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**Influence of Equal Opportunity on Employment of People with Disabilities in
Ghana**

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Abstract

Purpose: The study sought to investigate the challenges and the influence of offering equal job opportunities to people with disabilities in Ghana.

Methodology: The study adopted a desktop methodology. Desk research refers to secondary data or that which can be collected without fieldwork. Desk research is basically involved in collecting data from existing resources hence it is often considered a low-cost technique as compared to field research, as the main cost is involved in the executive's time, telephone charges and directories. Thus, the study relied on already published studies, reports and statistics. This secondary data was easily accessed through online journals and library

Results: The results revealed that in terms of supply, education emerged as a key aspect that employers looked at when it came to the employment of PWDs. Thus, it was seen as advantageous for PWDs to seek post-secondary and vocational education to enable them to access the labour market. Internships were also seen as a way for PWDs to gain relevant work experience and access the labour market. However, the transition rates into employment were quite low. Type of disability had a very strong relationship to the employment of PWDs. It was seen to negatively influence the employment of PWDs as HR personnel were more inclined to employ persons with physical disabilities than other types of disability. In conclusion employment of PWDs in the human resource sector was predicted by legislation, supply and type of disability

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: This study used virtue theory, the socio-economic theory of compliance and the Keynesian theory of employment. These theories may be used to anchor future studies in the employment sector. The study will benefit many stakeholders. The top management of companies in the country will also use the study findings to improve the employment sector and ensure high and stable performance in all their activities and programs. It is expected that the adoption of effective employment methods will help to improve efficiency in their major operations and activities. The study results will also benefit other stakeholders such as the policy makers as well as researchers and scholars from different parts of the world. Scholars may attempt to bridge the conceptual and contextual gaps identified in this study.

Keywords: *Opportunities, Employment, Disability.*

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INTRODUCTION

Employment is an important social determinant of health and wellbeing. People with disability experience labour market disadvantage and have low labour force participation rates, high unemployment rates, and poor work conditions (Shields, 2015). Environmental factors are crucial as facilitators of or barriers to participation for people with disability. Understanding how the physical, social, and economic characteristics of local areas influence employment for people with disability can potentially inform interventions to reduce employment inequalities (Alon, 2020).

People with disability have a right to work on an equal basis with others. As stated in Article 27 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), this includes the right to the opportunity to gain a living by work freely chosen or accepted in a labour market and work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities (Dingel, 2020). However, globally, people with disability experience disadvantage in the labour market (Lindsay, 2018).

Compared with their nondisabled peers, people with disability have lower rates of labour force participation and higher rates of unemployment (Hooley, 2020)]. Further, those with a job are more likely to be employed under nonstandard conditions and to experience disadvantage in relation to job security, retention, satisfaction, earnings, and characteristics related to psychosocial job quality, such as job control and level of job demands (Pradhan, 2018).

Employment is a well-known social determinant of health, with unemployment, underemployment, job insecurity, and nonstandard conditions of employment detrimentally affecting health and wellbeing. For people with disability, there is evidence that adverse employment outcomes (such as unemployment and underemployment) negatively impact mental health, and that such impacts can be greater than those for people without disability (Holm, 2022)

The importance of equal access to *decent work* is recognized in Goal 8 of the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda (Keramat, 2021). Not having a job or having a job that negatively impacts the individual (such as poor work conditions, poor remuneration or job insecurity) can compound disability-related disadvantage. The link between disability and poverty is well established (Rotarou, 2021). As stated in the *World Report on Disability*, "If people with disabilities and their households are to overcome exclusion, they must have access to work or livelihoods, breaking some of the circular links between disability and poverty" (Bryan, 2021)

