

Getting in and Getting on: An Intersectional Approach to the Careers of the Visually Impaired in the Workplace

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By

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ABSTRACT

Supporting visually impaired persons to achieve their potential in a context characterised by underdeveloped markets and institutions has come to dominate the discourse on equality, inclusiveness, and diversity in the workplace. Drawing on the contemporary turn to ‘intersectionality’ in social theory as a lens, this thesis explores the careers of the visually impaired in the workplace and provides fresh empirical articulation on how their identity, situatedness, and positionality in a context marked by underdeveloped institutions may combine to shape and give form to their career outcomes. Developing the study’s contribution in the context of Ghana, the Ghana Blind Association served as the empirical research site for recruiting the research participants who met the study’s theoretical sampling strategy. Methodologically, the study took an interpretive approach and adopted an exploratory research design. The main data for the empirical inquiry were semi-structured interviews collected from twenty-eight (28) registered visually impaired people who are employed in various capacities across different industries. This was supplemented with publicly available data including Ghana government white papers and policy documents on disability, policy documents of the Ghana blind association, and popular newspaper articles on the life and careers of disabled people in Ghana. The study presents three main findings. First, challenging the taken-for-granted assumption that employers may actively provide support to visually impaired job applicants to help them get a foot in the employment ‘doorway’, the study found that entry into the job market required visually impaired persons, like any other applicant, to have the requisite educational qualifications or technical competences required for the job. Beyond this, the visually impaired, by their disability, are likely to experience micro-aggression and be subjected to personally intrusive questions when trying to get a foot in the employment doorway. Second, while the visually impaired may progress on the job through timebound promotions and participation in capacity development programmes, they frequently faced the challenge of working in disability unfriendly environment, which frequently plays out in the form of the lack of basic assistive devices and the underutilisation of skills which combine to impede their potentiality to progress in practice. Third, to survive the very challenging environments in which they work, the study identified and labelled three differential coping

strategies: *adaptation, avoidance, and confrontational strategies*, which the visually impaired in their situated work practice tend to adopt to help them navigate, manage, and deal with the plethora of challenges they face within the contingencies of working and getting work done.

The thesis contributions are three-fold. First, emphasising how the identity, situatedness, and positionality of visually impaired persons in a context marked by underdeveloped institutions interact to shape their career entry and outcomes, the intersectionality helps to uncover how taken-for-granted assumptions about the social positions of the disabled, organizing structures and workplace conditions interact, engendering the dynamics of challenges faced by the visually impaired to ‘getting in’ and ‘getting on’ at the workplace. Second, the study extends our understanding of how the visually impaired experience work by providing insights into their experiences at the workplace, elucidating how they make sense and make meaning of the intractable challenges they face in ‘getting in’ and ‘getting on’ at the workplace. Third, the study contributes to the literature on disability and work, and the theorizing of intersectionality by identifying forms and strategies employed by the visually impaired to cope with the challenges they encounter in the workplace. Pragmatic interventions to support and empower visually impaired persons in ways that could help them to enter the workplace, thrive, and pursue their careers are presented.

GLOSSARY

ADHD	Autism, Down Syndrome, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
BPM	Bio-psychosocial model
CDT	Critical Disability Theory
GBU	Ghana Blind Union
GLSS	Ghana Living Standards Survey
GSS	Ghana Statistical Service
ILO	International Labour Organisation
LEAP	Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty
LMICs	Low-and-middle-income countries
NVTI	National Vocational Training Institute
PWDs	Persons With Disabilities
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UK	United Kingdom
UPIAS	Union of Physically Impaired Against Segregation
UNCRPD	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
WHO	World Health Organisation

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Disability policies are centred on the concept of an accessible society, which guarantees that people with impairments can participate fully in society. Although these policies are important, there have been significant drawbacks in a variety of areas (Mahmoudi, 2022; Nyombi & Kibandama, 2014), particularly in the area of employment for individuals living with disabilities such as visual impairments. This situation defeats the entire global agenda of ensuring sustainable employment and inclusivity of Persons With Disabilities (PWDs) including those with some form of visual impairment.

Globally, one out of seven people has some form of disability (World Health Organisation [WHO], 2021). The WHO (2021) further estimates that there are approximately 2.2 billion people who suffer from either near or distance vision impairment, with the highest burden (90%) being reported in low-and-middle-income countries (LMICs). Africa is home to an estimated 15.3% of the global population of people with visual impairments (WHO, 2019). With the ever-changing dynamics in the demographics of countries coupled with the perpetual increase in chronic diseases, it is expected that the number of visually impaired persons would significantly increase in the next decade. Hence, it has become imperative to prioritise the social well-being of individuals who have some form of visual impairment.

Having paid employment is an important indicator of economic independence and social interaction that has the potential to significantly reduce one's risk of poverty and social exclusion (Saunders, MacEachen & Nedelec, 2015; Saunders & Nedelec, 2014). While the pathways to getting employment are frustrating for all people, the situation is far worse in the case of people

with disabilities including those with impaired vision. Even though most jobs, such as teaching and accounting, can be performed by persons with visual impairment, their rate of unemployment and underemployment is quite high because prospective employers perceive their disability as an inability to perform tasks that may be assigned to them (Coffey, Coufopoulos & Kinghorn, 2014). Previous studies have documented the intricate relationship between an individual's identity as a disabled or visually impaired person, and their risk of poverty (Brucker, Mitra, Chaitoo & Mauro, 2015; Groce, Kembhavi, Wirz, Lang, Trani & Kett, 2011; Trani & Loeb, 2012). Having an impairment raises the likelihood of the individual experiencing a vicious cycle of poverty in two ways: by decreasing opportunities for employment and education and by raising costs associated with one's disability. Thus, creating a disabling environment to facilitate the employability of persons with visual impairments. With the emergence of the coronavirus pandemic, many individuals and households have experienced a significant economic recession (Nicola, Alsafi, Sohrabi, Kerwan, Al-Jabir, Iosifidis & Agha, 2020; Ozili, 2020); however, individuals with disabilities including visual impairments are most likely to suffer and steep down the road of poverty and social exclusion (Sabatello, Landes & McDonald, 2020). All of these happenings have serious ramifications on the employment trajectory of visually impaired persons, especially in resource-constrained settings like Ghana.

Given the low employability prospects of visually impaired persons, the international community as well as the local legal system have proposed certain frameworks to ensure a smooth transition through employment for PWDs. For instance, under the declaration of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of PWDs (UNCRPD), employers are required to provide the necessary accommodations and an environment that supports people with visual impairments in finding employment and ensures the non-discrimination and inclusion of visually impaired people in all

spheres of employment (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs [DESA], 2022). Similarly, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) reiterated the UNCRPD's principles by urging all of its signatories to ensure that people with visual impairments are included in the workforce and that no one is left behind (Ekblom & Thomsson, 2018; Stoian, Monterroso & Current, 2019; Zammitti, Magnano & Santisi, 2021).

Within the Ghanaian context, there is the Persons with Disability Act, 2006 (Act 715) which serves as a framework to ensure the inclusivity of visually impaired persons and other disabled individuals in the economic sector of the country's development. According to the Act, the government must establish facilities for work for both those who are blind and those who have other disabilities (Asante & Sasu, 2015). This includes educating those who are blind or have another condition and may have been jobless for at least two years. It is anticipated that the training would provide them with the knowledge and abilities that will enable them to compete for loans or other sources of capital to launch their own business (Asante & Sasu, 2015). The Act further stipulates that every business entity or organisation must ensure that their visually impaired workers have access to the facilities and resources they need to successfully optimise and smooth the transition to the workplace (Asante & Sasu, 2015). These facilities or resources might have buildings that are accessible to people with disabilities. It might also entail making computers and braille displays available to visually challenged people, as well as guaranteeing their transportation to and from work.

Despite the availability of these provisions in the Persons with Disability Act, 2006 (Act 715) as well as in the UNCRPD, many people with vision impairment have low or no employment rates in the labour field (Zhou, Smith, Parker & Griffin-Shirley, 2013). Individuals with some form of visual impairment find it more difficult to find work (Duquette & Baril, 2013). Also, a considerable

loss of independence may result from vision impairment for many people, who may be forced to stop working. These postulations are the reality in studies conducted in Ghana (Gyamfi, 2020) and France (Mahmoudi, 2022). For instance, Gyamfi's (2020) study revealed that among visually impaired persons in Kumasi, the second most populous city in Ghana, poor preparation, limited training, and limited opportunities challenged the experience of seeking employment.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

While there is evidence about the lived experiences of visually impaired persons in Ghana and their job-seeking challenges, there is still substantial knowledge in what we currently know. The emphasis has mainly been on job seeking. However, there is limited understanding of how visually impaired professionals interpret their job entry and job progression experiences. It is unclear from the current body of literature what it means to progress on the job for a visually impaired person. Neither is there evidence of how the visually impaired person navigates to secure employment or progress in their chosen profession. Moreover, there has been no study in Ghana that holistically explores the job entry and progression preparations, process, challenges, and how visually impaired persons can cope with the challenges. This situation presents a significant knowledge gap that demands evidence-based research to narrow.

It is also important to note that issues regarding the visually impaired person's employment, employability prospects, and progression do not stand in isolation. They are influenced by multiple factors including the positionality, situatedness and identity or personal characteristics of the individual. These factors interact and intersect to influence the experiences of persons who have impairments in their vision. Therefore, an intersectionality lens is quintessential in developing a deeper understanding of the nuances that characterise the job entry and job progression preparations, processes, and challenges experienced by the visually impaired person. Yet, the

current body of knowledge, particularly in a resource-constrained setting like Ghana, has not explored this phenomenon from an intersectionality approach. Hence, resulting in the strait jacket policies and interventions that have limited rates of success. To address this knowledge gap and ensure the cost-effectiveness of interventions that support the employment of visually impaired persons, the present study sought to explore the factors that influence the labour force participation of the visually impaired in Ghana and how these persons, referred to as “Diamonds in The Rough”, can get into employment, sustain, and progress in their various fields in the professions.

1.2 Aims and Objectives

The study aims to explore and document the job entry and job progression of visually impaired professionals in Ghana and examine how these persons referred to as “Diamonds in The Rough”, are influenced by the intersectionality of their identity, positionality, and situatedness.

Specifically, the study sought to achieve the following objectives:

- a. Explore the job entry process and challenges experienced by visually impaired persons in Ghana.
- b. Explore the job progression process and it's associated challenges as experienced by visually impaired persons in Ghana.
- c. Examine the coping strategies adopted by visually impaired persons to navigate through the challenges that they experience at the workplace.

1.3 Research Questions

The identity, positionality and situatedness of visually impaired persons are likely to have some ramifications on their job entry and job progression. However, to develop a deeper understanding

of the nuances that exist about the job entry and job progression of visually impaired persons, it is imperative to provide answers to some pertinent questions including the following:

- a. How do visually impaired professionals get into employment, and what challenges do they encounter during their job entry process?
- b. What are the job progression experiences and related challenges visually impaired professionals in Ghana encounter in their job progression?
- c. How do visually impaired professionals in Ghana cope with the challenges that they experience in their job search and job progression?

1.4 Definition of Key Terms

Disability: The task of comprehending disability is challenging. Without reaching a universally accepted definition at the international level, its perception has changed over time. This makes it challenging to comprehend the idea as a whole, apply global standards, and draw cross-national comparisons. In the past, the medical model and social model—which differ in the origin of the condition—have been the two most significant and influential perspectives through which the concept of disability is understood (Mahmoudi, 2022). The medical model views the person's health condition (sickness, disease, or health problem) as the primary factor in the disability, which may have an adverse effect on the person's day-to-day activities. The disability may then need to be identified, and the health condition may then need to be treated, stabilised, or improved. The social model, on the other hand, attributes impairment to the social setting (Mahmoudi, 2022).

However, to provide a comprehensive definition, the study aligns with the International Disability Caucus' description as a situation where an individual's "*ability to lead an inclusive life in the community of his/her own choice is limited by the separate or concomitant impact of physical,*

economic, social, and cultural environments and/or personal factors that interact with physical, sensory, psychosocial, neurological, medical, intellectual, or other conditions that may be permanent, temporary, intermittent or imputed (IDC, 2004, p.7). Per this definition, disability includes psychic disabilities (i.e., personality disorders, paranoia, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, etc.), motor disabilities (i.e., having lost a limb, cerebral palsy etc.), intellectual and mental disabilities (e.g., autism, down syndrome, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder [ADHD], etc.), and sensory disabilities (e.g., hearing loss and deafness, sensory processing disorder, blindness and low vision, deaf-blindness). Nevertheless, within the socio-cultural context of Ghana, disability is regarded as taboo. In some ethnic groups in Ghana (e.g., the Akans), individuals with a disability are denied the opportunity to take up leadership roles (Odame, Opoku, Nketsias & Nanor, 2021; Opoku, Alupo, Gyamfi, Odame, Mprah, Torgbenu, & Badu, 2018). The general perception is that PWDs are beggars and not socially or medically fit to participate in employment.

Visual impairment: Any degree of vision impairment that interferes with a person's everyday life is referred to as a visual impairment, which can range from low vision to blindness (WHO, 2021). Although blindness strictly refers to absolute blindness, the term is frequently used to describe severe visual impairments that force a person to rely mostly on nonvisual sensory data (Sapp, 2010). Low vision describes visual impairments that are less severe than blindness but have some effect on a person's capacity to carry out daily tasks. When performing tasks, people with low vision may need to employ nonvisual methods in addition to equipment and strategies to help them make the most of their limited vision (Sapp, 2010).

Intersectionality: Intersectionality is “a theoretical framework that posits that multiple social categories (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status) intersect at the micro-level of individual experience to reflect multiple interlocking systems of privilege and

oppression at the macro, social-structural level (e.g., racism, sexism)” (Bowleg, 2012). It operates on the assumption that the life of every individual is significantly influenced by the interaction of multiple dimensions. In the context of this thesis, intersectionality as applied as a theoretical lens postulates that the identity of individuals as being visually impaired would intersect with their positionality as being socially desirable, and also with the situatedness that they are medically unfit.

This kind of intersectionality tends a situation where employers and co-workers would perceive individuals with visual impairments as being unable to assimilate into the existing working conditions. Moreover, the study postulates that the intersection between the identity and situatedness of visually impaired persons could result in a situation where employers consider persons with visual impairments as needing constant support. Hence, raising concerns about the financial or economic consequences of employing a visually impaired person. Therefore, in contexts like Ghana where there are lapses in the enforcement of laws and conventions that protect the rights of PWDs, the visually impaired person would struggle to get employment or progress in their chosen profession after gaining employment.

Employment: The study ascribes to the International Labour Organisation’s (ILO) definition of employment. Accordingly, employment is defined as comprising “those jobs where the incumbents hold explicit (written or oral) employment contracts, which give them a basic remuneration” (Smith, 2018, p. 13). By this definition, it implies that individuals with some form of visual impairments who volunteered for activities or participated in unpaid internships would not be considered as being employed. This is based on the premise that such activities, although maybe economically inclined, do not provide a basic remuneration to the individual who has visual impairments. Hence, this study excludes visually impaired persons who are engaged in such

activities.

Job entry: For this study, job entry is conceptualised as all the activities related to the preparation for employment, job seeking process, and landing a job.

Job progression: The study operationalises the concept of job progression as the gradual development and advancement of an employee from one level to a higher level. Not only is job progression limited to moving up a level in one's career, but it also includes taking up additional responsibilities, gaining promotion and participating in employee capacity development programmes including workshops, seminars, symposiums, and continuous professional development training sessions. It also includes moving to a different sector or business and taking on new challenges.

Resource-constrained settings: In the context of this study, resource-constrained settings refer to societies, contexts or environments that lack the necessary technical, social, and economic resources to implement policies, and establish interventions to protect the rights of persons with disabilities including those with some form of visual impairments. Ghana is an example of a resource-constrained setting. This is due to the fact that despite the availability of the Persons with Disability Act, the country lacks the resources to ensure its enforcement. Thus, resulting in a situation where individual employers and organisations choose what aspects of the Disability Act to implement.

1.5 Assumptions

As a study that relied on a qualitative research design, there was a need to make some assumptions. The study assumed that the participants would provide an accurate description of their experiences with their job entry and job progression. Hence, reducing the likelihood of recall bias. The study

also assumed that the participants would be capable of providing evidence that intersects their identity as visually impaired with their positionality and situatedness in society. Another assumption for this study was that the participants would understand the interview questions and provide a candid response that is free from any form of social desirability bias and the Hawthorne effect.

1.6 Nature of the Study

A qualitative research approach was used. Specifically, phenomenology was employed as the method of inquiry. This is due to the point that the study was concerned with developing a deeper understanding of visually impaired person's transition and progression in their chosen professions. Also, the decision to use phenomenology was premised on the philosophical assumption that “individuals can know what they experience only by attending to perceptions and meanings that awaken their conscious awareness” (Donaldson, 2017, p. 8).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with visually impaired persons who were recruited through purposive and snowballing sampling techniques. The criteria to be considered eligible to participate in this study included the following: (a) the prospective participant should be gainfully employed in either a public or private source of employment; (b) the prospective participant must have been employed for at least twelve months; (c) the prospective participant should be registered and identified as a visually impaired person; (d) the prospective participant should be employed as a full-time employee for either a public or private business entity or organisation; and, (e) the prospective participant must be willing to participate in the study. This meant that the study excluded individuals with some form of visual impairments who were engaged in self-employment.

1.7 Main Findings

Using an intersectionality approach, three main findings emerged in response to the research questions. The first major findings provided insights into the preparations, processes, and challenges faced by visually impaired persons during their employment search. The study showed that the process of preparing visually impaired professionals for the workforce was complex. Therefore, depending on the field of employment, different preparation processes existed for visually challenged professionals. Those who were in search of employment in the official or formal sector of the economy needed to have the requisite higher education credentials and professional training to be recognised as qualified for employment.

However, in the case of visually impaired persons who sought jobs outside of the official economy, having a higher level of education was not always necessary. Such people primarily required some kind of vocational education or training to improve their career prospects. The results also showed that social support groups and empowerment organisations were crucial in helping individuals with visual impairments get ready for work in the informal market. The main organisations that facilitated programmes and sessions to train and equip visually impaired people with practical skills in craftsmanship, electrical work, computing, and the arts were the Ghana Blind Union (GBU) and National Vocational Training Institute (NVTI).

The findings showed that an important source of information regarding employment for visually impaired persons was advertisements. Through adverts, people with visual impairments learned important information about open positions as well as other details about how to apply for such jobs. The study also showed that recommendations gave people who are blind or visually impaired a chance to get employment. This advice was primarily provided by social networks (friends, relatives, and acquaintances), who rely on their networks to find accommodations for those with

vision impairments. The drawback of this outcome is that visually impaired people who lacked social networks would find it difficult to secure employment.

