounded theory as the research design. Five male participants and two key informants participated in the study. Three semi structured interviews were conducted with each one of the seven participants (five PWID and two key informants).

RESULTS: Three core concepts emerged: 1) Unforeseen challenges of change; 2) A well-planned work preparation programme enables success and 3) Crossing the bridge into the workplace: “Do I belong here?”

CONCLUSIONS: This indicated that with sufficient external support, PWID are able to gain a sense of social belonging and develop the necessary skills to cope with challenges that arise in the workplace when PWID transition from protective/sheltered workshops to the open labour market. The findings of the study also indicated that work preparation programs and supportive employment approaches helped PWID transition to the open labour market.

Keywords: Work, occupational adaptation, barrier, facilitator, qualitative research and social belonging

1. Introduction

The persistent high unemployment rate for persons with disabilities is a world-wide concern [1]. A study done in Sweden looking at the living conditions of people with intellectual disabilities (PWID) showed that only 2 out of 110 people with intellectual disabilities (PWID) had some form of paid work [2]. Even greater numbers of unemployed people with

disabilities occur in low and middle-income countries, such as South Africa [3]. This is as a result of underdeveloped infrastructure, limited access to high quality education, and a high rate of unemployment of a poorly skilled workforce. Furthermore, few PWID are gainfully employed in the open labour market in South Africa as employers are fearful about employing PWID, possibly due to the stigma related to intellectual disability [4]. Employment of PWID offers the opportunity for social inclusion and a sense of belonging and purpose in their lives [5]. According to the Institute for Research and Development on Inclusion and Society [6], an estimated 99% of

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people with disabilities are not employed in the open labour market in South Africa. In the South African context there is no research that particularly focuses on the experiences of PWID about adapting to their work role in the open labour market.

2. Literature review

2.1. Facilitators for PWID related to adapting to the open labour market

Facilitating factors such as reasonable work conditions, adjustments, and accommodations in the workplace facilitate an increase in performance and job retention in the open labour market for PWID [7]. Social participation through employment leads to social recognition and the feeling of citizenship among PWID as they interact and build relationships with their co-workers [8]. On a social level, PWID are known as individuals that form a culture that humanize the workplace and contribute to the social connectedness of workers [9]. The findings of the study conducted by Lin [9] revealed that co-workers had feelings of affection and care for the workers with disability. It is evident that social connectedness and support from employers and co-workers are a major facilitating factor in the lives of PWID when adapting to the open labour market.

2.2. Work as an occupation and the meaning it brings to a person with intellectual disability

Current occupational therapy theory states that occupation could be defined as everything that people do in order to occupy themselves [10]. This includes an individual's self-care, their leisure pursuits, as well as contributing to the social and economic fabric of their communities through work or employment endeavours [10]. According to Bloom [11], researchers have observed a connection between engagement in meaningful occupations and perceptions of being "competent, capable and valuable." Work also holds great meaning and benefits for people with intellectual disabilities beyond just monetary gain. The study conducted by Conroy, Ferris and Irvine [12] revealed that for a sample of people with intellectual disabilities and developmental disabilities and their support workers their quality of work life improved for both groups. The above authors

further stated that their study's analysis showed that participants experienced an overall increase in quality of working life of about 27%. Some of the facilitators that contributed to the employment of PWID consisted of support from their families, job coaches, work environments with necessary accommodations, employers appreciating the work of PWID, support from an employer and a supportive work organization [13]. Typical barriers that identified could relate to the fact that many PWID may not have any vocational experience after leaving school or may lack work experience [13]. It could be argued that employers may view the latter as barriers especially when employing PWID in the open labor market (OLM) or competitive employment. The results of the latter study provided moderate support to the notion that employment in the open labour market does offer a viable alternative to adult day programs and sheltered workshops for adults with intellectual and developmental disability.