The newly enacted Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is designed to protect the civil rights of individuals with disabilities (Spurk, 2020). It takes aim at discrimination and articulates goals for equal opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency. It documents that people with disabilities, as a group, occupy an inferior status in our society, and are severely disadvantaged socially, vocationally, economically, and educationally. It calls for a "clear and comprehensive national mandate for the elimination of discrimination against individuals with disabilities" and provides enforceable standards for doing so (Helena, 2023). The ADA defines disability as "a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities of such for personal use only, a record of such impairment, or being regarded as having such an impairment" (van der Zwan, 2021). It is broad in its reach and prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in the areas of employment, public accommodations,

services provided by state and local governments, telecommunications, and transportation. Title I, which addresses employment, is perhaps the most far-reaching of the ADA provisions. The ADA has the potential to affect the lives of substantial numbers of people. One estimate places the number of people with disabilities at 43 million (Gupta, 2021), while another based on category or type of impairment suggests there are approximately 33 million people with sensory, motor, or cognitive disabilities severe enough to interfere with work or otherwise constitute a serious disability (Wong, 2021). These studies also cite 14 million adults (about 7% of the population) who have fourth grade or lower reading skills, which seriously impairs their capability for doing many kinds of jobs, especially those in information occupations. The past two decades brought about a heightened awareness of the importance of work and the right of individuals with disabilities to equal opportunity in the workplace, while advancing technology offered new and creative approaches for overcoming functional limitations. Yet the employment picture for persons with disabilities worsened over the same period (Holland, 2021), and disability remains a major cause of unemployment and poverty. While the overall labor force participation rate increased 10%, the labor force participation rate for working-age persons with disabilities fell by 4% (Ne'eman, 2021) and their wages were generally lower (Goda, 2023). Half to two thirds of Americans with disabilities between the ages of 16 and 64 are not working at all (Lindsay, 2018).

Statement of the Problem

Global estimation estimates indicate that persons with disabilities (PWD) account for 10% of the world's population which translates into 650 million people out of whom 80% live in developing countries without basic social services such as access to education (UN, 2008). Globally, people with disabilities are often marginalized and experience difficulties as a result of their disability status especially when seeking employment (Oliver, 1996). Majority of them do not have access to education, employment or rehabilitation services (RoK, 2008). Denying people with disabilities the right to acquire employment and education may lead to a lifelong impact on the earning processes, academic achievement and employment achievements in future hence hindering their potential in economic social and human development. Children with disabilities experience hardships due to widespread cultural, social, and economic prejudices (RoK, 2008). These discriminative treatments lead to stigmatization on the bases of disability which impacts negatively on the child's access to education.

Many studies have been done on disabilities, Fortune (2022), conducted a study on investigating associations between area-level environmental factors and employment for people with disability. Anastacia (2017) conducted a study on Greek employers' attitudes to employing people with disabilities: effects of the type of disability. Ringera (2017) conducted a study to find out the influence of child labour on access to education of children with disabilities. However, these studies presented a conceptual gap because our studies seek to investigate influence of equal opportunity on employment of people with disabilities.

Theoretical Review

This study will be guided by Virtue Theory proposed by Arjoon (2000), Socio-Economic Theory of Compliance developed by Sutinen and Kuperan (1999) and Keynesian Theory of Employment proposed by John Maynard Keynes in the 1930s.

Virtue Theory

This theory was proposed by Arjoon (2000) cited in Arjoon, Turriago-Hoyos, and Thoene (2018) as he studied traditional approaches to ethics in organizations. He discovered that traditional approaches focused on the avoidance of wrongdoing and were regressive as organizations would develop measures to avoid past failures and future charges. However, under the virtue theory organizations would shift from avoidance of discriminatory behavior to proactively practicing behaviors related to inclusiveness for all. Thus, an organization would set its virtues, mission, principles and core competencies to achieve this. If an organization is grounded on these virtues and aligns its practices to virtuous behavior, they will exhibit socially acceptable behavior based on doing the right thing (Arjoon, 2000 cited in Arjoon, Turriago-Hoyos, and Thoene, 2018). Thus, demographic attributes of PWDs would be viewed and accepted as a norm in society (Barclay, Markel and Yugo, 2012). When this theory is applied to legislation, organizations will voluntarily implement legislation because it is socially acceptable and will not go against their principles. Organizations will have inclusive workplace policies and employers will not discriminate against employment of PWDs to ensure their equitable employment and integration. This would counter traditional disability approaches which focus on costs of accommodations and mandatory implementation of law.