From the study, there were some psychological and social barriers to the successful integration of people with visual impairments into the workforce. Managing everyday micro-aggression, getting the job groove on, struggling with transportation, the job market being too competitive to break into, and the poor implementation of laws requiring businesses to hire people with visual impairments were some of the emerging themes. The findings suggest that waiting times for job seekers should be cut down. This may mean providing job seekers who are visually challenged with timely feedback and ongoing updates. Such rapid response is necessary to reduce the frustrations that persons with visual impairments feel while waiting for a call from an employer. In instances where there was some implementation of these legislations, it was sub-optimal. That is, there is a discord between the availability of legislation and its implementations.

Regarding job progression, the study revealed that visually impaired people's career growth followed a first-come, first-served model. This meant that the visually impaired person's progression on the job was determined by the length of time they had been employed, regardless of their job status. Therefore, regardless of the differences in academic qualifications, a visually impaired person with a master's degree who is employed concurrently with a non-disabled person with a certificate in the same area would be promoted at the same time. Due to this circumstance, people with visual impairments who had a higher educational or professional qualification than their comparably qualified peers without any sort of disabilities struggled to progress on the job.

The present study also showed that work advancement among people who are blind or visually impaired occurs not just through first-come, first-served promotions but also through the blind or

visually impaired person's participation in skill development and employee capacity programmes. The participants claimed that their company occasionally held workshops and seminars to build staff capability. It is crucial to realise that people who are blind or visually impaired should possess fundamental abilities including problem-solving abilities, professionalism, cooperation, and collaboration (Briscoe-Palmer & Mattocks, 2021). The study found that visually impaired persons gained these essential abilities for career advancement while taking part in the numerous workshops and training programmes for skill development and employee capacity.

This study was able to provide answers to the question about the kind of challenges experienced by visually impaired persons in their job progression. It is evident from the study that the job progression of visually impaired persons is fraught with many challenges. Among the emerging challenges included feelings of being under-utilised and underemployed, exclusion from managerial positions, lack of assistive devices, stereotypes and misperceptions about visually impaired professionals, transportation challenges, and lack of a disability-friendly environment. Hence, highlighting a need for the enforcement of disability laws, and compelling employers to provide the necessary assistive devices (i.e., computers, screen readers and scanners) as well as the enabling environment to facilitate the progression of visually impaired professionals in their chosen professions.

To navigate through the challenges encountered during their job entry and job progression, visually impaired persons adopted three types of coping strategies, namely: adapting to the challenges, avoiding the challenges, and confronting the challenges. People with visual impairments who used adaptive coping strategies attempted to adjust to the difficulty rather than ignoring or confronting it. Ignoring stereotypes expressed by co-workers and employers was one of the often-used adaption tactics by visually impaired people.

Also, the study suggests that some visually impaired persons adopted the strategy of addressing their problems by themselves rather than involving other people. This was based on the perception that seeking support from another person somehow gave impetus to the stereotypes and microaggression exhibited by employers and co-workers who had no impairments. In addition, persons with some form of impairments with their sight coped with challenges associated with their employment by settling for jobs that they had no interest in. Another adaptive coping strategy utilised by persons with visual impairments was ascribed to Stockholm Syndrome. That is, visually impaired professionals sometimes internalised the challenges that they experienced to the point that they begin to perceive the absence of assistive devices and other enabling factors as a norm.

Visually impaired people adapted to the difficulties they have in getting a job and moving up in their careers by serving as role models for other PWDs and visually impaired people at work. The participants blamed their difficulties on a lack of career mentorship and direction. Since they are powerless to undo what has been done, they decide to mentor other PWDs at work so that newly hired people with visual impairments or other disabilities will be able to take proactive steps to avoid running into problems. Thus, individuals with visual impairments aided in the integration of newly hired PWDs into the workplace. This kind of coping technique is considered transformative because it makes use of the skills, knowledge, and experiences that the visually impaired person who is presently employed has acquired both throughout the hiring process and while working for the organisation.

Some visually impaired professionals also adopted avoidance coping strategies. This kind of coping strategy involved any means to prevent the impaired person from experiencing the challenge in the first place. Setting strict boundaries between work and personal life was one of the avoidance coping mechanisms used by visually impaired people. The participants made clear

distinctions between their work and personal lives to avoid conflicts and foster a positive work environment that will facilitate their entry into and subsequent advancement on the job.

Additionally, the study revealed that persons with visual impairments employed the technique of abandoning their jobs to avoid any difficulties that may impede or delay their advancement in their positions. Essentially, the obstacles that visually challenged professionals confront are removed by leaving the job as a coping mechanism. It was revealed that unfavourable working conditions, such as the absence of assistive devices, help, transit allowances, inadequately built physical infrastructure, etc., had an impact on their decision to leave their previous position. Essentially, the findings suggest that avoidance coping strategies are maladaptive and less likely to eliminate the challenges that visually impaired professionals face.

Evidence from this study suggests that visually impaired persons adopt confrontational strategies to cope with the innumerable challenges that they experience in their job entry and job progression. Primarily, those who ascribed to confrontational coping strategies lodged formal complaints with the appropriate authorities and levels of management. This strategy was the most proactive coping strategy that was adopted by the study participants as it allowed them to receive the necessary support.

1.8 Theoretical Contributions

The study investigated the career path of visually impaired people in Ghana using the biopsychosocial theory and the intersectionality approach as theoretical lenses. The study primarily advances knowledge by demonstrating that the path for a visually impaired individual to get employment and advance suitably in a chosen field is a complicated process that is influenced by a variety of circumstances. Thus, changing how we currently think about how visually impaired

people enter the workforce and advance in their careers. The study contends that to produce a thorough conclusion, any study that attempts to comprehend the problems faced by visually impaired people and their career trajectories must employ a variety of lenses. By demonstrating that there is no linear approach to promote easy work entry and sustained job growth, this study adds to the body of material currently available on the professional trajectories of visually impaired people. Instead, there are just several factors that come together to help visually impaired people advance in their careers.

The study has also made a significant contribution to the use of intersectionality as a theoretical lens for examining problems that visually impaired people face in environments with limited resources. This study is the first to use intersectionality to analyse the career development of Ghana's visually impaired population. The intersectionality approach functioned as a crucial theoretical lens given the distinct sociocultural setting of Ghana. The study demonstrated the relationship between self-identification as a visually impaired person and employers' opinions of visual impairments as indicators of incompetence. It also demonstrated the expense associated with hiring people who have vision impairments. Due to this circumstance, employers were reluctant to hire people who were blind or visually handicapped. As a result, it was difficult for the blind person to find a job.

The study also showed how the identities and situatedness of individuals with impairments in their vision intersected with how they progressed in their chosen professions. The participants claimed that their co-workers and employers viewed them as being medically unfit. As a result, the resources that the visually impaired individual contributes to the advancement of the organisation were underutilised by employers and co-workers. The visually impaired person would need ongoing physical assistance from co-workers and employers to move around. As a result, they

were reluctant to involve them in conferences and workshops that support employees' career advancement. Additionally, this circumstance resulted in instances where blind individuals used unhealthy coping mechanisms, such as quitting their jobs or ignoring the issue entirely.

It was observed that the perceived situatedness of the participants and the positionality of visually impaired people as being socially undesirable overlapped. In other words, once employers and other co-workers in an organisation labelled the visually impaired person as socially undesirable and a medically unfit participant in the operations of the organisation, it elevated their reservations and aggravated their unlikeliness to be supportive of the job progression of visually impaired persons. Employers believed that the visually impaired person was unable to integrate into the routine of the workplace because positionality and situatedness intertwined. The participants' sense of underutilisation consequently intensified.

The intersectionality of positionality and situatedness yielded positive outcomes for the job entry process, and job progression of visually impaired people when there was a supportive social network to recommend them for employment and provide a supportive environment for them to work. Accordingly, the study shows that once someone identifies themselves to be visually impaired, they face the likelihood of encountering micro-aggressions and discriminatory attitudes from their employers and co-workers. However, the success of landing a job and then moving up in that profession depends on how employers and co-workers view visually impaired people, whether there are assistive devices available, whether there is a workplace that is accommodating to people with disabilities, whether there are laws and regulations in place to protect their employment rights and more.

1.9 Implications for Policy and Practice

The results from this study have some implications for policy and practice. These implications are summarised below:

- a. According to this study, employers are the biggest source of microaggression for those who are blind or visually impaired. Most often, latent stereotypical and biased ideas about the competency of people with visual impairments served as the foundation for this microaggression. Therefore, disability organisations (such as the Ghana Blind Union and the Federation of PWDs) need to work with the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE) to educate employers about their duty to provide visually impaired people with equal opportunity in the workplace in order to add to the challenge. The goal of this education and sensitization must be to increase understanding of the Disability Act of Ghana among employers and co-workers. To remove the misconceptions and assumptions that employers frequently hold about people who have some form of vision impairment, this is required.
- b. Based on the emerging findings that individuals with impairments in their vision frequently lacked the confidence to search for employment, Ghana should set up and carry out a variety of career mentoring and human resource development programmes that will encourage visually impaired people to be assertive, proactive, and willing to persevere throughout their job search and job advancement journeys. The goal of these programmes must be to help people with visual impairments grow in their sense of self-worth and self-identity. Key parties like the Ghana Blind Union and the Federation of PWDs must collaborate to design a structured mentoring curriculum that will provide possibilities for people with visual impairments for a career mentorship and development programme to

effectively achieve its goals. Programmes and interventions of that nature must offer possibilities for internships that visually impaired people can take advantage of to improve their employability skills and decrease the difficulties they face throughout the application process for jobs.

- c. Visually challenged people encountered significant transportation issues both during the job application process and once they had landed a job. Because of their transportation issues, visually challenged people were unable to keep appointments for employment interviews. The accessibility of training workshops and seminars for visually impaired people, which require them to stay late into the night, was similarly hampered by transportation issues. As a result, this study advises resource-constrained environments like Ghana to take into account remote or virtual job experience, especially after the nation started to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. To lessen the strain of commuting, employers might offer visually impaired people the option of working electronically or remotely from home. When remote working cannot be implemented, the employer is required to offer visually impaired people a safe means of mobility.
- d. The report suggests that the Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations must ensure that employers fully abide by the precepts in the Disability Act of Ghana, SDG, and the UNCRPD in light of the gaps in the implementation of disability protection laws. Additionally, the Ghanaian government must insist that all businesses and employers set aside a certain percentage of their workforce for those with visual impairments. Regular monitoring of employers and organisations is required to guarantee the enforcement of these laws. This will help find businesses that follow the law. Employers and organisations who successfully comply with the laws protecting the employment rights of people with

visual impairments may be granted some tax relief as a form of extrinsic motivation to keep up the programme. To act as a deterrence for other non-compliant employers, it is necessary to sanction companies and organisations that violate Ghana's

Disability Act.

- e. The findings from this study highlight a need for employers to provide the requisite assistive devices (i.e., computers, screen readers, brail, and scanners) that will support and facilitate the work of visually impaired professionals.
- f. This study also calls for more concentrated efforts to provide advocacy and empowerment programmes for people with visual impairments. Given that many visually handicapped research participants showed low self-confidence, this is particularly notable. These advocacy programmes must aim to increase the sense of self-worth and self-identity in those who have visual impairments. Individuals with visual impairments need to be motivated to persevere and develop fortitude.

1.10 Structure of Thesis

This thesis is structured into seven chapters. Chapter One is the introductory chapter. It provides a detailed background and situational analysis of the employment situation for visually impaired persons at the global, regional and national levels. The chapter also justifies the need for the study by clearly articulating the problem statement. A summary of the main findings, theoretical contributions, and implications for policy and practice is presented in this chapter.

Chapter two is a review of relevant literature that relates to all of the research questions. The review covers the conceptualisation of key issues such as disability and employment. Also, the chapter reviews international laws and frameworks on disability and employment. Theoretically, the medical, social, and bio-psychosocial models of disability were reviewed. In addition, the critical

theory of disability and intersectionality as a theoretical lens was reviewed. The chapter also provides an exposition on the conceptual framework.

The research methodology is presented and discussed in chapter three. This covers providing details of the research design used, the study setting, the data collection instrument, and procedures. Additionally, the chapter provides details of how the sample was recruited. The data analysis procedures are also provided in this chapter. All issues relating to ethical approval and the protection of the rights, autonomy, and confidentiality of the participants are captured within the research methodology chapter.

Chapter four is the first empirical chapter. It aims to extend our understanding of how visually impaired professionals prepare for and enter the job market. The organisation of the chapter is as follows: the first section draws insights from the participants' narratives to explain the employment pathways of individuals who have visual impairments. The second section highlights how individuals who have visual impairments gain employment. The final section presents and discusses participants' perspectives about the challenges that individuals who have visual impairments endure in their search for employment. Also, the role of intersectionality as a theoretical lens in explaining the job entry processes and challenges of visually impaired persons is explored in this chapter.

Chapter five presents empirical results to answer the second research question, which is: What are the job progression experiences and related challenges visually impaired professionals in Ghana encounter in their job progression? The chapter examines how people who have some type of visual impairment succeed in their different job assignments. This chapter is divided into two main sections. The first portion uses the personal accounts of professionals who are blind or visually

impaired to recount in vivid detail the experiences they had as they advanced in their careers. The difficulties that visually impaired professionals face as they strive to advance and progress through the ranks in their particular employment are discussed in the second section from their viewpoints.

Chapter six marks the third empirical chapter which is a response to answer the third research question. This chapter highlights the numerous coping mechanisms and adaptation techniques used by visually impaired people to overcome the never-ending obstacles they face while navigating the workplace. The emerging themes were broadly classified into three categories: adapting to the challenges, avoiding the challenges, and confronting the challenges.

Chapter Seven is the final chapter of this thesis. It begins with a restatement of the key findings that emerged from the analysis and then continues with the contribution of the study to knowledge and theory, as well as a discussion of the implications of the findings for policy, and practice. The chapter then follows with an exposition on the research limitation, direction for future research, and conclusion. Table 1.1 provides a summary of the structure of the thesis.

Table 1.1: Thesis structure

Chapter	Title	Contents
Chapter 1	Introduction	The chapter provides the contextual and conceptual background for the study, the problem statement, research questions, and a summary of the main findings, theoretical contributions, and implications of the findings for policy and practice.
Chapter 2	Literature review	This chapter reviews relevant literature related to the employment of visually impaired persons. It also reviews various theories including intersectionality as a theoretical lens.
Chapter 3	Research Methodology	Issues regarding the research design, sampling procedures, study setting, target population, data collection instrument and

procedures, data management and analyses, and ethics are discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 4	Getting a Job as a visually impaired person: preparation, processes, and Problems	The chapter expands the frontiers of the current discourse and scholarship on the job entry experiences of individuals who are blind or have some form of visual impairment. Mainly, the discussions of the findings were done around three primary themes, namely: the path to getting market ready; securing employment and the processes of entering the world of work; and job entry as a wormhole of problems.
Chapter 5	Progressing on the job as a visually impaired person: experiences and challenges	It was revealed that there were several existing barriers which included feelings of being under-utilised and underemployed, exclusion from managerial positions, lack of assistive devices, stereotypes and misperceptions about visually impaired professionals, transportation challenges, and lack of a disability-friendly environment.
Chapter 6	Coping mechanisms and adaption strategies for visually impaired persons in employment	Provides insights into how visually impaired persons manage to cope with the various challenges that they encounter regarding their job entry and subsequent job progression.
Chapter 7	Conclusion	Restatement of the key findings, the contribution of the study to knowledge and theory, implications of the findings for policy, and practice, limitation, direction for future research, and conclusion.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter critically reviews existing literature on employment and unemployment among the physically challenged focusing on the legally blind or visually impaired persons and their job entry, sustenance, and career progression in their employment area. First, the author conducted a literature search to find and review papers pertinent to this study. Second, the concept of disability/visual impairment was explored to understand themes and nuances of disability and scaled down to persons with visual impairment. Third, the chapter discussed the challenges the visually impaired face in obtaining and maintaining employment given barriers to entry, sustenance, progress on the job, and the negative perception they experience in their everyday activities in the work environment. Fourth, the chapter established the theoretical lens for understanding this study and further discussed these theories broadly and extensively. The author finally concluded this chapter by exploring relevant stakeholders' perspectives on the employment outcomes of persons with visual impairment.

2.1 Digesting the Concept of Disability

The term 'disability' is one of the most frequently used in social science, health sciences and economics. Nevertheless, its conceptualisation and definition are nuanced with complexities (McLoughlin, 2017). This is because the term in its generic form is highly subjective and could refer to any situation or condition. Notwithstanding, literature has provided some guidance as to how the concept of disability is understood and discussed in different societies and contexts.

According to Boman, Kjellberg, Danermark, and Boman (2015), the conceptualisation of disability can be looked at from three main perspectives, namely: the medical or functional conceptualisation of disability, administrative conceptualisation, and the subjective conceptualisation of disability. From the subjective conceptualisation, disability is a social construction from either the individual or the society in which the individual finds themselves. In other words, the extent to which an individual considers him or herself as disabled would constitute a subjective disability (Grönvik, 2009). This conceptualisation of disability presupposes that being categorised as disabled is a voluntary act.

The second conceptualisation of disability is the administrative definition (Boman et al., 2015). To distinguish between those who are and are not eligible for state assistance, the law frequently includes criteria of what is regarded as a disability (or handicapped 'enough') in connection to a certain benefit (Hedlund, 2004). This indicates that, according to an administrative definition, if a person receives a disability payment, they are invariably considered a person with a disability (Barron, Michailakis, & Söder, 2000). This definition of impairment varies widely not only between welfare systems but also within a single system. Because various benefits have varying qualifying conditions, there is a wide range of meanings (Mashaw & Reno, 2001). When evaluating disability reforms or benefits, administrative definitions of disability are frequently used in research.

From the functional or medical perspective, disability is a functional limitation or alteration of any part of the body of an individual (Boman et al., 2015; Grönvik, 2009). Generally, most of the accepted definitions of disability have been based on this type of conceptualisation. For instance, in the United Nations (UN) declaration of the rights of disabled people, a disabled person refers to “any person unable to ensure himself or herself, wholly or partly, the necessities of a normal

individual and/or social life, as a result of deficiency, either congenital or not, in his or her physical or mental capabilities” (UN, 1975). Likewise, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities defines having a disability to include having “long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others” (UN, 2006). Similarly, the World Health Organisation (WHO, 2011) defines disability as “the consequence of an impairment that may be physical, cognitive, mental, sensory, emotional, developmental, or some combination of these.” In the same vein, the International Disability Caucus (IDC) has also shed some light on the conceptualisation of disability and a person with a disability. This definition holds that:

A person with a disability is an individual whose ability to lead an inclusive life in the community of his/her own choice is limited by the separate or concomitant impact of physical, economic, social, and cultural environments and/or personal factors that interact with physical, sensory, psychosocial, neurological, medical, intellectual, or other conditions that may be permanent, temporary, intermittent, or imputed (IDC, 2004, p.7).