2.3. Laws supporting the rights of people with disabilities

Historically, persons with intellectual disabilities have been denied the right to live in the community, marry, procreate, work, receive an education, and, in some cases, to receive life-saving medical treatment. They have been subjected to incarceration, sterilization, overmedication, and cruel or unusual punishment [14]. Contrary to many African countries, numerous South African policies now address disabilities, including intellectual disability [15]. The South African Constitution makes provision for PWID including policies making provision for social security (disability) grants for children and adults, health security in the form of free primary healthcare for grant recipients as well as tax benefits. People with IDs are entitled to supported decision making where a support in the workplace such as a job coach enables someone with a disability to take and communicate decisions with respect to personal and legal matters [16]. When a legal representation is given to people with ID, namely substitute decision making, the court has the authorized power to make decisions for the PWID. One form of concern remains that despite the employment equity practices having improved in the workplace, employment levels for PWID are very low. Similarly there is minimal research that focuses on the experiences of PWID about transitioning to the open labour market.

Table 1
Description of the participants

Participants (P)	Gender (age)	Relationship	Race	Job title	Years of employment in the OLM
P 1	Male (26)	Married	Black	Customer service	3 years
P 2	Female (23)	Single	Coloured	Packaging	4 years
P 3	Male (48)	Married	Coloured	Kitchen staff assistant	10 years
P 4	Male (28)	Single	Black	Maintenance work	5 years
P 5	Female (22)	Married	Black	Cleaning	2 years
Key informants					
Name	Gender	Age	Qualification	Years of experience	Place of employment
K1	Female	59	BSc (Occupational Therapy)	20 years	Protective workshop
K2	Female	57	B Comm degree	35 years	Sheltered workshop

3. Aim

The aim of this study was to explore the experiences and perceptions of individuals with intellectual disabilities with regard to adapting to their worker roles in the open labour market.

3.1. Objectives

1. To explore the barriers and facilitating factors experienced by individuals with intellectual disabilities in adapting to and/or working in the open labour market.
2. To explore individuals with intellectual disabilities' experiences of social belonging and acceptance within the work environment.

4. Research design

The researchers chose to utilize a grounded theory (GT) approach for the research project. Grounded theory is typically used to build theory from qualitative data, whereby data are compared with data i.e. constant comparison [17, 18]. Grounded theory is often conducted for a problem that has not been clearly defined, hence it was utilized by the researcher to explore the challenges PWID experience in the open labour market.

4.1. Study setting and the sampling strategy

This study was conducted at various retail industries. The researchers' intentions were to get consent from all the research participants; including PWID and their employers who are working in the open labour market. Each participant, including the key

informants, were interviewed at their place of work to avoid individuals having to spend time and money on travelling. The five participants came from three different retail industries and were either interviewed during their lunch breaks or during working hours as approved by their respective employers (See Table 1). The two key informants were occupational therapists who were deemed as being knowledgeable in the provision of work related training and the placement of PWID in the OLM. After the initial two interviews with PWID, the data that were generated indicated that occupational therapists would also be able to provide valuable information specifically related to how PWID adapt to their worker roles in the open labour market. The latter contributed to theoretical sampling.

The researchers used purposive sampling as a means of recruiting the research participants. The inclusion and exclusion criteria for the current study were as follows: PWID had to be employed in protective and sheltered employment before being referred to the open labor market. They needed to be 18 years of age and over, able to communicate in English, Afrikaans or IsiXhosa and to have been employed for at least six months in the open labour market. The exclusion criteria included workers who had dual diagnoses, such psychiatric conditions that would compromise their work ability.

4.2. Data Collection

The researchers used semi structured interviews for data collection. Newton [19] states that semi structured interviews allow individuals to disclose thoughts and feeling which are clearly private. The interviewer asked the participants open-ended questions which allowed them to elaborate on their various

203 experiences (please see interview guide). The inter-
 204 views were audio-taped to make sure an accurate
 205 account of the interview could be recorded for ana-
 206 lytic purposes. Three interviews were conducted with
 207 each research participant inclusive of the key infor-
 208 mants. The interviews were continued until saturation
 209 of data was achieved.