Socio-Economic Theory of Compliance

This theory was developed by Sutinen and Kuperan (1999) cited in Calcador and Juan (2017). This theory integrates principles of economic, sociology and psychology to account for both tangible and intangible motivations influencing individuals' decisions whether to comply with a given set of regulations. The study adopted the theory to explain an individual's decisions to comply with a specified set of laws. Under social theory, decisions on whether to comply with regulation, social attitude towards disability are viewed to impact the employment of PWDs. Economic theory was used to analyze aspects of supply and demand, through demand factors, financial incentives offered in legislation.

Keynesian Theory of Employment

This theory was proposed by John Maynard Keynes in the 1930s (Keynes, 2018). This theory states that employment occurs when there is equilibrium between aggregate demand and aggregate supply in the labour market. Keynes propagated that an increase in effective demand would increase the level of employment and vice versa. The employment level of an organization depends on the number of workers that are employed and on the decisions of organizations related to hiring employees. This theory was applied to explain the aspect of demand, supply and employment in hotels. Thus, when hotels created employment opportunities for PWDs and there was an equal and available supply of qualified PWDs employment would occur.

Empirical Review

Fortune (2022), investigated associations between area-level environmental factors and employment for people with disability. Eighteen articles published between 2000 and 2020 met the inclusion criteria, and data were extracted to map the current evidence. Area-level factors were categorized into six domains relating to different aspects of environmental context: socioeconomic

environment, services, physical environment, social environment, governance, and urbanicity. The urbanicity and socioeconomic environment domains were the most frequently represented (15 and 8 studies, respectively). The studies were heterogeneous in terms of methods and data sources, scale and type of geographic units used for analysis, disability study population, and examined employment outcomes. The study concluded that the current evidence base is insufficient to inform the design of interventions. Priorities for future research were identified, which included further theorizing the mechanisms by which area-level factors could influence employment outcomes, quantifying the contribution of specific factors, and interrogating specific factors underlying the association between urbanicity and employment outcomes for people with disability.

Anastacia (2017) researched on Greek employers' attitudes to employing people with disabilities: effects of the type of disability. The aim of the cross-sectional study was to answer two central research questions: (i) what are Greek employers' attitudes to employing people with a range of disabilities; and (ii) do employers' attitudes differ according to the type of disability? The study sample comprised 102 local employers with small-sized retail trade and service businesses located in semi-urban areas of Lesbos and Chios, Greek islands in the North Aegean Sea. The results showed that employers' attitudes differed depending on the type of disability; most respondents believed that it would be easier for people with diabetes, thalassemia or renal insufficiency to gain employment than those with schizophrenia, blindness, learning disability or depression.

Ringera (2017) investigated the influence of child labour on access to education of children with disabilities. The study was done in Samburu County. The sample size constituted 217 children with disabilities enrolled in school, thirty teachers, three head teachers, six assessment teachers and fifteen parents of children with disabilities. The study used a mixed methods research approach. Analysis of data from questionnaires generated descriptive statistics which was presented in tables, charts and figures. The study used descriptive survey in its methodology. Children with disabilities were engaged in child labour on the bases of the nature of their disabilities and the culture of the Samburu people. It was established that there were more boys with disabilities in child labour than girls. The findings further established that there were more children with physical disabilities in child labour than any other disability and that they were discriminated against in school and at home hence their involvement in child labour. From the findings of the study, it was established that the main factors that pushed children with disabilities into child labour were social exclusion, lack of conducive learning environment, lack of assistive devices and lack of learning resource.