A recurring theme across the various definitions gathered indicates that defining disability from the medical or functional perspective suggests that persons with disabilities must have been confirmed to have an impairment with any of their sensory (ear, eyes, speech), physical, mental, or intellectual attributes. Another cardinal point from the various definitions is that functional disability can be a result of congenital anomalies (i.e., from birth), or acquired due to complications from diseases or accidents (GBD 2015 Chronic Respiratory Disease Collaborators, 2017; Greenaway & Dale, 2017; Vervloed, van den Broek, & van Eijden, 2020). For instance, in the case of visual impairment, evidence suggests that the leading cause of both reversible and irreversible

blindness include conditions such as cataracts (Marmamula, Khanna, Kunkunu, & Rao, 2016), glaucoma (Alghamdi, 2016), uncorrected refractive errors (Abokyi, Ilechie, Nsiah, DarkoTakyi, Abu, Osei-Akoto & Youfegan-Baanam, 2016), trachoma (Porth, Deiotte, Dunn & Bashshur, 2019), age-related macular degeneration (Chou et al., 2013), and diabetic retinopathy (Sivaprasad, Gupta, Crosby-Nwaobi & Evans, 2012).

2.1.1 Understanding visual impairment

As already indicated, disability can affect the sensory (ear, eyes, speech), physical, mental, or intellectual attributes of an individual. Hence, disabilities are categorised based on where the condition affects the individual. That is, in the situation where it affects vision or sight, the individual is categorised as being visually impaired.

According to the International Classification of Diseases (ICD) code 2006, persons with visual impairment can be categorised as either blind in one eye, blind in both eyes, having a low vision in one eye, having a low vision in both eyes or a combination of all (Dandona & Dandona, 2006). This classification has been summarised in Table 2.1. The WHO (2021) posits that the revised version of the ICD (2018) mainly classifies visual impairment based on distance vision impairment and near vision impairment. For the distance vision impairment, the impairment is classified as either mild (i.e., visual acuity worse than 6/12 to 6/18), moderate (i.e., visual acuity worse than 6/18 to 6/60), severe (i.e., visual acuity worse than 6/60 to 3/60), and blindness (i.e., visual acuity worse than 3/60).

Table 2.1: ICD classification for the level of visual impairment

ICD code	Level of visual impairment in a person
H54	Blindness and low vision
H54.0	Blindness, both eyes Visual impairment categories 3, 4, and 5 in both eyes.
H54.1	Blindness, in one eye, low vision in the other eye Visual impairment categories 3, 4, and 5 in one eye, with categories 1 or 2 in the other eye.
H54.2	Low vision, both eyes Visual impairment categories 1 or 2 in both eyes.
H54.3	Unqualified visual loss, both eyes Visual impairment category 9 in both eyes.
H54.4	Blindness, one eye Visual impairment categories 3, 4, and 5 in one eye [normal vision in the other eye].
H54.5	Low vision, one eye Visual impairment categories 1 or 2 in one eye [normal vision in another eye].
H54.6	Unqualified visual loss, one eye Visual impairment category 9 in one eye [normal vision in the other eye].
H54.7	Unspecified visual loss Visual impairment category 9 NOS.

Source: Dandona and Dandona, 2006

Estimates from the WHO (2021) indicate that approximately 2.2 billion people suffer from either near or distance vision impairment. The same report shows that nearly 50 per cent of these 2.2 billion visual impairments were preventable as uncorrected refractive errors and cataracts constituted the common cause of vision impairment and blindness worldwide. The WHO (2021) further reports that a billion people suffer moderate to severe distance vision impairment or blindness. Of this number, uncorrected refractive errors (88.4 million) and cataracts (94 million)

constituted the leading cause. The other causes of moderate to severe distance vision impairment or blindness were “glaucoma (7.7 million), corneal opacities (4.2 million), diabetic retinopathy (3.9 million), and trachoma (2 million)” (WHO, 2021). Available evidence indicates that nearly 90 per cent of all visual impairments are recorded in low-and-middle-income countries (LMICs) (Ehrlich, Stagg, Andrews, Kumagai & Musch, 2019; Pascolini & Mariotti, 2012). In 2010, blindness was predicted to be 7300 per million in the WHO Africa area, with 81.7per cent of people aged 50 or older being affected (Naidoo et al., 2014; Pascolini & Mariotti, 2012). In Ghana, a related study revealed that the prevalence of visual impairment was 19. per cent (Wiafe, Quainoo & Antwi, 2015).

2.2 Disability Issues in Ghana

Advancing research and advocacy for persons with disabilities (PWDs) in Ghana has a long history. Scholars like Avoke, Mprah, Seidu and Wiafe have been at the forefront of articulating issues related to PWDs in Ghana. Traditionally, various ethnic groups have different labels and descriptions for the different forms of PWDs. For instance, among the Akans (i.e., the dominant ethnic group in Ghana), individuals with mental or intellectual disabilities are described as “wanyin agya wo’adwen” which loosely translates as having grown without your brains or wisdom (Baffoe, 2013). On the other hand, the Gas describe persons with intellectual disabilities as “buluu” which translates as fools (Baffoe, 2013). Visually impaired persons are described in Akan as “anifra foc” which loosely translates as people who have lost their sight. Similarly, within the Akan context, physically disabled persons are referred to as “bafan” which translates as someone who came as a half rather than whole. This reinforces the assumption that disability is a social construction (Grönvik, 2009). Nevertheless, some of these labelling and descriptions are derogatory and have the potential to exacerbate self-stigma and lowered self-confidence. This can

have some ramifications on PWDs confidence to participate in socio-economic activities such as seeking a job.

Within the Ghanaian context, there are certain stereotyped and prejudiced perspectives about visual impairment and PWDs. Previous studies have revealed that traditionally in Ghana, visual impairment is regarded as a punishment for the sins of an individual or as a consequence of the sins of their parents (Odame, Opoku, Nketsias & Nanor, 2021; Opoku, Alupo, Gyamfi, Odame, Mprah, Torgbenu, & Badu, 2018). These stereotyped views and perspectives about visual impairment have a ripple effect on the educational and career progression of visually impaired persons (Odame et al., 2021; Odame, Osei-Hwedie, Nketsia, Opoku & Nanor Arthur, 2021). Consequently, successive governments have initiated different social policies, programmes, and interventions to support visually impaired persons, their social integration, self-reliance, and career prospects.

Among the key social policies and interventions developed to support visually impaired persons and PWDs, in general, include the Livelihood Empowerment against Poverty (LEAP), Disability Common Fund, Disability Act, the establishment of the Ghana Federation of Disability Organisation (GFD), and the Ghana Blind Union (GBU) (Agboga, 2015; Foli, 2015; Oduro, 2015; Opoku, Nketsia, Agyei-Okyere & Mprah, 2019; Tuggun, 2014). For instance, in 1987, the GFD was established (Seidu, 2018). The core mandate of the GFD was to mobilise PWDs, be at the forefront of advocacy for PWDs and champion the inclusion of PWDs in all spheres of development. Later in 2005, the disability common fund was instituted as a mechanism to bring about some level of financial cushion to PWDs including visually impaired persons (Sackey, 2009). About 7.5% of the total national revenue is disbursed to the various metropolitan, municipal

and district assemblies (MMDAs) for infrastructure development every quarter (Opoku et al., 2019).

Three per cent of this quarterly allocation to the MMDAs is supposed to constitute the disability common fund that is disbursed through the GFDs (Agboga, 2015; Sackey, 2009).

2.3 Understanding Employment

Employment is a cardinal indicator and bench marker to show how well a country is developed (Frumkin, 2015). High rates of unemployment signify lower economic development while a high rate of employment suggests good economic development. However, a fundamental question is about what constitutes employment. From a generic point of view, employment is a contract between an employer and an employee in which the employee agrees to provide specific services (Malcomson, 1999). In exchange, the employee receives a salary or hourly rate. Similarly, the international labour organisation (ILO) defines employment as comprising “those jobs where the incumbents hold explicit (written or oral) employment contracts, which give them a basic remuneration” (Smith, 2018, p. 13). The challenge with these definitions is that they do not consider engagement in economic activities that have no sort of remuneration. For example, the ILO’s definition of employment nullifies volunteer work and unpaid internships as employment. However, in reality, volunteer work and unpaid internships have become another medium of employment (Wilson-Forsberg & Sethi, 2015). Nevertheless, in the present study, employment is operationalised within the context of the ILO’s definition.

2.4 Employment Options for PWDs

Generally, employing the population is a major challenge confronting both high-income and high-income LMICs. For example, the United Nations (2015) reports that only 40% of PWDs aged 18 to 49 are in employment, compared to 58% of their entire group without disabilities. The same

report shows that in PWDs aged 50-59 years, only 40% are in employment whereas 61% of persons without disabilities in the same age cohort are employed. This reflects the lags that exist concerning guaranteeing employment for PWDs including persons with visual impairments.

However, in LMICs like Ghana, insufficient policy and resources exacerbate the rate and risk of unemployment. The situation is much direr among PWDs, including visually impaired persons as society holds on to stereotyped perspectives. These stereotypes include views that PWDs lack the capacity and competence to work (Hunt, Swartz, Rohleder, Carew & Hellum Braathen, 2018). The proportion of employment among persons without disabilities aged 15 years and older is 65.2 per cent as compared to 54.1 per cent among PWDs (GSS, 2013). In terms of sector contribution to employment of PWDs in Ghana, a majority (88.8%) are employed by the private informal sector while only 5.4% and 5.1% are employed by the government/public and private formal sector, respectively (see Table 2.2). Meanwhile, employment in private informal sectors has been identified to be characterised by a severe decent work deficit. This is evidenced by quality employment, inadequate social protection, poor governance, and low productivity (ILO, 2022).

Table 2.2: Distribution of Employment in Ghana by disability status

Sector	Persons with disabilities Frequency	Percentage
Government/Public	17,731	5.4
Private formal	16,769	5.1
Private informal	290,684	88.8
Semi-formal	335	0.1
Non-governmental organisations	1,584	0.5
Other international organisations	97	0.0

Source: Extracted from the Ghana Statistical Service (2013)

In the broader context, PWDs including persons living with visual impairments have two main options when it comes to employment. These employment options are self-employment, and getting employed by a second party (Smith, 2018). Self-employment is the oldest alternative for PWDs struggling with employment (Maritz & Laferriere, 2016; Pagán, 2009). It is regarded as an opportunity and panacea to the employment lags for disabled persons (Maritz & Laferriere, 2016). To some extent, self-employment can be regarded as the path to the least resistance. This is because, in such circumstances, the PWD assesses his strengths to see the particular skills that they have and how they can effectively harness them to create employment (Dotson, Richman, Abby, Thompson & Plotner, 2013). Self-employment focuses on an individual's performance working for oneself for personal benefit and revenue rather than pay gained through employment (Le, 1999). Often, self-employment by PWDs has to do with providing technical and practical skills. For example, PWDs who have relevant skills or expertise in beads making, dressmaking, or handicraft design may want to establish an employment venture for themselves.

A related study conducted in South Korea found that among a population of 915,217 economically active PWDs, 42.4% were engaged in self-employment (Lim, Yang, Kim & Kim, 2011). Pagán (2009) also revealed in a multi-country study, including 13 European Union countries, that PWDs were more likely to engage in self-employment as compared to a person without disabilities. The advantage of self-employment is that it reduces the likelihood of PWDs encountering discrimination, prejudice and other attitudinal challenges that would have otherwise been experienced had they decided to rigorously seek employment (Maritz & Laferriere, 2016). Other benefits that PWDs enjoy from self-employment are the flexibility to work and accommodation of special needs in the workplace (Gouskova, 2012; Maritz & Laferriere, 2016; Pagán-Rodríguez, 2011).

Notwithstanding the benefits of self-employment to PWDs including persons with visual impairments, it has been criticised for some of its limitations. For instance, from a socioeconomic standpoint, self-employment is restrictive because the emphasis is on producing work for one person (Parker Harris, Caldwell & Renko, 2014). Also, disabled persons who decide to venture into self-employment as a viable alternative to traditional employment seeking are bound to face certain challenges including being “subject to social stigma, low self-esteem, diminished self-determination, and long-term government assistance” (Ashley & Graf, 2018).

2.5 International Law on Disability and Employment

Over the years, there has been heightened interest in the well-being and welfare of PWDs. This section of the review discusses some notable international laws and frameworks designed to facilitate PWDs’ welfare, particularly in the area of their livelihoods and employment. Some laws, conventions and declarations tailored to PWDs include the UN Declaration on the Rights of mentally retarded persons, the UN Declaration on the Rights of disabled persons, ILO Convention No. 159, and UN CRPD (ILO, 2015).

2.5.1 United Nations Convention on the Rights of PWDs (UNCRPD)

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (A/RES/61/106) and its Optional Protocol (A/RES/61/106) were enacted on December 13, 2006. However, it was opened for signing on March 30, 2007 (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs [DESA], 2022). This Convention had 82 signatories, whereas the Optional Protocol had 44 signatories. Subsequently, the UNCRPD had one ratification. The UNCRPD can boast of being arguably the first complete and thorough human rights pact of the twenty-first century, as well as the first human rights convention accessible to signing by regional integration organisations (UN DESA, 2022).

The Convention went into effect on May 3, 2008. This Convention is the culmination of years of work by the UN to alter thoughts and behaviours toward disabled persons. It advances the movement from perceiving PWDs as "objects" of charity, medical treatment, and social protection to seeing PWDs as "subjects" who have equal rights just as persons without disabilities and being capable of enforcing these rights to facilitate lifetime decision-making (UN DESA, 2022).

In Article 3 of the convention, the guiding principles are stated. UNCRPD is primarily guided by the principles of equality of opportunity; gender equality; autonomy in decision-making; inclusivity and full participation; non-discrimination; and respect (Hendriks, 2007). Regarding disability and the rights of PWDs, the UNCRPD calls on all State Parties to recognise the nuanced and ever-changing nature and meaning of disability as a concept (Lawson, 2006). That is, disability is caused by the interplay between psychological and environmental constraints that limit PWDs from fully and effectively participating in society on an equal level with others. Additionally, this convention calls on relevant actors and parties to recognise mainstream disability issues such as employment and entrepreneurship as critical contributors to sustainable development (Chataika & McKenzie, 2016; Harpur, 2012; Koistinen, 2018).

Another core issue that was illuminated by the UNCRPD was the diversity of PWDs as well as the need to promote and protect the rights of all PWDs. Essentially, the conventions state categorically that any discrimination against a PWDs that lead to denied employment opportunities or retarded progression on the job due to their disability status is considered a complete violation of the dignity and fundamental rights of PWDs (Fraser Butlin, 2011; Mégret, 2017). This recognition as stipulated in the UNCRPD is significant to the job entry and progression of PWDs. By protecting and promoting the rights of PWDs, it implies that employers do not have to disqualify individuals

from gaining employment on the premise of their disability status. This is enshrined in Article 5 of the UNCRPD.

The issues in the UNCRPD also imply that employers are mandated to create the requisite enabling working environment that will protect the rights of disabled persons and reduce the tendency to be stigmatised or discriminated against. This could be by way of providing all assistive devices, support allowances and systems that makes the disabled person comfortable working and enjoying their fundamental freedoms (Assembly, 2006; Hendriks, 2007). For example, in Article 9 of the UNCRPD, issues of accessibility are discussed; it states that for visually impaired persons to have full accessibility to the work environment, employers are charged to provide signage in braille (Assembly, 2006). Additionally, employers are obliged to provide appropriate live assistance to PWDs including visually impaired persons; this live assistance could be in the form of guides and software to aid reading on the computer (Hendriks, 2007).

Given that the workplace environment is a social environment filled with humans who interact continuously, there are bound to be situations where PWDs in their quest to seek employment suffer some form of discrimination and violence. Recognising this limitation in the social structure, Article 16 of the UNCRPD obligates parties to remediate any acts of violence or abuse that are meted out to PWDs. Specifically, Article 16 calls on employers to provide rehabilitation and reintegration to PWDs, and this must be an atmosphere that promotes the individual's well-being, welfare, self-esteem, dignity, and freedom, as well as gender and age-specific requirements (Assembly, 2006).

Article 27 was specifically dedicated to issues concerning work and employment for PWDs including persons living with visual impairments. The UNCRPD states that State Parties must acknowledge PWDs' right and capacity to work. It further calls for legislation to:

(a) Prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability with regard to all matters concerning all forms of employment, including conditions of recruitment, hiring and employment, continuance of employment, career advancement and safe and healthy working conditions; (b) Protect the rights of persons with disabilities, on an equal basis with others, to just and favourable conditions of work, including equal opportunities and equal remuneration for work of equal value, safe and healthy working conditions, including protection from harassment, and the redress of grievances; (c) Ensure that persons with disabilities are able to exercise their labour and trade union rights on an equal basis with others; (d) Enable persons with disabilities to have effective access to general technical and vocational guidance programmes, placement services and vocational and continuing training; (e) Promote employment opportunities and career advancement for persons with disabilities in the labour market, as well as assistance in finding, obtaining, maintaining and returning to employment; (f) Promote opportunities for self-employment, entrepreneurship, the development of cooperatives and starting one's own business; (g) Employ persons with disabilities in the public sector; (h) Promote the employment of persons with disabilities in the private sector through appropriate policies and measures, which may include affirmative action programmes, incentives and other measures; (i) Ensure that reasonable accommodation is provided to persons with disabilities in the workplace; (j) Promote the acquisition by persons with disabilities of work experience in the open labour market; and, (k) Promote vocational and professional rehabilitation, job retention and

return-to-work programmes for persons with disabilities (Assembly, 2006, p. 17-18)

2.5.2 Sustainable Development Goal

Ending the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2015, the UN charted a new course of development for the next 15 years. This new course is what became known as the Agenda 2030 or the sustainable development goals. The UN and its members ratified 17 goals that are expected to inform development plans and initiatives till 2030 (Sengupta, 2018). These 17 SDGs focused on issues including eliminating poverty, eliminating hunger, ensuring good health and well-being, and promoting quality education and gender equality (Howden-Chapman, Siri, Chisholm, Chapman, Doll & Capon, 2017; Sengupta, 2018). It also includes goals and targets to propel the world towards clean water and sanitation, the use of clean and affordable energy, the creation of decent work, as well as sustainable innovations and infrastructure (Franco, Arduz & Buitrago, 2020; Úbeda, Forcadell, Aracil & Mendez, 2022). Additionally, the SDGs encompass other key areas including initiatives to have sustainable cities, promote responsible consumption, mitigate climate change, as well as the protection of marine and terrestrial life, forge stronger partnerships, and promote peace and justice (Campbell, Hansen, Rioux, Stirling & Twomlow, 2018; MacDonald, Clarke, Huang, Roseland & Seitanidi, 2018; Virto, 2018).