210 4.3. Data analysis and rigour

211 The data were collected and analysed in tandem,
 212 the data from the existing interviews were then used
 213 to guide subsequent interviews. The data were anal-
 214 ysed using the steps outlined by Charmaz [20] and
 215 Corbin and Strauss [17]. First the data were analysed
 216 into discrete segments (also known as indicators) that
 217 were classified under conceptual headings (e.g., this
 218 segment is about the barriers that PWID experience
 219 when RTW). The researcher coded for similarities
 220 and differences in the data, which involved const-
 221 antly comparing the indicators and concepts with
 222 new data that in turn led to new concepts (i.e. open
 223 coding). The researcher coded the data in terms of
 224 psycho social processes, with an emphasis on what
 225 the participants describe themselves as doing and
 226 their feelings related to their behaviour. Many lower
 227 level codes were labelled using gerunds i.e. whereby
 228 the verb form of the code would function as a noun
 229 (e.g., Training). The researcher coded for process,
 230 i.e. the researcher wanted to determine how the par-
 231 ticipants would react in different contexts [17]. The
 232 researcher then made tentative propositions about
 233 the relationships between various emerging cate-
 234 gories, specifically focusing on how the variation
 235 in context shaped the participants' experiences (i.e.
 236 axial coding). Axial coding enabled the sub cate-
 237 gories to explain the categories in more detail. During
 238 the coding process the researcher wrote reflexive
 239 and theoretical memos (written records of analy-
 240 sis). Memoing enabled the researcher to capture
 241 methodological insights and theoretical comparisons
 242 about the data that guided theory building. The final
 243 aspect of the coding process is known as selec-
 244 tive coding, which involves the identification of a
 245 core category that incorporates existing categories
 246 or supersedes them in explanatory importance. At
 247 this stage the relationships between the various cat-
 248 egories became evident, this ultimately constituted
 249 substantive theory (i.e. theory about how PWID adapt
 250 to their worker roles in the OLM). Inductive and
 251 deductive approaches to analysis were used in this
 252 study.

253 Strategies such as credibility, transferability,
 254 dependability and confirmability were used in order
 255 to ensure the trustworthiness of the data [21]. Cred-
 256 ibility was ensured by the dense description of the
 257 lived experience of the research participants and
 258 member checking. In the context of this study mem-
 259 ber checking was conducted as at the end of the three
 260 interviews. However at the end of each interview the
 261 interviewer provided a summary of the main findings
 262 and a final presentation of the study findings were
 263 presented to all the research participants individually.
 264 The participants agreed with the findings, however
 265 also provided some positive suggestions (e.g., the par-
 266 ticipants felt that there should be a strong emphasis
 267 on the utilisation of work preparation programmes
 268 in order to enhance the work skills of the partici-
 269 pants). Transferability was ensured by the detailed
 270 description of the research methods, contexts and the
 271 lived experience of the participants. Dependability
 272 was ensured by means of dense descriptions, peer
 273 examination and triangulation. Confirmability was
 274 ensured by the process of reflexivity whereby the
 275 researcher's own biases or assumptions were made
 276 apparent by means of a reflexive journal.

277 5. Ethics

278 Ethics approval was provided by the University
 279 of the Western Cape. The research participants were
 280 contacted by telephone to explain the aim, purpose
 281 and process of the study. The details with regard to
 282 the study together with the consent forms were fully
 283 disclosed to the participants on arrival at the interview
 284 session. All the participants gave written consent to
 285 participate in the study, as well as to have the findings
 286 of the study published in journals.

287 6. Findings

288 6.1. Core concept one: unforeseen challenges of 289 change

290 According to the participants, transitioning from
 291 a sheltered or a protected workshop into the open
 292 labour market calls for change and many adaptations
 293 in the lives of people with intellectual disabilities.
 294 These changes were viewed as being an unforeseen
 295 challenge.