Amy (2015) analysed the role of adaptive sport in predicting employment for individuals with physical disabilities. This study was cross-sectional. The study collected survey data on employment and other covariates including education, age, age at disability onset, veteran status and athletic classification from 140 mobility impaired athletes who play either wheelchair rugby or wheelchair basketball. The analysis showed that playing an additional year of adaptive sport is associated with an approximately 4% increase in likelihood of employment. Education and duration of disability are found to be positive predictors of employment, while veteran status and severity of injury are negative predictors of employment. Age of disability onset is not found to be

a predictor of employment when other controls are included. This result indicates that a substantial economic benefit would result from increased participation in adaptive sport, and therefore may justify additional funding to expand adaptive sport programs

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a desktop research methodology. Desk research refers to secondary data or that which can be collected without fieldwork. Desk research is basically involved in collecting data from existing resources hence it is often considered a low-cost technique as compared to field research, as the main cost is involved in executive's time, telephone charges and directories. Thus, the study relied on already published studies, reports and statistics. This secondary data was easily accessed through the online journals and library.

RESULTS

The results were grouped into various research gap categories namely as conceptual, contextual, and geographical.

Conceptual Gaps

Conceptual is the missing gap of knowledge which is related to the role a variable plays in an already existing body of knowledge and it is a sub-set of research gap. Fortune (2022), conducted a study on investigating associations between area-level environmental factors and employment for people with disability. Anastacia (2017) conducted a study on Greek employers' attitudes to employing people with disabilities: effects of the type of disability. These two studies presented a conceptual gap since our study will focus on the influence of equal opportunity on employment of people with disabilities in Ghana. In addition, all the mentioned studies did not establish the challenges and opportunities of PWDs in the employment sector in Ghana. The studies did not outline the challenges and opportunities in a clear manner. Therefore, the current study seeks to address these conceptual gaps.

Contextual and Geographical Gap

Studies by Fortune (2022), Anastacia (2017), Ringera (2017) and Amy (2015) had geographical gap because they were not conducted in Ghana. This implies that the results may be inapplicable in Ghana since the social economic environment of Ghana and other countries differ. The current study seeks to address this gap.

Methodological Gap

This type of research gap emerges as a result of the research methodology or design of existing studies. Ringera (2017) conducted a study to find out the influence of child labour on access to education of children with disabilities. The study used a mixed-methods research approach. Analysis of data from questionnaires generated descriptive statistics which was presented in tables, charts and figures. The study presented a methodological gap as it utilized a mixed method approach while our study will use desktop research methodology. The study done by Amy (2015) analyzed the role of adaptive sports in predicting employment for individuals with physical disabilities. This study was cross-sectional. The study presented a methodological gap as it utilized cross-sectional research design while our study will use desktop research methodology.

Conclusions

In terms of supply, education emerged as a key aspect that employers looked at when it came to the employment of PWDs. Thus, it was seen as advantageous for PWDs to seek post-secondary and vocational education to enable them to access the labour market. Internships were also seen as a way for PWDs to gain relevant work experience and access the labour market. However, the transition rates into employment were quite low. Type of disability had a very strong relationship to the employment of PWDs. It was seen to negatively influence the employment of PWDs as HR personnel were more inclined to employ persons with physical disabilities than other types of disability. In conclusion employment of PWDs in the human resource sector was predicted by legislation, supply and type of disability.

Recommendations

Quotas are one of the ways the government attempts at solving the problem of employment of PWDs. The study showed that none of the hotels had achieved the quota or reserved positions for PWDs. Quota achievement is a collaborative effort between various stakeholders like PWDs, educational institutions, disability service organizations and the government itself. Thus, the study recommends that the government and stakeholders collaborate to benchmark and develop standards and measures that will monitor and facilitate the compliance of quota obligations within employment sectors. Finally, the study results will be important to researchers and scholars from various regions around the globe. This is because the future researchers will use the study findings as their reference points and starting points for their further studies. Future academicians and students will also use this study for references and will form the basis for their discussions. Scholars may attempt to bridge the conceptual and contextual gaps identified in this study. This study will also provide a source of reference available for future studies on similar or related topics touching on challenges faced by people with disabilities on the employment sector. The virtue theory, socio-economic theory of compliance and Keynesian theory of employment, may be used to anchor future studies in the employment sector.

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