The issue of disability is mentioned eleven times within the SDGs, with seven goals specifically identifying PWDs as compared to the ended MDGs which had no mention of disability in any of the goals and targets (Ekblom & Thomsson, 2018). Target 5 of SDG 8 specifically focuses on employment for PWDs (Stoian, Monterroso & Current, 2019). This target seeks to “achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including people with disabilities, and equal

pay for work of equal value” by 2030 (WHO, 2019, p. 6). According to the WHO (2019) factsheet, the disability-employment gap, that is, the difference in the employment rate for disabled persons as against persons without any disability is continuously widening. Hence, the aim of the SDG 8.5 is to narrow the disability-employment gap by guaranteeing employment and decent work for PWDs.

Decent work in this context refers to a spectrum of remunerative employment opportunities, ensures both social and workplace security, entails opportunities for employees to develop their personal and work capacities, facilitates social integration, and equality and supports employees’ freedom to express their opinions and concerns (Ghai, 2003; Zammitti, Magnano & Santisi, 2021). Thus, SDG 8.5 calls on employers to employ PWDs in a non-discriminatory manner. Additionally, it calls on employers to make available the necessary assistive devices and infrastructural support that will enhance the conditions of work for PWDs. Essentially, the core issue within SDG 8.5 is that employers must provide opportunities to employ PWDs taking into account workers' rights, employment, social protection, and social dialogue (Zammitti, Magnano & Santisi, 2021).

2.6 Entry into the job market as a visually impaired person

Getting access to employment does not occur in a vacuum. It requires intensive and extensive searches and processes. The ease of the process of finding employment significantly influences the likelihood of disabled persons gaining employment. Available evidence from the literature has shown that individuals who have visual impairments often gain employment through information from advertisements or employment support services, which progresses to an interview process, recruitment, and selection process.

Advertisements and employment support services are the frequently cited sources of information on employment for individuals who have visual impairments. For instance, in a study conducted

by McLoughlin (2017) to explore the experiences of individuals who have visual impairments in Ireland, it was revealed that advertisements provided physically disabled persons with the needed information to seek employment. McLoughlin (2017) reported that the Department of social protection acted as an important employment support service centre that provided prospective candidates with information. This support service centre sometimes facilitated training sessions to increase the employability skills of individuals who have visual impairments for the job market. In the same vein, Lewis, Dobbs, and Biddle (2013) reported that in the United Kingdom (UK), the availability of employment support services such as the WORKSTEP scheme made it possible for PWDs, including visually impaired persons to easily have access to employment information and actual employment.

2.7 Factors That Facilitate PWDs Access to Employment

This section of the review is concerned with the various factors that facilitate or serve as enabling factors that influence individuals who have visual impairments' accessibility to employment and the journey after gaining employment. Some of the issues discussed include the adaption of the physical layout to meet the needs of disabled persons, protection from legal risks, flexible working arrangements, and the availability of subsidies or financial incentives to employers.

2.7.1 Adaptation of physical layout to the needs of visually impaired persons

Unquestionably, the built environment of the workplace plays a critical role in influencing the employment opportunities available to PWDs. The nature of the built environment and detail should support the development of an accessible and inclusive distributed workplace continuum (Martel, Day, Jackson & Kaushik, 2021). Subsequently, access to the physical layout of the workplace could either motivate or serve as a disincentive to disabled persons (Jahan & Holloway, 2020).

Notwithstanding, the physical layout has often been regarded as a disabling instrument in itself (Jackson, 2019). As such, it is important to adapt the physical layout of the workplace to meet the needs of individuals who have visual impairments. Primarily, these adaptations can include the following: fixing audio-visual alarm systems to support hearing and visually impaired persons; widening the doorways to enable PWDs to easily access the workplace using wheelchairs; providing easily accessible toilet facilities; relocating the position of switches and door handles to accommodate all people who cannot reach it at the current place; fixing elevators to carry individuals who have visual impairments to floor higher than the ground floor; and, replacing all steps with ramps to easily accommodate individuals with physical disabilities (Addae-Wireko, 2019; Rahim & Samad, 2010). Additionally, the relocation of the workstation of wheelchair users from the upper floors to the ground floor is significantly important in making disabled persons more comfortable to work.

2.7.2 Availability of government subsidies and financial incentives to Employers

There is evidence to show that employers are more likely to employ individuals who have visual impairments when they are assured of some government subsidies, financial incentives, and exemptions (Lama & Osimen, 2019). Often employers are of the view that employing individuals who have visual impairments come with additional financial and operational costs which they try to avoid (Jahan & Holloway, 2020; Kaye, Jans & Jones, 2011). Therefore, the availability of some relief in the form of government subsidies, financial incentives and tax exemptions serves as a motivating factor for individuals with disabilities to be employed. For example, Kaye, Jans and Jones (2011) revealed in their study that involved 463 participants that tax exemptions and government subsidies were key policy strategies that facilitate employers' likelihood to employ persons with some form of impairments.

Similarly, Lama and Osimen (2019) found that employers who recruited individuals with impairments benefited from tax benefits and easier bank services. In practicality, Ghana's Disability Act makes provision for tax emotions and benefits for organisations that employ disabled persons. For instance, the Disability Act of Ghana states categorically that, any corporate entity that employs people with disabilities, including the visually impaired, would be eligible for an annual tax rebate or other special programmes (Ansah & Owusu, 2012; Naami, 2015). Thus, indicating the significance of tax benefits and special financial incentives granted to organisations that employ individuals with disabilities, including visual impairments.

2.7.3 Flexible working arrangements

The existing working arrangement and environment is an important factor that facilitates the employment prospects of persons with impairments. There needs to be an enabling environment that supports PWDs' ability to gain employability skills necessary to increase their chances of getting a job or progressing in a job if they are already employed. This flexible working arrangement could include the availability of advisory skills training, paid leave and support systems for remediating any acts of discrimination and stigmatisation that may affect disabled persons upon their entry into the job market. For example, Maritz and Laferriere (2016) conducted a study in Australia that showed that the availability of advisory skill training enabled individuals with disabilities to better adjust to working life. With springing up in all spheres of life, coupled with the technological drive that has been associated with the outbreak of COVID-19, the adoption of remote work accessibility would significantly increase the employment opportunities of disabled people (Martel, Day, Jackson & Kaushik, 2021). Moreover, remote work options are viable to reduce discrimination and stigmatisation that is often associated with the conventional face-to-face type of work situation. In Ghana, the Disability Act requires the government to offer

work opportunities for the visually impaired as well as other individuals with disabilities (Asante & Sasu, 2015). This includes training for the visually impaired and other people with disabilities who have been out of work for at least two years. The training is meant to provide students with the knowledge and resources necessary to compete for loans or other types of capital to start their businesses.

2.7.4 Availability of Allowances and personal assistance

It is undeniable that individuals who have visual impairments face several challenges in their entry into the job market and progression on the job. These challenges include the absence of assistive technologies and aides to support individuals who have visual impairments when they are employed (Jahan & Holloway, 2020; WHO, 2015; 2018). This implies that the availability of strategies and mechanisms that makes assistive technologies and aides accessible could avert these challenges. People with impairments may experience additional daily living expenditures while working, which may impact their decision to pursue or continue working. Increased day-to-day living expenses may arise as a result of the necessity to purchase appliances, clothing, footwear, and personal assistance services (Dehghani, Khoramkish & Isfahani, 2019; ILO, 2015; Mitra, Palmer, Kim, Mont, & Groce, 2017; Palmer, Groce, Mont, Nguyen & Mitra, 2015). Therefore, it is worthwhile and effective to provide disabled individuals with some allowances in the form of transportation allowances, and allowances to support PWDs to hire personal assistants to help with some of their activities. Such allowances would support PWDs to stay committed to work. In the same vein, Lee and Sau (2013, p. 166) also revealed in their study that:

the government provide an incentive for organizations to subsidize part of the salary of a disabled person. This payment would allow time for the employer to

orient the employee to the workplace, while the new staff person would also have an extended period to adjust and ascertain the appropriate accommodations. This longer adjustment time frame is also recommended to address probation periods which are often only three months in length. Thus, a longer probation period can provide additional time for a new employee to become oriented and accommodated in the workplace.

2.7.5 Employment of PWDs as a Means of Corporate Social Responsibility

Available evidence shows that employers are more likely to employ individuals who have some form of disability when they perceive this employment as an act of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) (Csillag, Gyori & Matolay, 2018; Xu, 2021). CSR refers to activities and initiatives undertaken by organisations or corporate entities to show accountability to the society in which they operate and have a good influence over society. Previous studies have shown that effective CSR activities raise the image and reputation of PWDs (Arendt & Brettel, 2010; Bruns, 2017). For example, Miethlich and Šlahor (2018) reported in their study that employers were more likely to employ individuals with disabilities when they are certain it would contribute to a CSR activity. According to Bruns (2017), customers are attracted to brands that come off as being corporately responsible because it brings them a sense of fulfilment. When employers recruit PWDs, it paints a positive impression of the organisation. Customers and stakeholders of the business enterprise begin to see the company as one that ascribes and upholds the tenets of inclusivity and non-discrimination. Such good reputations that arise as a result of the employment of disabled persons are a significant factor that influences employers' decision to recruit individuals who have some form of impairment.

2.8 Barriers to career entry and Progression for the visually impaired

Accessing and retaining employment is a challenging endeavour for all people. However, PWDs suffer the greatest challenges. These challenges and barriers could stem from the individuals with a disability, the workplace and employer circumstances, and also from the point of policy. Therefore, this section of the review discussed the barriers that hinder visually impaired persons' access to and progression in employment.

2.8.1 Workplace or employer-related barriers

At the workplace level, there are some barriers associated with the built environment and architecture of the workplace that tends to serve as a barrier to employment opportunities for PWDs, including individuals living with visual impairments. Also, employers' prejudices, stereotypes, and misperceptions of PWDs are another significant barrier that impedes successful job entry and job progression. In addition, the perceived time and financial cost of recruiting PWDs is another important challenge that retards the job entry process and job progression prospects for PWDs. This section discussed in detail the various workplace or employer-related barriers to the job entry and progression of PWDs, with emphasis on visual impairments.

2.8.1.1 Attitudinal Barriers: prejudices, stereotypes, and misperceptions about visually impaired persons

Visually impaired persons are frequently discriminated against as a result of environmental, behavioural, social, and organisational impediments. The attitudes and prejudices of co-workers and managers are among the most important challenges that disabled persons confront while joining the labour sector (Colella & Bruyère, 2011; Vornholt, Villotti, Muschalla, Bauer, Colella, Zijlstra & Corbière, 2018). There is a preponderance of empirical studies that have investigated

the attitudinal barriers that confront visually impaired persons in accessing and retaining employment. According to Vornholt et al. (2018), attitudinal challenges often arise from preconceived stereotyped and prejudiced perspectives about disabled persons and their ability to work. Hence, individuals who perceive that a co-worker or employee with a disability would bring about increased workload and difficulties at work are most likely to have negative attitudes towards visually impaired persons, their entry into and progression in the job market (Vornholt, Uitdewilligen, & Nijhuis, 2013). This phenomenon of stereotyped perception about disabled persons is not only limited to individuals who have visual impairments with no formal or low level of education; Niehaus and Bauer (2013) have also documented that individuals who have visual impairments with university qualifications are also subjected to the stereotyped and prejudiced actions that limit their chances of getting employment or progressing in their employment should they already be in employment.

Moreover, these negative attitudes against disabled people seeking employment are further fuelled by distrust and fear about how well they can perform on the job (Vornholt et al., 2018). For example, McCary (2005) reports that employers lack confidence in the quality and extent of productivity of PWDs, hence becoming reluctant to employ disabled persons including visually impaired persons. Often, the fear is that PWDs would struggle to adapt to the work environment and pace. As such, employers are less enthused to recruit PWDs even when they are the best candidate for the job opening (Jans, Kaye & Jones, 2012; Kaye, Jans & Jones, 2011). In a study conducted among 879 employers in Chicago, America and Beijing, China using a cross-sectional design, the authors revealed that employers held onto perceptions that individuals who have visual impairments are less motivated to work and would struggle to follow instructions (Rao, Horton, Tsang, Shi & Corrigan, 2010).

Another stereotyped perception that drives employers to deny individuals who have visual impairments the opportunity of employment is what Colella and Bruyère (2011) refer to as “aesthetic anxiety”. According to Colella and Bruyère (2011), this is a type of anxiety that makes employers believe that recruiting a disabled person would make the business enterprise less attractive to customers. Closely related to the issue of stereotyped and prejudiced perceptions about individuals who have visual impairments is the level of discrimination that they endure in their quest to find employment, even within situations where they already have employment. For instance, Maina (2016) conducted a qualitative study in Nairobi, Kenya. This study showed that PWDs were underpaid and had only a handful of opportunities. Moreover, Maina’s (2016) study revealed that individuals who have visual impairments were less optimistic about their likelihood to progress in their workplace because of the label of being a disabled person. Thus, reducing employees with disabilities’ chances of getting employment.

2.8.1.2 Employers’ insufficient capacity to afford the cost associated with employing visually impaired people

Often, the cost of employing a disabled person, and in this case, a visually impaired person, is unspoken. Yet, it is one of the main reasons why employers are reluctant to employ persons with visual impairments (Jahan & Holloway, 2020; Kaye, Jans & Jones, 2011). For instance, in employing a person with visual impairment, the employer is supposed to provide the individual with live assistance which could be a guide to assist with some aspects of the disabled person’s duties. Additionally, the employer would be mandated by international and local law to provide sufficient assistive technologies such as computers and reading software which are often expensive to set up. The overall architecture of the work environment would have to be redesigned to meet the spectrum of disabled persons employed. These activities geared towards making the workplace

and working conditions appreciable to individuals who have visual impairments tend to be costly. Therefore, in an attempt to ensure cost-effectiveness in the recruitment process, employers may be reluctant to employ individuals who have visual impairments (Kaye, Jans & Jones, 2011). For instance, in the case of visually impaired persons, the employer would now have to provide all information shared among employees in braille format or a format that is readable by software. This inconvenience and associated costs tend to be a major challenge that hinders the employment prospects of individuals who have visual impairments. Beyond the cost of providing assistive technologies, and aides, and redesigning infrastructure to meet the needs of individuals who have visual impairments, evidence shows that there is significant concern about the potential financial burden that is likely to be aggravated by health insurance premiums for employees who are disabled, as well as allowances that would be useful to employees who suffer from one or more disabilities (Kaye, Jans & Jones, 2011).

2.8.1.3 Unsupportive physical environment

As stipulated in Article 16 of the UNCRPD, employers are expected to ensure that their built environment and architecture are friendly to individuals who have visual impairments. The environment is a crucial element in whether or not a job location is available to disabled persons. This may include everything from wheelchairs to ramps, elevators/lifts, and everything in between. Individuals who rely on crutches or a wheelchair would find it extremely difficult if not impossible to work in a workplace that is not on the ground floor and does not have a functional elevator (Barbareschi, Carew, Johnson, Kopi & Holloway, 2021; Jahan & Holloway, 2020).

Individuals living with visual impairments or impaired hearing may need to use assistive devices to excel at work. Closed subtitles for training films and larger text sizes for persons with visual impairments are also included. If work necessitates the use of cell phones and computers, it must

be tailored to encapsulate employees with these requirements (Jahan & Holloway, 2020). However, this is not the case in most situations. According to Gida and Ortlepp (2007), issues such as the inadequacy of parking facilities, inaccessibility to public transportation, and buildings impede individuals who have visual impairments' involvement in the formal job market. In certain circumstances, employers are unaware of the peculiar needs of individuals who have visual impairments. As a result, people with impairments are not inspired to work in the formal sectors of the economy (Jahan & Holloway, 2020).

2.8.1.4 The glass ceiling research

The glass ceiling is described as a transparent barrier preventing persons who are qualified for a job from realising their full potential and enjoying the full benefits of their education and training. It also prevents persons(employees) from providing their families with a better standard of living and being able to contribute their talents and skills fully. The glass ceiling is a transport barrier that impedes qualified workers from realising their full potential as employees on the job in terms of enjoying the full benefits of their effort and (educational) training, from contributing their skills and talents fully on the job as well as providing better living standards for their families (Braddock & Bachelder, 1994). A glass ceiling is, therefore, a metaphor used to describe an invisible barrier preventing especially women and minorities in the workplace from rising beyond a particular level in the hierarchy (Wiley, 2012). This concept (the glass ceiling) demonstrates the underrepresentation of certain categories of people which includes persons with disability the visually impaired form part of, women. and minorities in the labour market (U.S. Department of Labour, 1991). The glass ceiling is generally described as an unacknowledged impediment to the advancement and progress in a profession, which normally affects women and members of minority

groups, of which persons with visual impairment are a part, at the workplace (Braddock & Bachelder, 1994).

2.8.2 Barriers emanating from individuals who have visual impairments

The concomitant barriers associated with the job entry process and job progression of PWDs do not end at the employer or workplace dynamics. The individuals who suffer from visual impairment share in the problem confronting the larger population. In this section, the barriers that emanate from individual disabled persons are discussed in detail.

2.8.2.1 Self-stigmatisation and Lack of Confidence

Self-stigmatisation is another challenge that confronts individuals with some form of impairment. A wealth of previous studies has established that throughout the life of disabled persons, they experience and endure series of discrimination, prejudice, and stereotyped attitudes from other people (Chhabra, 2021; Low, Cao, De Vos & Hickman, 2020; Schwartz, Blue, McDonald, Giuliani, Weber, Seirup & Perkins, 2010; Vornholt et al., 2018). From the perspective of Chhabra (2021), these discriminatory attitudes against PWDs are so bad that these individuals have to turn a blind eye to employers' discriminatory actions. In doing so, the individuals begin to internalise the discrimination and start to self-stigmatise.

Self-stigmatisation in the context of this study refers to a situation where a cohort (i.e., disabled persons) who are constantly stigmatised and discriminated against begin to accept the negative perceptions and stereotyped attitudes against them (Corrigan, Rafacz, & Rüsçh, 2011). Self-stigmatisation is not an event but rather a process; a process that is associated with significantly diminished self-esteem, confidence and reduced perceived self-efficacy (Vass, 2016; Wood, Byrne, Burke, Enache & Morrison, 2017). Self-stigma is a serious problem as it prevents people

from participating fully in different parts of their life. Owing to the significantly diminished level of confidence and self-esteem, many people with impairments would not attempt to find employment (Jahan & Holloway, 2020).