296	6.1.1. Category one: Job descriptions: New job,	343
297	New challenge	344
298	Any transition to a new job and a new environment	345
299	is a challenge; however, for people with intellectual	346
300	disabilities this can be especially challenging given	347
301	the nature of their diagnosis and working potential.	348
302	i. Sub category: New job, new faces	349
303	Many of the participants' most challenging tasks	350
304	of transitioning into a new work environment were	351
305	the 'new job' and 'new faces' [P1] to which they had	352
306	to adjust. Some participants described it as follows:	353
307	<i>"When I got here it was too much difficult. New</i>	354
308	<i>job, new people you see."</i> [P1]	355
309	<i>"See when you change your job there are more</i>	356
310	<i>different faces."</i> [P1]	357
311	<i>"In the beginning I was too scared, different peo-</i>	358
312	<i>ple I don't know I am working with."</i> [P1]	359
313	<i>"I felt a little nervous, because of how the people</i>	360
314	<i>were going to be like with whom I'll work with</i>	361
315	<i>and who they were."</i> [P2]	362
316	ii. Sub category: General public's lack of aware-	363
317	ness towards disability	364
318	Many of the participants who previously worked	365
319	with other PWID now had to work with the general	366
320	public, assisting and selling goods to customers who	367
321	were not always compliant or patient with them. One	368
322	participant shared this:	369
323	<i>"Sometimes they tell me the customers are always</i>	370
324	<i>right. They tell you, you must talk with the cus-</i>	371
325	<i>tomers first - whereas the customer is sometimes</i>	372
326	<i>swearing at me. It's not alright."</i> [P1]	373
327	6.1.2. Category two: Crossing the bridge into	374
328	the workplace	375
329	Once individuals with intellectual disabilities have	376
330	been successfully placed in the open labour market,	377
331	they have to adapt to being exposed to an environment	378
332	which is no longer designed to cater for their specific	379
333	needs. This new environment requires longer working	380
334	hours and different or extra working days such as	381
335	weekends and/or public holidays.	382
336	i. Sub category: Adjusting to longer working hours	383
337	The longer working hours required by jobs in the	384
338	open labour market is a great challenge to people with	385
339	intellectual disabilities. One participant indicated:	386
340	<i>"I used to get up at 7am and now I must get up</i>	387
341	<i>extra early at 5 : 45am. This was difficult for me."</i>	388
342	[P3]	389
	6.1.3. Category three: Caught in the middle of	
	two worlds	
	Often people with intellectual disabilities found	
	themselves caught in the middle of a protective world	
	where they are not challenged enough; and the open	
	labour world where they are not skilled enough or fast	
	enough for the job as compared to their respective	
	co-workers.	
	i. Sub category: Competition amongst co-workers	
	in protective employment	
	One particular area where participants felt caught	
	in between worlds was that of their previous co-	
	workers and those they currently work with in the	
	open labour market. Although many of the partici-	
	pants experienced job satisfaction, on the other hand,	
	they struggled with co-workers in the open labour	
	market. They were comfortable with people who	
	were more accepting of their disabilities. One par-	
	ticipant indicated:	
	<i>"I like my job but I don't like some of the ways the</i>	
	<i>workers treat me. They actually want me to work</i>	
	<i>like how some of the other workers work. Fast."</i>	
	[P3]	
	6.1.4. Category four: Disability Grant (social	
	grants) as an advantage and disadvantage	
	for working in the OLM	
	Although the participants felt more independent	
	and valuable when moving into the open labour mar-	
	ket, the participants realised that they would no longer	
	be given the disability grant they were used to each	
	month. This too made them feel as if they are caught	
	in between the two labour worlds, wondering which	
	in fact would be more beneficial for them at the end	
	of the day. Earning a salary in the open labour market	
	and risking losing the disability grant caused anxiety.	
	A participant said:	
	<i>"The lady told me my disability grant is going</i>	
	<i>to fall away, I thought what's going to happen</i>	
	<i>now (raise in anxiety about losing the disability</i>	
	<i>grant)?"</i> [P3]	
	6.2. Core concept two: A well-planned work	
	preparation programme enables success	
	As part of the inclusion criteria, all the participants	
	of this study had been through a work preparation	
	programme. This core concept discusses some of the	
	benefits and essential components of the work prepa-	
	ration programs and the improvements in quality of	

390 life that came along with the transition into the OLM.
391 One participant said:

392 *“See the supervisor prepared us for it [working*
393 *in the OLM].” [P3]*

394 6.2.1. Category one: Essential components of a 395 work preparation program

396 According to the participants and the key infor-
397 mant, the work preparation programmes included
398 various components such as work skills training
399 specifically related to the work environment which
400 enhanced work placement.

401 i. Sub category: Simulated tasks are essential for
402 work placement

403 All the participants mentioned that they were given
404 simulated tasks as part of their training programme
405 which enabled them to gain the necessary skills they
406 needed to cope in the various worker roles. Two of
407 the participants who had both been in the same work
408 preparation programme mentioned that they were
409 given the opportunity to train weekends at the work-
410 places of prospective employers or performed similar
411 tasks within the protective workshops which allowed
412 them to transition into their new jobs. One participant
413 said:

414 *“When I first came I was prepared for this job*
415 *because the time in [names workshops] I came*
416 *to work every Saturday for these people [current*
417 *employer]. I get a lot of advice.” [P1]*

418 ii. Sub category: Life Skills Training

419 Most of the participants indicated that the addi-
420 tional life skills such as coping skills and conflict
421 management that they were exposed to in the work
422 preparation programs were helpful. One participant
423 said:

424 *“Patience, like here sometimes when I get cross I*
425 *just, when the people are getting cross I leave it*
426 *you see. I don’t want to go further. I just come to*
427 *tell the boss that somebody is making it hard for*
428 *me.” [P1]*

429 iii. Sub category: Work skills training specifically
430 relating to the work environment enhances work
431 placement.

432 The participants expressed their gratitude towards
433 the work preparation programs. They mentioned
434 that not only did the work preparation training
435 provide them with valuable skills; they were also

436 provided with a job that was relevant to their per-
437 sonality and level of functioning. One participant
438 said:

439 *“They give you lots of skills; they get you a new*
440 *job.” [P1]*

441 The participants in this study mentioned that
442 they were able to obtain specific work skills such
443 as punctuality, trustworthiness, concentration, com-
444 prehension and retention of instructions, use of
445 material and equipment, initiative/planning of work
446 and neatness. These skills the participants reported
447 were helpful as they were able to receive posi-
448 tive affirmation from their employers and some
449 even received bonuses and promotions for their out-
450 standing work skills and attitudes. One participant
451 said:

452 *“He (referring to employer) encourages me, he*
453 *tells me that I am a good worker and he looks*
454 *well after me. I like it when he speaks like that to*
455 *me . . . ” [P3]*

456 6.2.2. Category two: Improvement in salaries 457 and benefits within the OLM

458 The study’s participants mentioned that they all
459 experienced improved quality of life as a result of
460 the benefits and better salaries and wages. Being
461 employed in the OLM also gave the participants a
462 sense of confidence. The participant said:

463 *“ . . . they (family) are happy, I can now help out*
464 *with my little girl and don’t have to wait on the*
465 *grant all the time.” [P5]*

466 i Sub category: Disability grant is used as a buffer
467 to facilitate the return to work of PWID

468 According to a key informant, the PWID is given
469 a trial period to adjust to the new job before the dis-
470 ability grant is removed as they earn an increase in
471 wages. He said:

472 *“I remember when the lady told me my disability*
473 *grant is going to fall away, I thought what’s going*
474 *to happen now? This is the end of it? But they said*
475 *no it’s not the end of it because you are going*
476 *to earn more! And then when I got my wages,*
477 *my mom was the one who said ‘come on don’t*
478 *worry about that, look at all the money you have*
479 *now’ But then I was happy that the money (dis-*
480 *ability grant) would fall away and I got excited.”*
481 *[P4]*

482 6.3. Core concept three: Crossing the bridge
483 into the workplace: Do I belong here?

484 The participants demonstrated a sense of social
485 belonging within their new work environments hence
486 the name of the core concept. Social belonging in
487 the context of the study was viewed as the PWID's
488 manner of adapting to their worker role in the OLM.
489 Below is a quote from one of the participants who
490 demonstrated how she felt a sense of social belong-
491 ing in her new work environment. The participant
492 said:

493 *"He encourages me, he tells me that I am a good*
494 *worker and he looks well after me. I like it when*
495 *he speaks like that to me because then I feel like*
496 *I belong here."* [P2]

497 6.3.1. Category one: New management needs to
498 be familiar with disability

499 This category describes how most of the managers
500 in the OLM do not understand intellectual impair-
501 ment, hence they do not know the limitations of
502 PWID. Below is a quote from the key informant
503 explaining how managers lack the knowledge about
504 their employee's predicament of being intellectually
505 disabled, she said:

506 *"Ok I think employers don't understand the*
507 *umm... the way they, they don't understand the*
508 *diagnosis so they don't understand why the intel-*
509 *lectually disabled person is behaving the way they*
510 *are behaving."* [KI]

511 Employers that are familiar with the functional
512 ability of the PWID positively aided the PWID's
513 adaptation process. The participant said:

514 *"She was placed with an employer who is one*
515 *of our service providers so he knows what he*
516 *has in us and he knows what to expect from our*
517 *employees, so he has an open mind."* [KI]

518 i. Sub category: The manner in which the OT facil-
519 itates the transition of PWID into OLM.
520 It is the role of the occupational therapists and job
521 coaches to make sure that PWID in the open labour
522 market are placed in the right work task areas for
523 easy handling and staying motivated. Below is a
524 quote from the key informant that demonstrated how
525 vital the assistance from the occupational therapist
526 and job coach is in the transition into open labour
market.