Currently, securing employment hinges substantially on the social network and net worth of an individual. That is, one's level of social inclusion and participation in social activity is a key factor to determine the employment prospects of individuals who have visual impairments (Jahan & Holloway, 2020). Yet, many people who have some form of impairment, including visual impairments tend to lead a socially isolated life due to the internalised stigma (Jahan & Holloway, 2020; Salleh & Zainal, 2010). This disconnectedness and social isolation limit individuals who have visual impairments access to social networks like collaborators, acquaintances and a pool of friends who can potentially assist with finding employment (Monah, 2018).

Beyond the issue of social isolation and self-stigma, individuals with visual impairments also lack confidence in the recruitment process. For some persons with impairments, their prior experience with employers and the general rhetoric in society about visually impaired persons tends to reduce the confidence of disabled people in the recruitment process (Jahan & Holloway, 2020). For many individuals who have visual impairments, the perception is that employers will be biased and discriminatory in their recruitment process irrespective of how well their resume communicates their skills and experience. This lack of confidence could also be fuelled by the perception that employers will be reluctant to adjust the infrastructural and built environment of the workplace. In effect, individuals with visual impairments are likely to refrain from seeking employment for the fear that they may be perceived as incompetent and lacking commitment to work when in actuality, the necessary adjustments have not been made to support visually impaired persons' entry to work (O'Mahony, 2017).

2.8.2.2 Lack of Skills and Education for the Job

Without the right skills and educational or technical qualifications, it is difficult to secure employment. Thus, a mismatch between one's skills and what is expected for the industry can result in an individual becoming unemployed in the long term. According to Jahan and Holloway (2020), PWDs often lack access to formal education; and those who can receive a formal education, usually lack access to higher education. This situation pitches disabled persons at the lowest point of the employability spectrum, thereby becoming significantly unattractive for employers to consider for employment or placement in a firm. For instance, Bean-Mellinger (2019) posits that people who identify with one or more disabilities graduate from high school at a lower rate than those without impairments.

Essentially, perceptions about disability and people with impairments are not the only reason for the high unemployment among individuals who are blind and limited to job chances; the apparent lack of competitive employable skills leads to employers discriminating against people living with some form of impairments within the labour market (Jahan & Holloway, 2020). Jahan and Holloway (2020) further argue that among disabled persons, the opportunity to have access to higher education, skills training and capacity building necessary to raise the employability rate varies substantially based on the nature of the disability. That is, it matters whether the disability was through congenital means (thus, from birth), or was later acquired in life. And for those that were acquired later in life, their likelihood of gaining the requisite education and skills for employment was dependent on the age during which they became impaired. According to Jahan and Holloway (2020), individuals who were born with disabilities were more likely to receive education and training that makes them competitive for employment. A plausible explanation for this could be that parents can accept the condition of their child and are more likely to enrol the

individual in a special or inclusive school to develop their knowledge and skills for a job in the future. Moreover, at an early age of development, it is much easier for individuals with visual impairments to learn to work as efficiently as persons without any form of impairments. However, for individuals who acquire their disability later in life, particularly during adulthood, it becomes extremely difficult for them to assimilate to their new status quo, come to acceptance and change their skills to fit their new status as a disabled person.

2.8.3 Policy and wider context barriers

At the policy and broader socio-cultural context, certain factors act as barriers to visually impaired persons, and other PWDs' entry into and progression of the job. In this section, the review discusses some of these policies and wider contextual barriers.

2.8.3.1 Poor Implementation of Laws and PWD employment frameworks

Policies, guidelines, conventions, and frameworks are an inalienable and ubiquitous component of safeguarding decent work for individuals who have visual impairments. The existence of policies in itself is a way of providing guidance and standardisation of how individuals who have visual impairments should be treated when it comes to employment issues. The UNCRPD, SDG 8.5, and the Disability Act of Ghana (2006) are a few of these policies, conventions and frameworks that have been used over time to promote decent and sustainable work to disabled persons. However, the availability of these laws and regulations is not an end in itself. The effectiveness of the implementation of these policies and frameworks is critical.

In a study conducted in Ghana (Attipoe, 2017), the author found that the inaccessibility of the Disability Act was a major challenge to the employment prospects and journey of disabled persons. According to Attipoe (2017), there were reports of the absence of legislation to operationalise the

provisions made in the Ghana Disability Act. This situation led employers to partly or not implement the provisions of the Disability Act, thereby resulting in reduced employment entry and progression for persons with some form of impairments. Similarly, a multi-country study in Kenya revealed that poor implementation of the existing disability employment laws resulted in employers' non-compliance with the quota system designed to ensure an equitable distribution of PWDs across all sectors of the economy (Wickenden, Thompson, Mader, Brown & Rohwerder, 2020)

2.8.3.2 Lack of assistive technologies

In Articles 4, 20, and 32 of the UNCRPD, Member States are obliged to address the challenges associated with PWDs through investments in assistive devices or technologies (Assembly, 2006; Hendriks, 2007; WHO, 2015). Assistive technologies, in the generic meaning of the word, describe any device that eases the mobility and functioning of persons with impairment, with the key tenet being that it must be disability-specific and appropriate. However, it is important to have a standardised definition or conceptualisation of assistive technologies to facilitate the current discussion in this review. Hence, the WHO's definition and components of assistive technology are used. According to the WHO global disability plan that ended in 2021:

Assistive technologies are evolving quickly and include any item, piece of equipment or product, whether it is acquired commercially, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of individuals with a disability. Assistive technologies include low-vision devices, hearing aids, augmentative and alternative communication, walking frames, wheelchairs, and prostheses such as artificial legs. The field also covers information and communications technologies such as computers, screen-reading

software, and customized telephones. Assistive technologies play a significant role in enabling people with disability to function and participate. (WHO, 2015, p. 14).

The implication of this definition by the WHO is that assistive technologies are aimed to improve the overall functioning capacities of a disabled person. It also implies that for a device or product to be considered an assistive technology, it must be specific to a particular disability. That is, there is no one-size-fits-all when it comes to assistive technologies. Many assistive devices have been created for the individual who has a visual impairment. These methods support their ability to learn, interact with others, obtain information, work, and generally improve their quality of life. For instance, there is a computer for the blind with screen readers, a braille reader, and a computer-assisted phone system with switchgear (Yeh & Yang, 2014). Visually impaired persons would require braille, computers, and software to support reading. They might also require rails along the stairs to guide them as they walk around the workplace. However, a hearing-impaired individual would require a hearing aid, while a physically disabled person may require the services of an elevator and the presence of ramps and wheelchairs.

Irrespective of the importance of assistive technologies in improving the functioning of PWDs and their employability, it remains a major challenge. Estimates from the WHO (2018) indicate that there are about a billion people in need of one or more assistive devices, yet only 1 in 10 people have access to such technologies. The same report estimates that if the current rate persists, then the need for assistive technologies will exceed more than 2 billion by 2030 (WHO, 2018). Concerning disabled persons, evidence suggests that employers in most situations do not provide the necessary assistive technology to assist PWDs. For example, in a study by Copley and Ziviani (2004), insufficient funding was a major reason for not providing individuals with an impairment the requisite assistive technologies. Jahan and Holloway (2020) have also argued that the lack of

assistive technology provision to PWDs is due to employers' low awareness and knowledge about the available assistive technology alternatives. Hence, employers are frightened by the idea that they have to conduct a complete overhaul of their workplace to accommodate PWDs. This can be a serious disincentive for employers to accept disabled persons (WHO, 2018).

2.8.3.3 Global Shocks and Pandemics

Global shocks and pandemics trying times for all employers, with employees being at a disadvantage. Crisis periods such as the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, threaten the employment prospects of individuals who live with some form of disability (Wong, Ezeife, Kudla, Crown, Trierweiler, Capraro, & Heinemann, 2022). A report from the Bureau of Labour Statistics (2021) and the Office of Disability Employment Policy (2021) indicates that at the beginning of 2020, the unemployment rate for PWDs was 7.8%; however, this rose to 12.6% at the end of the same year. This finding may be explained by the high rate of social isolation, diminished quality of life, and disruption in everyday activities among PWDs as compared to individuals without disabilities during the period of COVID-19 (Epstein, Campanile, Cerilli, Gajwani, Varadaraj & Swenor, 2021). This, suggests that in periods of crisis and pandemics, disabled persons are most likely to lose their job or find it difficult to get employment.

2.9 Theories on Disability/visual impairment

Individuals' attitudes regarding persons who have some form of impairment influence how they think about and act about individuals with visual impairments. Attitudes influence how individuals with visual impairments are treated and how they engage in society. The views that handicapped persons encounter eventually influence how they interact with others in society (Attipoe, 2017). To better understand the employment dynamics among individuals with visual impairments,

researchers have based on theoretical models to support the discourse. Some of the models used include the medical, social, economic, and bio-psychosocial models of disability (Dantas, Correa, Buchalla, Castro & Castaneda, 2020; Hogan, 2019; Petasis, 2019; Shakespeare, Watson & Alghaib, 2017). Deeper comprehension and appreciation of these theoretical models of disability are critical for developing good attitudes in society and better-appreciating people with impairments.

2.9.1 Medical Model of Disability

This model of disability is also known as the individual model of disability. It is primarily concerned with the individual's medical state and links impairment to the individual. Specifically, within the perspective of the medical model, disability refers to a circumstance for which there is a loss or an anomaly of anatomy and physiology (Attipoe, 2017). The medical model considered that persons with impairments may be helped to transcend their limits by medical therapy or solution. However, the challenge with this model is that it led to the medicalisation of disability. That is a situation where individuals with visual impairments are considered sick people who require medical attention. This situation led to a passive relationship between individuals with visual impairments and significant others like health care professionals.

Although the medical model provides some justifications about the medical origins of disability, it does more harm than good. This is in the sense that, the medical model of disability reinforces stigma and discrimination against persons with some form of impairments. As stated early on in this section, the medical model creates an impression that disability is a sickness that needs a cure. Hence, many individuals with visual impairments tend to have low self-esteem and diminished confidence which makes them susceptible to more discrimination and stigmatisation.

2.9.2 Social Model of Disability

The social model originated from the philosophical and political ideas of the Union of Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS, 1976), which stated that individuals are impaired not by their disabilities but by the debilitating and crippling restrictions they experience in society (Oliver, 2013; UPIAS, 1976). Principally, the social model was a reaction to the "medicalisation of disability" and its detrimental impact on the self-identity, self-esteem, and confidence of many people with some form of impairments, as well as the negative attitudes fostered by the charity and medical models. Unlike the medical model which portrays disability as a sickness and a problem with the individual, the social model rather carries disability as a problem with society. That is, it is a matter of social construction that revolves around attitudinal and social barriers (Attipoe, 2017). This model presents disability as an outcome of harassment, prejudice, and discrimination by society against persons with impairments. Thus, it places disability outside the scope of the individual and places much responsibility on the larger social structure and systems within which the individual resides (Attipoe, 2017).

Seidu (2018, p. 40) argues that within the social model of disability, "it is the society which constructs economic, social, health, architectural, legal, cultural and other barriers to deliberately prevent people with visual impairments from enjoying full benefits of social life".

This implies that it is the external factors around the individual that affects disabled persons and their progression in school, health, work, and in life in general (Groce, London & Stein, 2014). As such, within the social model of disability, impairments are at the individual level, but disability is the end product of failed social structures and systems (Seidu, 2018; Shakespeare, 2008; Shakespeare, 2013).

The social model is premised on three main constructs. These are that: the main problems faced by disabled persons are a matter of attitudes and social structure rather than functional limitations; every aspect of the social system is guided by public policy; and public policies often reflect the current public attitudes and values (Stein & Stein, 2006).

The main strength of this theoretical perspective is the fact that it opens up the discussion of disability away from the individual to make society the central theme of focus in the discourse of disability and their activities. This perspective by the social model makes room for social and behavioural change initiatives to be implemented. Unlike the medical model which limits the discussion to the individual who needs treatment, the social model creates the impression that the challenges associated with disabled people and their daily activities can be effectively remediated through attitudinal change. For instance, adjusting the built environment to include rails, ramps, elevators, and assistive technologies could substantially reduce the challenges that people with impairments struggle with daily (Addae-Wireko, 2019; Rahim & Samad, 2010). Moreover, the social model of disability reinforces the fact that disability issues are a matter of human rights and should be approached in that manner (Seidu, 2018). Also, the social model has proven to be an effective model that has a positive impact on the self-esteem, confidence and perceived self-efficacy of individuals who live with visual impairment (Shakespeare, 2008).

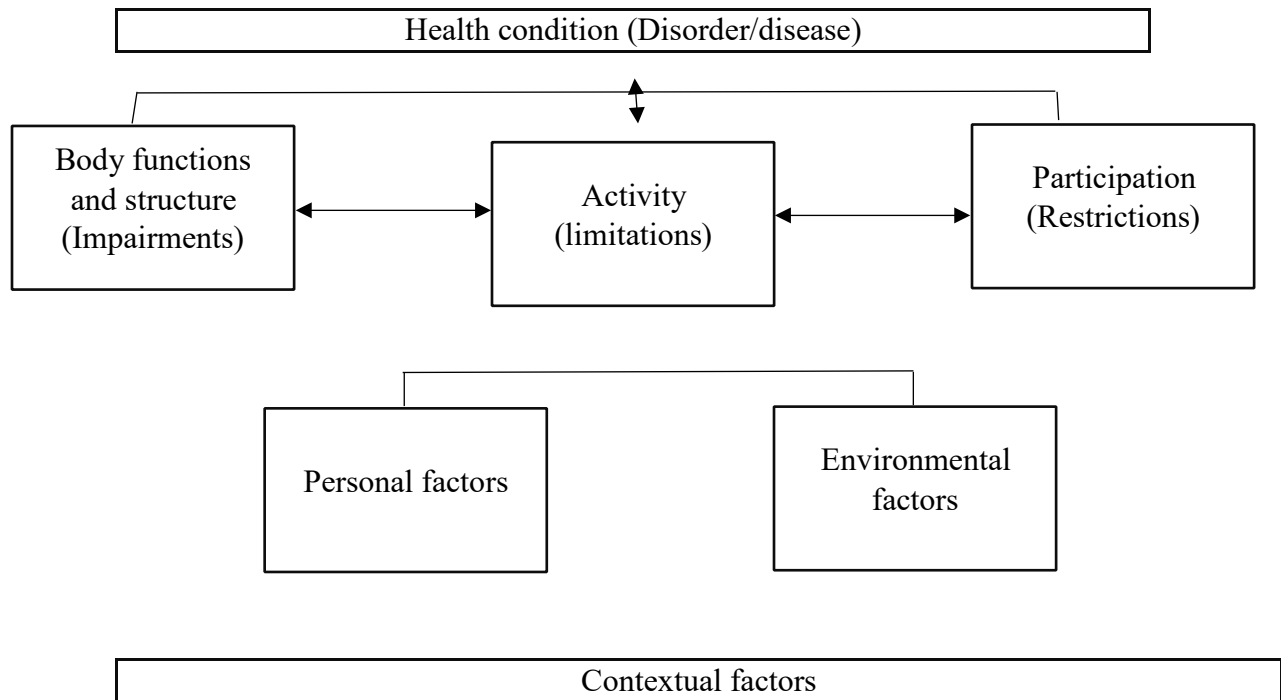
Although the social model has been instrumental in shaping perspectives about disability and the issues confronting visually impaired persons, it has some inherent limitations. The most obvious limitation of this model is the fact that it takes away the individual with a disability away from the equation. In the spirit of the model, societal attitudes, norms, and social construction are supposed to be blamed for the discrimination, stigma, prejudice, and difficulties that disabled people face in all aspects of their life including their employment search. This, in reality, may not be the case.

The disabled person is part of the problem and a critical component of the solution. Hence, the assumption that society is to be blamed for all the issues associated with individuals with visual impairment remains the most significant limitation of the social model.

2.9.3 Bio-psychosocial Model of Disability

Another theoretical model that has been used over the years to explain issues confronting PWDs and their challenges in daily living including, in terms of their employment, is the bio-psychosocial model (BPM). The BPM emerged in response to the medical and social models that had already centred on the individual and society, respectively (Seidu, 2018). This model indicates that medical and social models were both valid yet insufficient to explain the issues confronting PWDs. Therefore, the BPM merged both the social and medical models. However, the model made some additions to the previous models. In this case, the BPM posits that challenges associated with disability and individuals with visual impairments are a result of a culmination of individual, social, environmental, and biological issues (Mitra & Sambamoorthi, 2006). The main strength of this model is its multi-dimensionality. The BPM is shown in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1: The bio-psychological model



Source: WHO, 2011

2.9.4 The Critical Disability Theory

The Critical Disability Theory (CDT) according to Hoskings (2008), is a fast-growing theoretical framework which focuses on the analysis and study of issues concerning persons with disabilities. The Critical Disability Theory (CDT) argues that ‘disability is not fundamentally a question of medicine or health, nor is it just an issue of sensitivity and compassion; rather, it is a question of politics and power (lessness), power over, and power to’ (Devlin & Pothier, 2006, p. 2). Proponents of this theory explain that bodily impairment does not define disability; instead, it is determined by established social norms that result in social and economic categorisation (Berghs et al., 2016). Thus, the CDT theory tends to shift disability conversations from the realist perspective to a constructivist one that embodies how biological and psychological interactions of persons with disabilities reflect on their social world (Priestley, 1998). In the context of visual impairment, CDT

has been influential in changing discourses on vision limitations and its supposed effect on role performance (Siebers, 2013). Therefore, this suggests that a restriction on the participation of a visually impaired person in the labour front is an expression of a weak system or institution and not necessarily a manifestation of bodily impairment.

The CDT is credited for its ability to question pervasive assumptions on bodily impairments and participation. It is highly compatible with the approaches of neoliberals in defining ‘able-bodied’ in economic emancipation (McRuer, 2006). The CDT has provided practicalities in health and economic approaches. As Berghs et al. (2016) rightly put it, CDT affords an understanding of power nuances and embodiment fluidity to deconstruct disability and function. Albeit its critical perspective and practicality, the opponents of the CDT have criticised it for its inability to significantly influence policy changes, especially in the labour market (Vehmas & Watson, 2014).

Additionally, Vehmas and Watson (2014) posit that the CDT theory is widespread; thus, it does not deliver markers for specific disabilities. As such, it is challenging to provide theoretically informed and relevant disability-specific interventions to ensure paradigm shifts in dialogues on disability and employment. Despite ableism being central to the CDT concept, it still has tendencies of leaving ‘waste-ground devoid of meaning’ (Gillies, 2014). The CDT theory is further criticised for its lack of flexibility in involving disability studies because it assumes that such studies are more tied to the medical model of disability and not the social model, which is the core tenet of CDT (Meekosha & Shuttleworth, 2009). This seeming rigidity of the CDT theory to disability studies questions its ability to comprehensively rewrite the script for persons with disability (Linton, 1998).