527 *"... and that's where an Occupational therapist*
528 *is probably one of the best qualified people to*
529 *guage a person's level of functioning with umm,*
530 *align it with the type of job out there."* [KI]

531 ii. Sub category: Work place culture

532 Every workplace has its own culture that they follow
533 which is going to be different from other workplaces.
534 Below is a quote from one of the participants about
535 how she liked this culture of togetherness in her new
536 workplace which was different from where she used
537 to work. She said:

538 *"At CS (name of the workshop) it's the people*
539 *yes, not everyone but just certain people. There is*
540 *always a case of jealousy [competition] between*
541 *the people. I don't like that, I like to work where*
542 *ladies understand and support each other, you*
543 *understand..."* [P2]

544 6.3.2. Category two: New people and new faces

545 This category explains how the transitioning from
546 protective/sheltered workshops into the open labour
547 market for PWID refers to leaving behind friends and
548 other familiar faces. Below is a quote from the key
549 informant, explaining her view on transitioning from
550 a protective/sheltered workshop into the open labour
551 market.

552 *"It's going to depend on, they could very well*
553 *feel as outcasts if their co-workers don't support*
554 *and sort of marginalize them because they don't*
555 *understand them, they don't want to associate*
556 *with them."* [KI]

557 i. Sub category one: Coping with anxiety related
558 to being accepted.

559 In the protective/sheltered workshops PWID work
560 with other people that have similar diagnoses that they
561 have, but in the open labour market they meet peo-
562 ple who might not understand their disability which
563 might lead to stereotyping. Below is a quote from one
564 of the participants about how she felt on her first day.

565 *"I felt a little nervous, because of how the people*
566 *were going to be like with whom I'll work and*
567 *who they were."* [P2]

568 Another participant indicated that the fact that her
569 employer knew about her condition helped reduce her
570 anxiety. She said:

571 *"Yes my supervisor knows my situation and says*
572 *I shouldn't be scared to come and talk to her."*
573 [P5]

574 “Yes they did make adaptations for me such as
575 starting time at work especially when it rains or
576 when there are strikes.” [P5]

577 7. Discussion

578 7.1. Barriers

579 According to the participants, they all experienced
580 anxiety around changing to the new work environ-
581 ment as this required adjustment to a new work
582 setting. There was consensus from the participants
583 reflected that this transition was challenging as they
584 had to adapt to the new physical environment, the
585 work culture and the general public within the open
586 labour market. Most of the participants experienced
587 anxiety that stemmed from the uncertainties of fellow
588 colleagues’ perception of their disability.

589 The perception from PWID about their colleague’s
590 belief that PWID do not deserve disability grants once
591 they are employed within the open labour market
592 caused concern to them. The disability grant is then
593 seen as an unfair advantage towards PWID as they
594 are seen as people that get double payment as salary
595 from two different sources while being employed.
596 This perception by co-workers was inaccurate in that
597 they did not understand that in the South African
598 legal system, a grant is automatically stopped or
599 reduced once the PWID can earn a market related
600 income. This erroneous belief in turn leads to fur-
601 ther discrimination of PWID within the workplace.
602 Work discrimination can be defined as the unjust
603 and negative treatment of workers based on personal
604 attributes that are irrelevant to job performance [22].
605 The participants described varying degrees of dis-
606 crimination such as being denied work opportunities
607 or promotions, with no clear explanation; to obvious
608 discrimination such as unfriendly remarks, by col-
609 leagues or clients. Another barrier that arose from
610 the findings was based on the core concept enti-
611 tled “Unforeseen challenges of change”. The main
612 cause of people failing to understand the employ-
613 ability of PWID was noted as a lack of awareness
614 within corporate worlds about the work potential of
615 PWID.