In the broader perspective, Devlin and Pothier (2005) mention that disability has traditionally been perceived as an individual’s bad luck or misfortune which could preferably be prevented and most

definitely be cured, privileges being ‘normalcy’ over being ‘abnormal’ as it were, presumes able-bodied norms are inevitable, and values economic productivity as an essential aspect of personhood.

Initially proposed by Max Horkheimer in 1937, the CDT now includes a range of normative as well as descriptive fundamentals for social inquiry which is mainly aimed at maximising human freedom and bringing an end to the domination of certain groups by others who are defined by their standing in society such as their power, class, race or by extension, another social construct. Critical theory is mainly purposed to explain oppression and to transform society with the aim of human emancipation. Therefore, regardless of all the variations in the critical theory tradition, any critical theory deemed adequate must be normative, practical as well as exploratory, all at once. Berghs et al. (2016) explain that critical theory must be able to identify and explain if there is anything wrong with current social reality, identify the actors to change it and finally provide both achievable practical goals for its social transformation and clear norms for criticism. CDT, which is part of, and a member of the critical theory family is, therefore, a theoretical approach to the disability concept which tends to be simultaneously explanatory, practical, and normative.

2.10 Intersectionality as a theoretical lens to Understanding the Careers of the visually impaired

The concept of "intersectionality" was first postulated to explain the numerous forms of discrimination faced by African-American women, who were more susceptible to rape and domestic abuse (Crenshaw, 1991; Xiong & Lui, 2021). According to Bowleg (2012), intersectionality is “a theoretical framework that posits that multiple social categories (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status) intersect at the micro-level of

individual experience to reflect multiple interlocking systems of privilege and oppression at the macro, social-structural level (e.g., racism, sexism)”.

Intersectionality offers a perspective through which to view people's numerous identities (such as race, gender, sexual orientation, class, migration status, religious affiliation, and disability status), as well as how these identities interact to shape experiences in particular circumstances such as the context of job entry and job progression (Haegele, Yessick & Zhu, 2018; Moodley & Graham, 2015). According to the concept of intersectionality, various forms of oppression interact with one another and are mutually constitutive as they reinforce, increase, or complicate one another in particular ways, resulting in the emergence of completely new and complicated power relations (Haegele et al., 2018; Moodley & Graham, 2015; Xiong & Lui, 2021). Essentially, intersectionality embodies the notion that an individual's life is influenced by the interaction of multiple dimensions.

Evidence exists to support the idea that an intersectional approach might produce new information that better directs policy to reduce inequality across several social inequality dimensions (Olofsson, Zinn, Griffin, Nygren, Cebulla & Hannah-Moffat, 2014; Weber & Parra-Medina, 2003). This model serves as a prism through which identity concerns and their concomitant association with power can be framed. Given that it incorporates elements of several theories, including the ecological model, intersectionality is best understood as a theoretical framework (Levine & Breshears, 2019). All in all, it is imperative to understand the assumptions of intersectionality as a theoretical lens. According to Collins (2015, p. 14), the main assumptions that drive the intersectionality lens include that “(a) identities are best understood together rather than in isolation; (b) identity categories are shaped by interlocking systems of power; (c) these interlocking systems organize society and undergird material and experiential realities; (d) social

inequalities differ based on time and cultures; (e) social locations of individuals lead to unique perspectives on their and others' locations within social inequalities; (f) social inequalities are inherently unjust and inequitable". These assumptions provide a lens through which issues relating to visual impairments can be assessed.

Conventionally, intersectionality has been applied in feminism (Crenshaw, 1991). However, over the years, intersectionality has gained momentum and has been applied as a theoretical lens in other essential areas. For instance, Fielden and Davidson (2012) have applied this as a theoretical lens to understand discrimination and social support for Black, Asian, and minority ethnic females. Adeoti, Sarpong and Mordi (2022) have recently applied intersectionality to understand migrants' transition out of military service into civilian work. Similarly, Heard, et al. (2020) have also used this theoretical lens to explore aspects of health promotion. Thus, suggesting that the application of intersectionality is unending and dynamic. Other studies have also applied this theoretical lens to understand social protection, poverty and discrimination against PWDs (Saxe, 2017; Schneider, Mokomane & Graham, 2016). However, there is yet to be a study in Ghana that explores visually impaired persons' experiences with job search and progression from an intersectional lens.

2.10.1 Towards an intersectional understanding of the Careers of the visually impaired in the Context of weak institutions

In applying intersectionality as a theoretical lens to understand the career progression of visually impaired persons, it is imperative to contextual three major constructs, namely: identity, positionality and situatedness (McCall, Grabham, Cooper, Krishnadas & Herman, 2008). These three constructs intersect to shape the experiences and progress of visually impaired persons on the job. Thus, the argument is that the search for employment, job progression and retention is highly complicated and complex for visually impaired persons compared to people without any

form of disabilities. In essence, using intersectionality as a theoretical lens brings to the fore how the identity of visually impaired persons as being disabled, interacts with the socially constructed positions that are assigned to them and their situatedness as being medically unfit (see Figure 2.2).

Visually impaired persons are identified as disabled persons. This identity has varied interpretations in different socio-cultural contexts. However, in resource-constrained or weak institutional settings such as Ghana, the prevailing cultural identity ascribed to visually impaired persons is that they are disabled – meaning that they are unable to do anything in society. Traditionally, the Akans who constitute the dominant ethnic group refer to describe visual impairment as “3dem” which loosely translates as spoilt or not fit for purpose (Baffoe, 2013). Similarly, Moasun and Mfoa-M’Carthy (2021) have reported that some Akan proverbs about the identity of persons with disabilities exacerbate already existing inequalities and create an enabling environment for discrimination against visually impaired persons to thrive. This identity of being visually impaired can perpetuate self-stigmatisation which can be detrimental to the grit, perseverance and volition of the individual to search for a job or cope with challenges that they encounter in the job search and progression processes. Thus, highlighting the quintessential role of identity in the intersectionality discourse about individuals who have some sort of visual impairment.

The second aspect of the intersectionality discourse in the context of underdeveloped institutions is the issue of positionality. According to Sorrels (2013), “different experiences, understanding, and knowledge of oneself and the world are gained, accessed, and produced based on one’s positionality”. The term "positionality" describes how societal access and identity are shaped by variations in social power and position. Misawa (2010) argues that all aspects of our identities are moulded by the roles and affiliations we hold within society. This implies that an individual’s

identity as a visually impaired person is significantly influenced by socially constructed positions that are “embedded in our society as a system” (Misawa, 2010, p.26). In underdeveloped institutional contexts like Ghana, the prevailing social construction is that visual impairment is a punishment for the sins of an individual or as a consequence of the sins of their parents (Odame et al., 2021; Opoku et al., 2018). Consequently, visually impaired persons are positioned as social undesirables who are not “fit for purpose”. As shown in Figure 2.2, this position of visually impaired persons as social undesirables intersects with their identity as disabled persons to create a disabling environment to properly cope with the rudiments at the workplace. For instance, the perpetual positionality of visually impaired persons as socially undesirable beings intersects with an individual’s identity by reducing their assertiveness, perseverance and ability to go beyond the hurdles of perilous working conditions. The positionality created through social construction has the potential to be a disincentive for employers to be receptive towards the idea of employing visually impaired persons.

The final component of the intersectionality framework is the issue of situatedness (McCall et al., 2008). Situatedness alludes to the idea that individual experiences (i.e., historical, cultural, familial, and interpersonal) have a significant impact on how we perceive and respond to the outer environment (Laird, 2019). As depicted in the framework shown in Figure 2.2, the situatedness of visually impaired persons is that they are considered to be medically unfit. This sort of situatedness has the potential to intersect with the positionality of visually impaired persons (i.e., being socially undesirables). Consequently, their confidence and perceived self-efficacy are likely to be adversely impacted. In effect, this would potentially exacerbate their inability to adjust to the prevailing work conditions and organisational culture that often encourages ableism. Also, it is imperative to note that the identity as a visually impaired person intersects with situatedness to result in situations

where the individuals may not be able to gain employment or be unable to progress in their jobs because they lack the requisite resources to assist their career development. The situatedness as being medically unfit could force visually impaired persons to perform non-disclosure of their disability status during their application for jobs (Odame et al., 2021). This can have a significant effect on their likelihood to gain employment, and in situations where they gain employment, it would be difficult for them to progress because of the non-disclosure of their status.

It is important to understand that the intersectionality between identity, positionality and situatedness does not occur in a vacuum. The contextual issues in underdeveloped institutions and settings like gather further exacerbate the adversity of the three components of intersectionality. The intersectionality between class and disability, for instance, provides insights into the diversity of challenges that individuals with visual impairments face (Gillborn, 2015). For example, visually impaired persons who belong to low socioeconomic status are more likely to lack access to quality education and skills needed to enhance their employment prospects (Aro et al., 2019). Consequently, the effect of their poor economic status coupled with their disability status makes it difficult for them to secure a job. The intersectionality between socioeconomic status and visual impairment also suggests that visually impaired people from poor economic status may struggle to afford assistive devices and technologies to facilitate their work (Eide & Øderud, 2009). This is due to the high cost of assistive technologies and devices (Cote, 2021). Hence, disabled people faced with the double burden of poverty and disability are at higher risk of stagnation and have a lower likelihood of progressing on the job. This high likelihood of stagnation is more likely to occur in situations where institutional factors are weak. For instance, employers and firms that have no arrangements to provide the necessary assistive devices and technology for visually

impaired professionals indirectly create conditions for stereotypic assumptions and discrimination against people based on their disability status to thrive.

Similarly, the intersection of gender and disability plays a critical role in the job entry and job progression of visually impaired persons. Depending on the social context that the visually impaired person is located, their gender could expose them to greater threats, or be a protective factor that will facilitate their employment prospects. For example, in societies where gender norms and value system favours males, it is unlikely for the family or larger society to invest in disabled females. In effect, females who are disabled become disproportionately disadvantaged compared to disabled males (Shifrer, 2018; Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 2001). Given the importance of the intersection of gender and disability, Davaki et al. (2013, p.11) state that, an “intersectional approach in the context of employment would look into ways in which different positions in terms of gender and disability create conditions of differential access to resources”.

From an intersectional viewpoint, ableism has significant implications for the employment of persons with disabilities including visually impaired people. Ableism is a form of prejudice, stereotype or discrimination against people who have some form of disability (Bogart & Dunn, 2019). Ableism operates under the presumption that individuals who are impaired can perform daily functioning (Lindsay et al., 2022). Such intersection is manifested in the design of the workplace and public infrastructure that has total disregard for the needs of individuals with disabilities, rigid table and counter heights, inoperable transportation systems, and segregated education (Thompson, 2014).

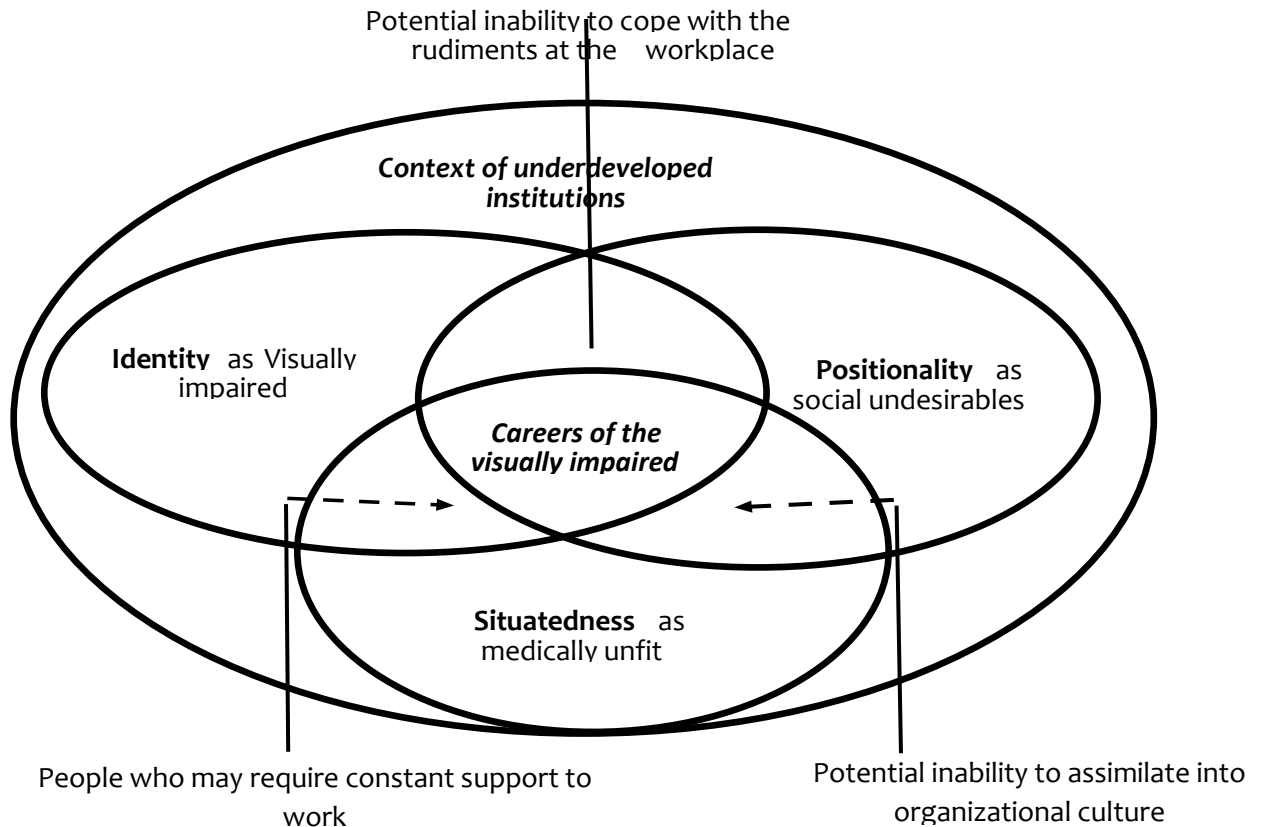
Another key element of intersectionality is power. In this context, power can be viewed from two streams: power over others, and power as working with other people (Hankivsky, 2022). This principle can be abused where visually impaired persons who lack power would be exposed to

discrimination and oppression by their employers and co-workers who have much power (Dick Mosher, 2015). This creates an uneven and unsupportive environment to advance the employability and job progression of disabled people including visually impaired persons. The job entry and job progression of a visually impaired person are grounded in its intersectionality with other factors.

Beyond the contextual issues of class, economic status, educational attainment, ableism, and power, the availability and implementation of disability policies play a critical role in how positionality, identity and situatedness intersect to explain the career experiences of visually impaired persons in underdeveloped settings like Ghana. In Ghana, there is the Disability Act which is a legally binding policy or framework that calls on employers and all persons to desist from discriminating against visually impaired persons; the Act also calls for employers to provide the needed assistive devices, technology and infrastructure that support the employability of individuals with disabilities including those with visual impairments. Notwithstanding the availability of this Act and its implementation has rather been suboptimal (Attipoe, 2017). Many employers and organisations in Ghana continue to have physical infrastructure that is not designed to meet the needs and expectations of visually impaired persons. Moreover, employers continue to be reluctant to employ visually impaired persons because they perceive their employment to be too costly for the organisation or that the individual would be unable to work as effectively as those without any form of disabilities elevator (Barbareschi et al., 2021; Jahan & Holloway, 2020; Kaye, Jans & Jones, 2011). In summary, the use of intersectionality as a theoretical lens in understanding the career journey of visually impaired persons suggests that their identities coupled with their positionality and situatedness in the context of policy problems in underdeveloped settings would exacerbate the risk of unemployment and stagnation among this cohort due to worsening their

inability to cope with the rudiments at the workplace, inability to adjust and inability to gain support from employers and co-workers.

Figure 2.2 An intersectional approach to the careers of the visually impaired



2.11 Conceptual Framework

At this point, the conceptual framework that guides the present study is presented. This conceptual framework is premised on the bio-psychosocial model. The reason for choosing the biopsychosocial model over the medical and social models of disability is that this model combines the principles and constructs of the two models while including other aspects like environmental factors. It also includes conceptual issues from the overall review of the literature. The conceptual framework is shown in Figure 2.3. The framework shows that the outcome variable is visually impaired persons' employment experiences. This outcome is primarily influenced by three

elements of the bio-psychological model, that is, the environmental (workplace), individual and social factors.

At the social level, issues about the social norms, beliefs and values about disability and persons with visual impairments are included. The stereotyped and prejudiced attitudes that employers have about disabilities and visually impaired persons have a direct influence on how the experience with employment will be for these people. This implies that individuals with visual impairments will have a smooth entry into work and progression within the job when there are little to no stereotyped attitudes from employers. Moreover, in situations where employers believe that visually impaired persons are capable of and competent in working, the individual is likely to have a smooth transition to work, with few challenges. However, in situations where there are existing misperceptions about visual impairments, then the individual is likely to struggle with getting into employment. For instance, when there are preconceived stereotyped and prejudiced perspectives about visually impaired persons and their ability to work, it enacts fear in the hearts of the impaired person.

The framework shows an interaction between social factors and individual factors. For example, the presence of stereotyped attitudes and misperceptions about visually impaired persons can subsequently result in lowered self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-efficacy which could make the employment experience challenging for the visually impaired person. Likewise, individual factors such as employers' and co-workers' knowledge about visually impaired persons' employment needs can directly influence job entry and job progression experience. Also, individual factors like employability skills and educational qualifications play a role in the job entry and job progression of visually impaired persons. Visually impaired persons who have the requisite employability skills and necessary educational qualifications can easily get into the job

market and progress accordingly. However, those who lack these employability skills, and educational qualifications would struggle to get employment. This can further fuel the misperceptions and stereotyped attitudes that employers have about visually impaired persons and their ability to work competently and professionally. Still, at the individual level, self-stigmatisation on the part of visually impaired persons has been found to significantly reduce their perceived efficacy and self-esteem (Jahan & Holloway, 2020; Monah, 2018; Salleh & Zainal, 2010; Vass, 2016; Wood, Byrne, Burke, Enache & Morrison, 2017). Consequently, this can affect the quality and smoothness of their job entry and job progression.

The final piece of the conceptual framework shows the linkages that exist between workplace factors and the employment experience of visually impaired persons. These workplace factors include the availability of assistive technologies and devices, the existence of an appropriate built environment that meets the needs of visually impaired persons, and the availability of employment support services, allowances, and policies. The bidirectional arrows suggest the interplay of intersectionality.

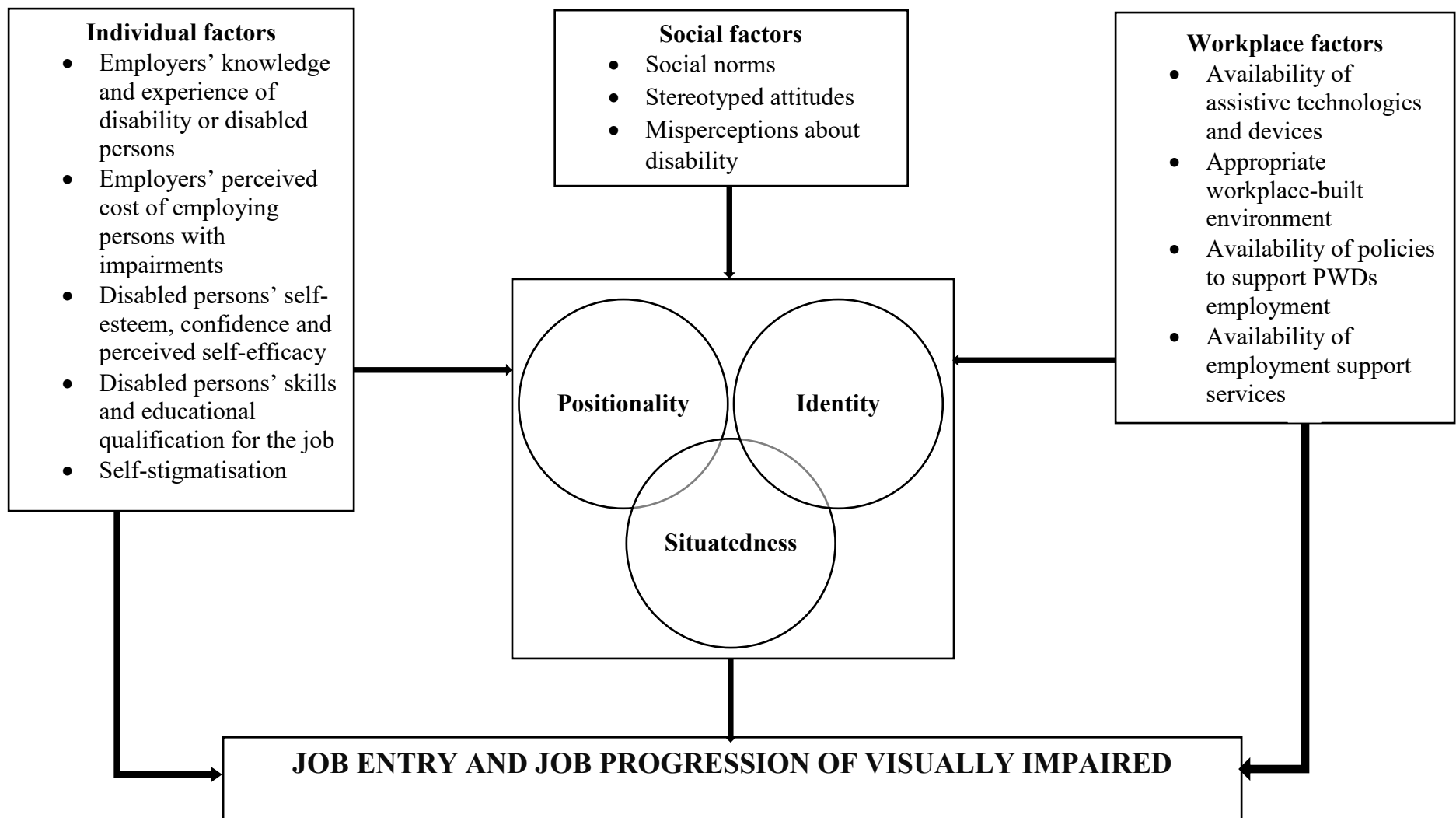


Figure 2.3: Conceptual framework

Source: Author's construction: informed by the theory of intersectionality and other concepts

Essentially, the conceptual framework as described above is informed by intersectionality as a theoretical lens. It is also informed by the literature review that shows that individual, social, and workplace factors significantly influence the job entry and job progression of visually impaired persons. The framework suggests that while individual, social and workplace factors can directly influence the job entry and progression of visually impaired persons, these factors also affect the perceived positionality and situatedness of the individuals. This results in a situation where the identity of the individual coupled with their positionality and situatedness in the context of policy problems in underdeveloped settings would exacerbate the risk of unemployment and stagnation among this cohort due to worsening their inability to cope with the rudiments at the workplace, inability to adjust and inability to gain support from employers and co-workers.

2.12 Chapter Summary

This chapter provides an in-depth review of past and current scholarship on disability, with emphasis on visually impaired persons and their journeys and transition into the job market. Related theories and key conceptual issues were also discussed in this chapter. Being (gainfully) employed is a major activity in an individual's working life or age, with work ensuring economic rewards, fulfilment, independence, accomplishment, a sense of identity, meaning and self-confidence. Physically challenged individuals including the blind or visually impaired continue to be underrepresented in the job market mainly due to their disability. Previous studies have shown that persons with visual impairment have a higher rate of unemployment compared to sighted persons. Crudden et al, 1998 mention that there are so many impediments to the employment or job acquisition and retention for blind or visually impaired individuals. Crudden et al, 1998,'s study identified that some of the most common impediments in the employment of an individual with a visual impairment include employer attitudes, transportation, assistive technology,

accommodation, skills and education, and government-sponsored disincentives. Crudden et al, 1998 further go on to indicate that it is generally agreed that there will be equal employment and job opportunities for everyone when these barriers are removed. This study is, therefore, focused on exploring the career journey of the blind or visually impaired in gaining and maintaining a job. The barriers uncovered show the challenges blind or visually impaired persons face in obtaining and retaining a job. It is certainly difficult for these individuals to participate fully in the workforce hence their lack of motivation and interest in being part of the workforce is simply due to all the negativities meted out at them. Previous and existing literature could not establish any study on the career journeys of the visually impaired in their professions in Ghana. No literature was found on job entry, sustenance, and progression on the job and in the professions amongst persons with visual impairment in Ghana. Moreover, no existing study in Ghana has explored the career transition and progression of visually impaired persons using intersectionality as a theoretical lens. Therefore, the present study fills this literature gap by showing how positionality, situatedness and identity intersect to explain the experiences and challenges faced by visually impaired persons in their search for jobs and progression on the job.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the research methodology adopted for the study is documented and discussed in detail. The chapter is structured by first setting straight the research context and setting. After this, the research approach is discussed. This is immediately followed by an in-depth presentation of the recruitment processes and procedures for selecting eligible participants to participate in the study. Additionally, the chapter discusses the theoretical sampling strategies as well as provides a detailed description of the data collected, managed, and analysed, as well as the strategies for ensuring the rigour and trustworthiness of the study. Issues relating to ethical considerations are also presented in this chapter. The chapter concludes with the methodological limitations.

3.1 Research Context and Setting

3.1.1 Ghana: Population, Culture and System

This section provides a detailed description of the country Ghana, which is located in West Africa, on the continent of Africa. Ghana, formerly known as the Gold Coast, is a country that is bordered by three French-speaking countries (that is: Burkina Faso to the north, La Cote D'Ivoire to the east, and Togo to the west) and the Gulf of Guinea. The country covers a total land area of 238,533 square kilometres (Kumi-Kyereme, Amu & Darteh, 2017). Ghana is mostly flat, except for Mountain Afadjato, which rises 883 metres above sea level, and a series of hills on the eastern border. Ghana has a population of 24,658,823 people according to the 2010 Population and Housing Census (Ghana Statistical Service, 2013). There were 12,024,845 men and 12,633,978 females among them. This means that males made up 48.8 per cent of the population, while females made up 51.2 per cent (Ghana Statistical Service, 2013). As a result, the sex ratio was 95

men to 100 females. In addition, the country has a population density of 103 people per square kilometre (Ghana Statistical Service, Ghana Health Service, ICF International, 2015).

However, the latest report from the 2021 Population and Housing Census revealed that Ghana's population had increased from 24 million people in 2010 to a total population of 30,832,019 in 2021 (Ghana Statistical Service, 2022).

3.1.2 Disability and Visual Impairment in Ghana

Disability is a ubiquitous phenomenon. In all countries, societies, races and cultures, some people suffer from one or more forms of disability, and Ghana is not an exception to that. Ghana is made up of several ethnic groups and has over 42 languages. However, the dominant Ghanaian language, that is Akan (Twi) translates disability as “*edem*” which loosely implies something unfit. These pejorative labels placed on persons with disability in Ghana often makes it difficult, if not impossible to openly and fiercely discuss issues surrounding disability (Avoke, 2002). This social construction of disability in Ghana is heavily grounded in spirituality and beliefs that it is a curse that the gods have placed on the individual (Botts & Evans, 2010). That is, the visually impaired individual may have seen something that he or she was not supposed to have seen. Therefore, the gods visited the person with blindness as a punishment. These ideologies and social construction have permeated the Ghanaian culture and societal understanding of disability including visual impairment. Such thoughts are dangerous for advancing interventions to improve the quality of life of persons with disability in Ghana, particularly in these times when the prevalence of disability and specifically, visual impairment is on the ascendency.

A related study conducted in Ghana using data from a nationally representative data set (i.e., The Seventh Round of the Ghana Living Standards Survey [GLSS 7]) has revealed the high prevalence of disability in Ghana (Asuman, Ackah & Agyire-Tettey, 2021). The study found a prevalence of

5.3 per cent which is higher than the estimated 3.7per cent of disabilities across Ghanaian households

(Asuman, Ackah & Agyire-Tettey, 2021; Seidu, Malau-Aduli, McBain-Rigg, Malau-Aduli & Emeto, 2021). More than half of all persons with disability (58.1%) constituted the economically active age group. Moreover, the study revealed that more males (54%) were living with at least one form of disability as compared to their female counterparts of whom only 45.9% had at least one form of disability (Asuman, Ackah & Agyire-Tettey, 2021). In terms of the distribution of disability, nearly half (45.1%) were physically impaired while 23.8 per cent were visually impaired. Speech and hearing, and emotional impairment constituted 24.6 and 15.5per cent respectively (Asuman, Ackah & Agyire-Tettey, 2021). Also, evidence points out that, on the national level, 38.54 per cent of all households that have a person with a disability as a member were living below the poverty line, with those in the rural areas being the most disadvantaged (see Table 3.1).

Table 3.1: Poverty headcount ratio by households and disability status

Type of household	All households (%)	Without a person with a disability (%)	With a person with a disability (%)
All households	23.41	22.57	38.54
Male-headed households	25.75	24.93	40.99
Female-headed households	17.58	16.66	33.01
Urban households	7.76	7.27	19.05
Rural households	39.52	38.69	51.50

Source: Estimates from the Ghana Living Standards Survey [GLSS 7], Asuman, Ackah and

Agyire-Tettey (2021).

3.1.3 Visual Impairment and Employment in Ghana

Ghana's 1992 Constitution protects the rights of all citizens, including the visually impaired. The Constitution particularly requires Parliament to pass legislation to safeguard and promote the rights of people with vision impairments and/or other types of disabilities (Asuman, Ackah & AgyireTettey, 2021). Consequently, Ghana, as a country, has over the years tried to promote and include persons living with visual impairment in active economic activities. This has often been pursued through the formulation and implementation of targeted policies, programmes and interventions.

For instance, in the year 2000, Ghana passed a legislative policy known as the National Disability Policy which was tasked with the overarching objective of guaranteeing equal opportunity, inclusivity and participation of the visually impaired and other persons living with disability in national development processes to improve their overall quality of life and alleviate poverty among this cohort (Asuman, Ackah & Agyire-Tettey, 2021). The national disability policy (2000) was borne out of the ratification of previous international conventions, declarations and charters such as “the UN Declaration on Human Rights (1948), the UN Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (1993)” (Gregorius, 2014, p. 88). This initial policy attempt to promote and guarantee the rights of visually impaired persons in Ghana worked to some extent but lacked the requisite legal backing. Consequently, there was the need to review the national disability policy of Ghana (2000), address all of its implementation shortfalls and propose a new policy that is much more comprehensive and has supportive legal and statutory backing. This led to the formulation and implementation of the Persons with Disability Act, 2006 (Act 715) (Asuman, Ackah & Agyire-Tettey, 2021; Seidu et al., 2021).

To iterate, the Persons with Disability Act, 2006 (Act 715) was enacted and passed as a response to the inadequacies of the existing national disability policy of Ghana. This new policy is composed of six main sections (Asante & Sasu, 2015). In the first section of Act 715, the rights of a person with a disability are clearly articulated and illuminated. The section explicitly states that under no circumstance should a visually impaired or any other person with a disability be subjected to any form of discrimination either by their place of residence or even by an employer (Asante & Sasu, 2015). The same section highlights and calls for all buildings including building facilities in a place of employment to be disability friendly. At the end of section one, the penalty for going contrary to these rights spelt out is clearly defined.

Employment is an important indicator of social development and a great tool for ensuring social justice. Some scholars such as Attipoe (2017) have contended that employment provides some level of identity and a sense of belongingness to the employee. In the case of persons living with disability, particularly the visually impaired, being employed is a demonstration of social participation and society's willingness to promote inclusivity. Some international policies such as the Convention on the Rights of Persons and the Sustainable Development Goal 8 have urged signatory countries to create an inclusive working environment that will ensure that persons living with disability gain full access to the job market as well as participate in income-generating activities to better their lives and contribute to the social and economic growth of society, ultimately resulting in poverty alleviation (Agyei-Okyere, Nketsia, Opoku, Torgbenu, Alupo & Odame, 2019). As such, section two of the Persons with Disability Act, 2006 (Act 715) was dedicated to issues of employment. The Act mandates the government to create facilities of employment for the visually impaired as well as other people with disability (Asante & Sasu, 2015). This includes training the visually impaired and other persons with disability who may have

been unemployed for at least two years. The training is expected to equip them with the skills and tools that will make them competitive to secure loans or other forms of funding to create a business for themselves. Again, this section states that individuals, corporations or any business entity that employs persons with disability including the visually impaired were going to be entitled to a yearly tax rebate or some form of a special initiative. Moreover, section two of the Persons with Disability Act, 2006 (Act 715) mandated all employers to guarantee and provide their visually impaired employees with the requisite facilities and resources that could effectively optimise and ease their transition to work (Asante & Sasu, 2015). These resources or facilities could be having a building structure that is disability friendly. It could also mean providing the visually impaired with a guaranteed source of transportation to and from work, as well as making brails and computers available to them.

Section three of the Persons with Disability Act, 2006 (Act 715) was dedicated to issues of education. The section mandated parents and guardians to enrol their child with a disability in school. The state will do its part by providing free education and creating special schools for these students. In section four, the Act presents the policy on transportation for all persons living with disability including the visually impaired (Asante & Sasu, 2015). The fifth section of the Act focused on access to healthcare whereas, in section six, other miscellaneous provisions were provided.

Beyond the provisions of both the National Disability Policy and the Persons with Disability Act, 2006 (Act 715), successive governments have implemented some livelihood strategies and programmes that target persons with disability, including the visually impaired. Notable among these strategies is the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP), and the establishment of the Disability Fund (Asuman, Ackah & Agyire-Tettey, 2021). According to Handa and Park

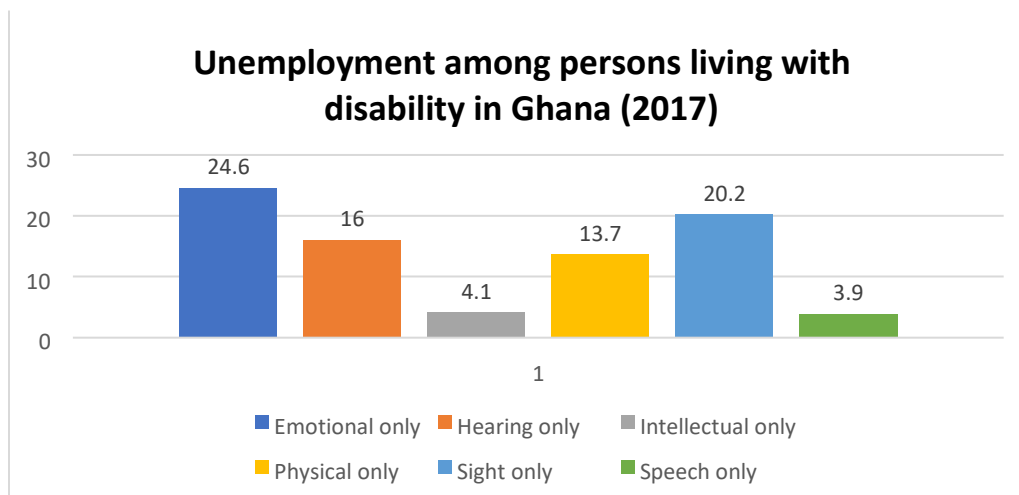
(2012, p. 6), LEAP refers to a “social cash transfer program, which provides cash and health insurance to extremely poor households across Ghana to alleviate short-term poverty and encourage long-term human capital development.” The programme initially began as a pilot programme in 2008 and later scaled up between the years 2009 and 2010 (Handa & Park, 2012). For individuals to benefit from the LEAP, they must either be: (a) an elderly person; (b) a person with a disability, which includes the visually impaired who is unable to work; or (c) a single parent with an orphan or vulnerable child. In addition to the cash support that beneficiaries receive from the LEAP, they also benefit from agricultural support (Asuman, Ackah & Agyire-Tettey, 2021). This implies that visually impaired persons who may desire to venture into agriculture or agribusiness were more likely to benefit from the agricultural support dimension of the LEAP. The disability fund works by setting aside three per cent of the district assembly common fund to support persons with disabilities, including the visually impaired. The purpose of this fund is to support those with disabilities who are involved in informal economic activities.

Albeit the provisions made by the National Disability Policy and the Persons with Disability Act, 2006 (Act 715), unemployment ravages as a social canker that continues to affect thousands of people each year, including the visually impaired (Odame, Osei-Hwedie, Nketsia, Opoku & Nanor Arthur, 2021). This is usually due to the stereotypes and schemas that have been formed about the visually impaired and their capacity to be economically active. Within the Ghanaian context, the visually impaired are often viewed as capable of achieving no economic prospects; moreover, they are viewed as being only worthy of pity from their family and close relations (Odame, Opoku, Nketsia, Swanzy, Alzyoudi & Nsowah, 2021). These schemas and stereotypes created around visual impairment significantly affect the engagement of the visually impaired in economic activities.

This is evident in the rate of unemployment among this cohort.

In Figure 3.1, the rate of unemployment among people living with disability in Ghana is presented. It is evident from the data that in 2017, although persons with an emotional impairment only constituted the highest proportion of unemployment, people living with visual impairment (20.2%) were the second cohort of persons living with disability who were unemployed (Sustainable Development Goals Secretariat, 2019). Thus, supporting the need to explore transitions into employment and progress thereof among the visually impaired in Ghana.