616 7.2. Facilitators

617 Core concept three “A well-planned work prepa-
618 ration programme enables success”, ‘referring to
619 the essential components of a work preparation

programme’ as well as the category ‘positive influ- 620
ences that enhance employment opportunities of 621
PWID’ were identified as factors that facilitate the 622
transition of PWID into the open labour market. A 623
work preparation programme prepares the individual 624
either to return to work after injury, or begin working 625
in the open labour market for the first time. This pro- 626
gramme generally begins with profiling, so that the 627
work-related goals of the individual are understood 628
and their strengths and weaknesses are identified 629
[23]. Many of the participants indicated that they 630
were trained on weekends at their various prospective 631
workplaces or performed simulated work tasks which 632
allowed them to transition into their new jobs with 633
ease. These findings corresponded with current lit- 634
erature. According to research conducted by Cramm 635
et al. [24], work preparation programmes promote 636
self-development and have a positive effect on the 637
individuals’ well-being, although in different ways 638
for different individuals. According to a key infor- 639
mant of this study, 60% of persons with intellectual 640
disability’s’ levels of functioning varies and needs 641
stimulating activities. These types of activity need to 642
be varied to ensure that they do not get bored with 643
one activity, whereas others feel a sense of comfort 644
in doing repetitive tasks. This suggests that although 645
the task of the occupational therapist of finding the 646
most compatible job for a PWID is not a quick or 647
easy one, the participants in this study gave positive 648
feedback. 649

650 7.3. Social belonging and acceptance within the 651 work environment

652 As discussed in core concept three: Crossing the
653 bridge into the workplace: Do I belong here? ‘*I feel
654 like I belong here*’ there were a number of factors
655 that contributed to the participants developing a sense
656 of social belonging. The participants and the key
657 informant indicated that supportive co-workers and
658 employers who offered help and friendship made
659 them feel wanted and accepted in the workplace.
660 The Department of Labour of South Africa [24] sup-
661 ports these findings by indicating that a person with
662 a disability develops into a well-adjusted, productive
663 worker in an atmosphere of acceptance, co-operation
664 and goodwill. Bates, Goodley and Runswick-Cole
665 [25] argue that if people with learning disabilities are
666 supported in creative ways in the work place then
667 there is a greater chance that they will be productive
and less dependent on social support.

7.4. Strategies to promote successful engagement in the workplace

Various strategies had been identified that promoted the successful engagement of PWID in the workplace. The findings of the study indicated that a work preparation programme and a supportive employment approach helped PWID transition to the open labour market. Although the participants had created new relationships and trust with their new employers and/or supervisors, many of them confirmed that they would want to keep their existing relationships with the protective and sheltered employed sectors as this provided them with support and encouragement to strive and thrive within the OLM. The participants identified that their transition was made smoother when the occupational therapist orientated them to their new setting in advance and ensured that both the employers and the colleagues were aware of their abilities and limitations in order to provide the PWID with the relevant support in their new job environments. The latter finding is supported by research conducted by Kuznetsova and Yulcin [26], who argue that employers are creating and awareness of PWID by means of streamlining work related policies that enables PWID to be productive in the workplace. Finally it is imperative that PWID participate in a form or work preparation programme or that schools or training centers provide PWID opportunities to gain exposure to working in the OLM or competitive employment. PWID and employers will then be able to realistically identify specific areas related to the PWID's work skills that need improvement. Research conducted by Soeker [28] reinforces the finding that relates to the fact that participation in work test placement enhances the ability of individuals living with disability to adapt to their worker roles.

8. Limitations

A limitation of this study was that the majority of the participants could have been uncomfortable when answering questions, as these interviews took place in their places of employment. However it must be mentioned that the participants chose to meet at their workplaces as it was more convenient to them. Another limitation of the study was that due to the small sample size the findings of this study may not be transferable to similar settings, however this limitation is inherent in qualitative research.

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Conflict of interest

None to report.

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Appendix: Interview guide

Interview guide: Participant

1. Describe what the most difficult part of changing to a new job was for you
2. Explain what you felt on the first day of your current job
3. What do you like most about working in the open labour market and why?
4. What do you dislike most about working in the open labour market and why?
5. When did you feel most supported during your current job and why?

6. Describe your relationship with your colleagues
7. Are there any parts of your current job that you did not feel prepared for when entering the workplace? Explain your answer
8. Are there any changes you would make to your current job right now if you could do so and why?

Interview guide: Key informant

1. Could you describe the challenges that PWID experience when returning to work in open labour market (OLM)?
2. Could you describe the factors that support PWID in returning to work?

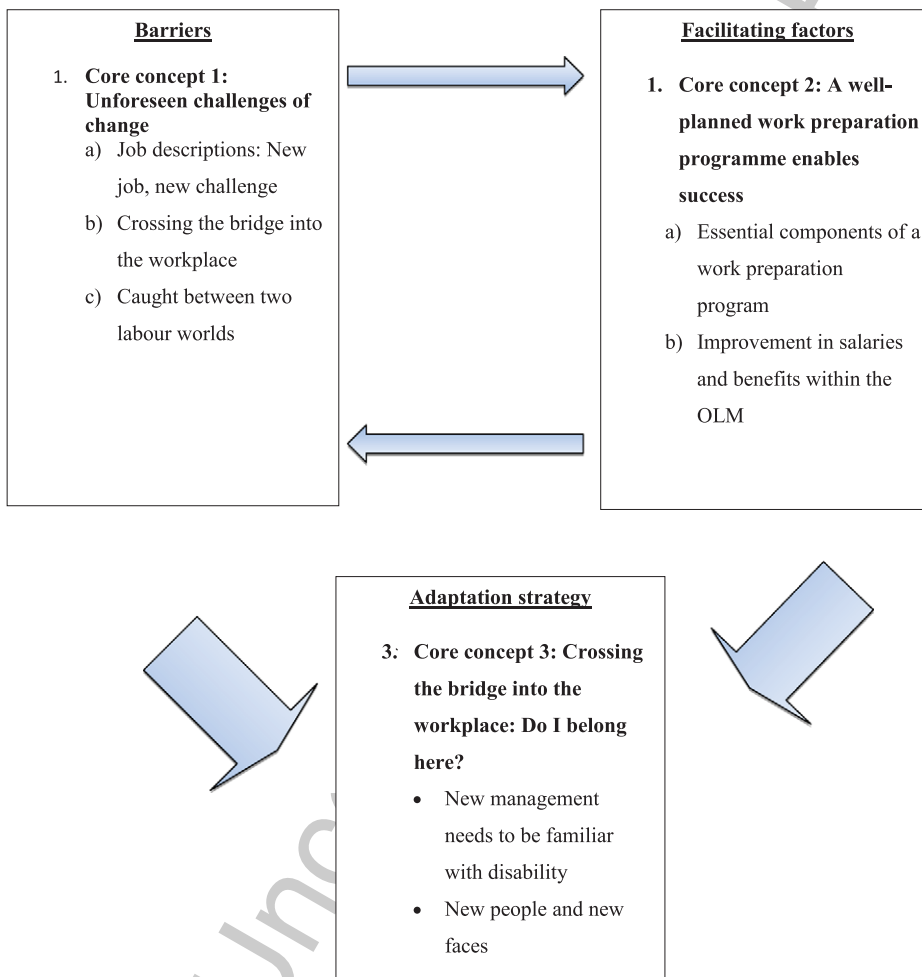


Fig. 1. Graphical representation of the research findings. Figure 5.1 represents the findings in relation to another as emerged from the core concepts and categories. The diagrammatical representation of the themes that link to each other described the relationship between the barriers and facilitators. The adaptation process of PWID in the OLM is described by a process of the PWID, *firstly*, being able to identify the barriers that prevents them from enhancing their work related skills and resuming the worker role, *secondly*, identifying and actively utilising the facilitating factors that supports them in the workplace. The presence of facilitating factors positively facilitated workplace adaptation and the absence of the facilitators negatively affected worker role adaptation. Similarly the presence of barriers negatively influenced workplace adaptation and its absence positively influenced worker role adaptation.

- 849 3. In your experience and opinion, to what extent
850 can PWID experience social belonging and
851 acceptance within the work environment? In
852 your opinion how do PWID adapt to the work
place
4. If work preparation programmes could be
improved to enhance placement in the OLM,
what would you suggest and why.
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