Figure 1: Unemployment among persons living with disability in Ghana

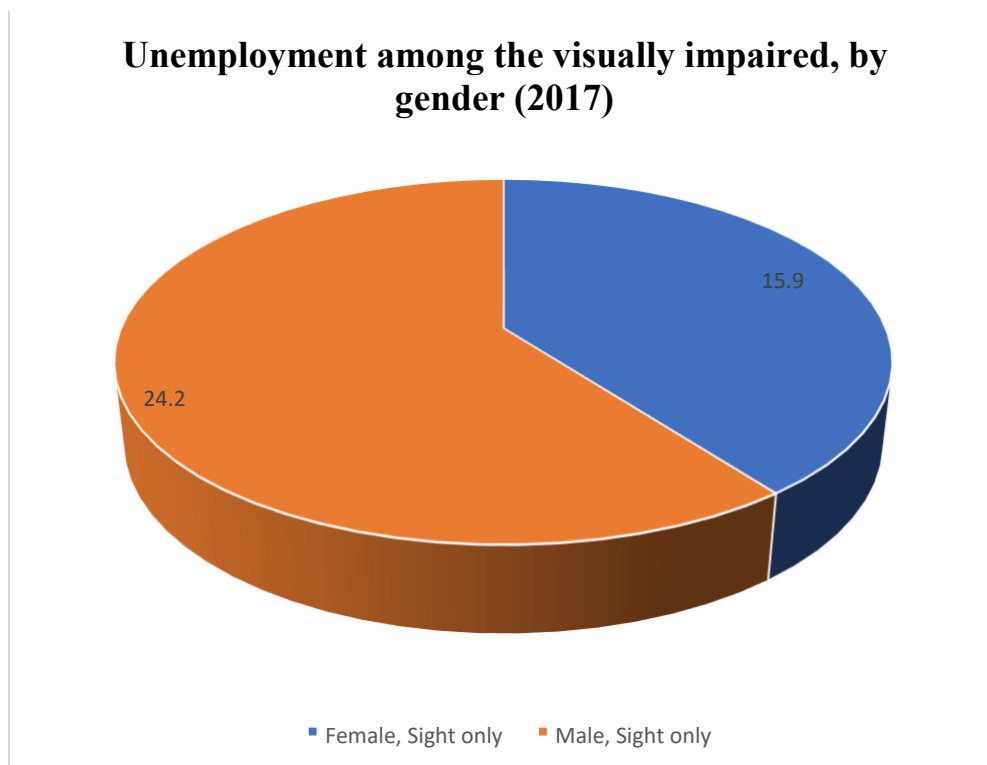


Source: Extracted from the Sustainable Development Goals Secretariat (2019)

Disaggregating the data by gender, it is evident that more males living with visual impairment were unemployed as compared to their female counterparts (24.2%) (Sustainable Development Goals Secretariat, 2019). Perhaps, these gender variations in the prevalence of unemployment among the visually impaired may be explained by the prevailing patriarchal ideologies that women do not need to work. Such ideological perspectives tend to “shield” female visually impaired persons from the realities of unemployment, while significantly exacerbating the economic plights of

visually impaired males. It is expected that males would go out and get some economic activities completed to earn some income. Figure 3.2 provides a graphical appreciation of the gender disparities in the prevalence of unemployment among the visually impaired.

Figure 3.2: Gender disparities in the prevalence of unemployment among the visually impaired

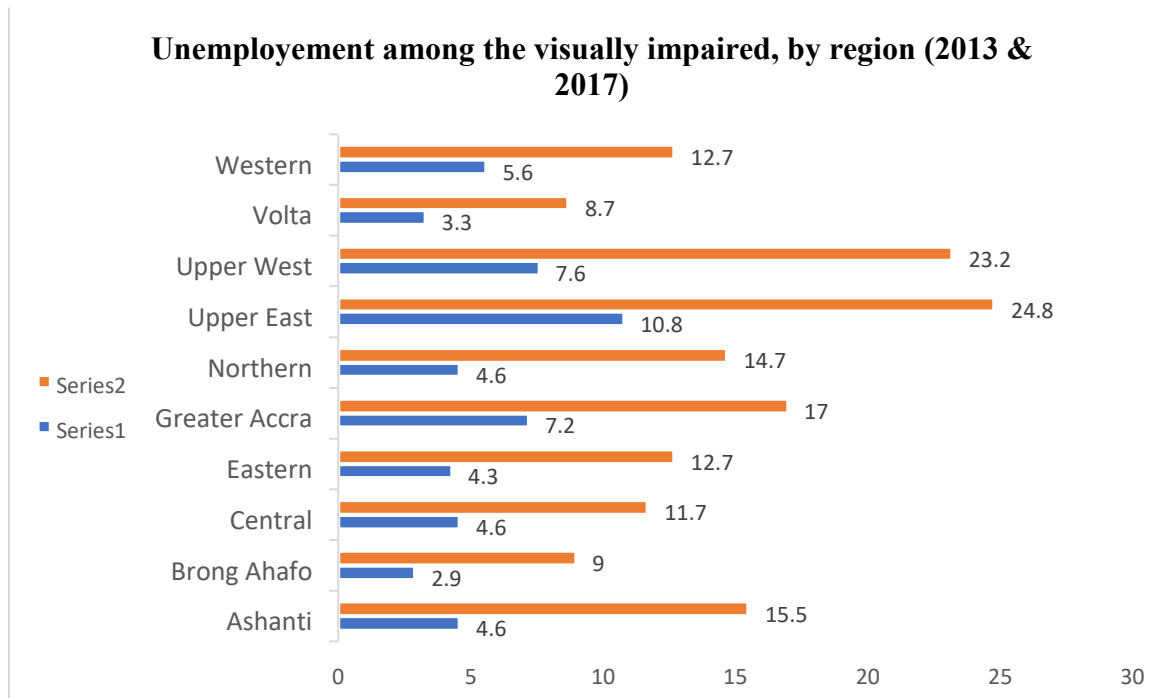


Source: Extracted from the Sustainable Development Goals Secretariat (2019)

There are also significant regional disparities in the prevalence of unemployment among persons with visual impairment. Evidence from the Sustainable Development Goals Secretariat (2019) reveals that the rate of unemployment among persons with visual impairment was high in Northern Ghana as compared to the Coastal and Middle zones of the country (Sustainable Development Goals Secretariat, 2019). For instance, consistently Upper East (24.8%), and Upper West (23.3) reported disproportionately higher rates of unemployment, albeit the Greater Accra (17%) and

Ashanti region (15%), as compared to visually impaired located in Volta (8.7%) or Brong-Ahafo region (9%) (see Figure 3.3).

Figure 3.3: Regional disparities in the prevalence of unemployment among the visually impaired



Source: Extracted from the Sustainable Development Goals Secretariat (2019)

3.2 Qualitative Research Approach (QRA)

This study adopted a qualitative research approach. According to Daniel (2014), qualitative research approaches include ethnography, grounded theory, and phenomenology. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) also describes qualitative research as comprising “the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials; case study; personal experience; introspection; life story; interview; artefacts; cultural texts and productions; observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts –

that describe the routine and problematic moments and meanings in individual lives.” The present study sought to develop a deeper understanding of a visually impaired person's transition to work. Therefore, adopting a qualitative research approach was the most appropriate method for the study. Available evidence suggests that unlike ethnography which seeks to explore “a given group's conceptual world, seen and experienced from the inside” (Sobo, 2009, p. 297), grounded theory is concerned with basing on theoretical models to describe the study processes and the relationships between variables (Teherani, Martimianakis, Stenfors-Hayes, Wadhwa & Varpio, 2015). Meanwhile, phenomenology is “a research approach that seeks to describe the essence of a phenomenon by exploring it from the perspective of those who have experienced it” (Neubauer, Witkop & Varpio, 2019; Teherani et al., 2015).

This study adopted phenomenology as the qualitative research approach. The decision to use phenomenology was based on the aim of this research approach. Phenomenology seeks to describe the meaning of the experiences of study participants (Neubauer, Witkop & Varpio, 2019). Given that this study focused on the lived experiences of persons with visual impairment with regards to their career and employment thereby mainly focusing on describing and elucidating the meanings of each individual's experiences by gaining an in-depth understanding of the nature and in totality the meaning of the phenomenon, adopting phenomenology was the most appropriate research approach to use.

3.3 Participant Recruitment

The participant recruitment process began with seeking ethical approval for the study. Ethics have become quintessential in research. This peculiarity of research ethics has been corroborated by previous international declarations such as the Nuremberg Code, the Belmont Declaration, and the Declaration of Helsinki (Ghooi, 2011; Mellin-Olsen, Staender, Whitaker & Smith, 2010; Miracle,

2016; Shuster, 1997). As such, it was imperative to receive ethical approval and clearance before the study participants could be recruited for the study. A list of visually impaired professionals was requested from the Ghana Blind Union. Based on the list received, the researcher placed a call to all professionals on the Ghana Blind Union list to check their eligibility and willingness to participate in the study. Visually impaired persons who were eligible to participate in the study were purposively sampled accordingly. A summary of the participant recruitment processes as well as the sampling procedure is presented diagrammatically in Table 3.2 below. Table 3.2 provides details of when ethical approval was granted, the first people who were contacted, as well as how the researcher identified and recruited each of the participants into the study.

Table 3.2: Summary of the participant recruitment and sampling processes

Key dates	Milestone	Activities executed
May 20, 2021	The Brunel Ethics Board granted ethical approval to conduct the study.	The researcher makes first contact with the Ghana Blind Union where she requested the sample frame, that is, the list of all visually impaired professionals registered with the Ghana Blind Union Meeting with relevant stakeholders including the Ghana Blind Union, Ghana Disability Federation and National Council of Persons with Disability in Ghana

July to August 2021

A face-to-face meeting with principal leads at the Ghana Blind Union and the National Council of Persons with Disability

Contacted the prospective study participants to discuss the likelihood of their participation in this study.
The information sheet along with the informed consent sheet was presented to the visually impaired persons who showed interest in participating in the study.

September 2021

Received final feedback from participants who would participate in the study

The researcher received queries and concerns from prospective participants about the intent of the study, the duration of the study and how the study would be conducted.

October to
December 2021

Semi-structured interviews are conducted

During this period, the researcher conducted all the face-to-face, telephone and online-based interviews with the visually impaired professionals

3.4 Theoretical Sampling Strategy

Persons living with visual impairment are often marginalised populations who are hard to reach (Brydges & Mkandawire, 2017; Kim & Sohn, 2020; Wang & Yu, 2017). Therefore, any sampling strategy to be used must be appropriate to meet their peculiar needs. Generally, in research, there are two broad forms of sampling strategies: probability and non-probability sampling strategies (Acharya, Prakash, Saxena & Nigam, 2013; Uprichard, 2013). While probability sampling aims for randomisation, non-probability sampling strategies do not aim for randomisation. This study

seeks for deeper understanding of the nuances related to the visually impaired person's transition in employment rather than aiming for randomisation. Therefore, the researcher adopted nonprobability sampling as the sampling strategy for the study.

Specifically, the researcher adopted two non-probability sampling strategies, that is, purposive and snowballing techniques. Visually impaired persons who were registered with the Ghana Blind Union were sampled purposively. The researcher had a set of inclusion criteria for sampling the visually impaired persons who were registered with the Ghana Blind Union. The inclusion criteria were that: (a) the prospective participant should be gainfully employed in either a public or private source of employment; (b) the prospective participant must have been employed for at least twelve months; (c) the prospective participant should be registered and identified as a visually impaired person; (d) the prospective participant should be employed as a full-time employee for either a public or private business entity or organisation; and, (e) the prospective participant must be willing to participate in the study. Only participants who fully met the inclusion criteria were sampled and recruited to participate in the study.

In total, seventeen (17) participants were sampled purposively to participate in the study. The researcher, now, based on the snowballing sampling technique, identified additional visually impaired persons to participate in the study. Through interaction with the participants identified through purposive sampling, eleven (11) additional visually impaired professionals were identified and recruited in the study. As indicated earlier on in this chapter, visually impaired persons are marginalised populations and hard to reach. As such, adopting snowballing sampling in addition to the purposive sampling strategy allowed the researcher to get to the hidden samples (Dusek, Yurova & Ruppel, 2015; Goodman, 2011; Hardesty, Haselschwerdt & Crossman, 2019).

In line with the specification by Francis, Johnston, Robertson, Glidewell, Entwistle, Eccles, and Grimshaw (2010), determining the data saturation was based on the stopping criteria after 10 interviews, the successive three interviews conducted will not produce any new themes. Therefore, this criterion was tested after the study had reached its 10th interview. So, after the 11th, 12th, and 13th interviews, the stopping criterion was tested. However, it failed to pass the test as new themes such as the Stockholm Effect and the avoidance coping strategies, emerged. Therefore, stopping at the 13th interview would have meant missing out on these themes. The test was repeated until after the 26th, 27th and 28th interviews no new analytical information or themes emerged. Therefore, applying the stopping criterion shows that saturation was attained at the 28th interview. This is in agreement with Saunders, 2012, postulation that saturation can be reached with 12-30 participants in a heterogeneous population. While the population was visually impaired persons, they differ significantly by gender, education, and type of employment.

Table 3.3: The biographical data or characteristics of all twenty-eight (28) visually impaired persons who participated in the study until the point of theoretical data saturation

No	Name	Age	Qualification at point of entry	Years of Experience	Position at Point of Entry	Highest level Achieved	Current Occupation
1	Razak	30-39	BA Arts Social Work	2 years	Principal	Principal	Social Worker
2	Eric	40-49	NVTI, Weaving	9 years	Senior Superintendent I	Senior Craft Instructor	Senior Craft Instructor
3	Abdul	40-49	BA Education	9 years	Principal	Assistant Director	Social Worker
4	Asante	30-39	BA Education	7 years	Principal Superintendent	Assistant Director 2R	Teacher
5	Latifa	30-39	BA Guidance and Counselling	14 years	Superintendent	Assistant Director II	Teacher

6	Alex	40-49	BA (Hons) Agriculture	8 years	Assistive Technology Manager	Technology Manager	Manager
7	Appiah	50-59	MA Alternative Dispute Resolution	13 years	Assistant State Attorney	Principal State Attorney	Lawyer
8	Ibrahim	20-29	MA Education	1 year 6 months	Principal	No promotion	Teacher
9	Ansah	30-39	BA Social Studies & Political Science	18 months	Administrator	Community Relations Officer	Administrator
10	Kwame	30-39	BA Sociology & Political Science	11 years	Producer	Assistant Manager	Radio presenter
11	Joshua	30-39	B Education	11 years	Assistant Superintendent	No promotion	Manager
12	Austin	30-39	HND Accountancy	10 years	Accountant	Accountant, no promotion	Accountant

13	Ato	30-39	BA Social Work	5 years	Assistant Social Development Officer	No promotion	Social Worker
14	Mina	20-29	MA Management & Administration	2 ½ years	Social Development Officer	No promotion	Social worker
15	Doe	40-49	NVTI	9 years	Technical Instructor	Senior Technical Instructor	Crafts Instructor
16	Kojo	40-49	BSc Chemistry	19 years	Senior Superintendent I	Assistant Director I	Teacher
17	Melisa	30-39	MSc Development Management	5 years	Social Development Officer	No promotion	Social Worker
18	Greg	20-29	BA Political Sciences & Philosophy	2 years	Assistant Social Devt	Assistant Development Officer	Social worker

19	Enoch	30-39	BA Education (Religion & History)	5 Years	Programmes Officer	Programmes Officer	Programmes Officer
20	Sam	30-39	B Education	7 years	Principal Superintendent	Assistant Director II	Teacher
21	Isaac	30-39	B Education	6 years	Principal Superintendent	Principal Superintendent	Teacher
22	Steve	60	PhD	35 years	Research Officer	Chief Research Officer	Lawyer
23	Gladys	43	MSc Development Management	8 years	Project Coordinator	Programme Officer	Social Worker/Development Manager
24	Akpene	20-29	MSc in Political Science and Philosophy	2 years	Assistant Social Worker	No promotion	Civil Servant
25	Arhin	30-39	B Education	6 years	Class Teacher	No promotion	Professional Teacher
26	Doreen	30-39	B Education	6 years	Social work	No promotion	Social worker

27	Bismarck	44	BA Political Science	8 years	Social work	Social Development Officer	Social worker
28	Kennedy	41	B Education	7 years	Assistant Social Development Officer	Assistant Social Development Officer	Crafts instructor

Source: Fieldwork, 2022

3.5 Research Methods

3.5.1 Semi-structured Interviews

In the present study, the researcher was interested in exploring the experiences of the visually impaired about their transition into employment. Consequently, phenomenology was used as the research approach. Given that phenomenology was employed in this study, it was imperative to adopt the most appropriate qualitative phenomenological method for data collection. In phenomenological studies, interviews and focused group discussions are commonly used for collecting data from study participants. However, this study adopted interviews; specifically, semi-structured interviews were used as a method for collecting data from the visually impaired. The rationale for choosing semi-structured interviews rather than focused group discussion is that, while the latter is concerned with soliciting information about the group experiences, semi-structured interviews are concerned with the individual's experience of the phenomenon which is the focus of this study. This study is concerned with the experiences of the visually impaired at the individual level. Therefore, a semi-structured interview was much more appropriate than compared to focused group discussion.

With regards to how the interviews were conducted, they were primarily conducted face-to-face, by telephone or via an online meeting platform. The reason for conducting the interviews via telephone and online platforms was that, although Ghana had opened its borders and eased the COVID-19 restrictions, it was still important to reach research participants in a way that will not predispose them to be at higher risk of contracting COVID. Therefore, the researcher needed to find alternative ways to interview the recruited study participants. Hence, the decision to conduct the interviews face-to-face, strictly observing all covid-19 protocols, or via telephone and online meeting platforms for hard-to-reach participants. The information sheet and informed consent were designed in brails and were sent to the participants two weeks ahead of the interviews so that they could have sufficient time to reflect and decide whether or not

they would be willing to spend a part of their time participating in the study. Once the participant had confirmed their voluntary participation in the study by giving both oral consent and thumb printing, the researcher went ahead to enquire about the preferred method of interview. The participants were given the options of a face-to-face interview, a telephone interview or an interview through the Zoom meeting platform (online). The participants communicated their preferred method of interview, and then a date and time for the interview were decided.

All of the interviews began with the researcher reiterating the objective of the study to the participants. Additionally, issues of confidentiality, anonymity, autonomy to withdraw from the study, and the voluntariness of the study were reaffirmed to the study participants before the interview commenced. For each interview, the background socio-demographic characteristics, in other words, biographical data were solicited from the study participants. The biographical data collected from the study participants included the age range of the study participant, highest educational attainment or qualification, years of experience, the position of the study participant at the point of entry into employment, current occupation, and highest employment achieved. Generally, the interviews conducted lasted between 30 to 60 minutes. However, there were a few occasions where the interviews exceeded 60 minutes.

During the interviews, the study participants were allowed to freely speak and even go beyond the questions that had been asked. This strategy was adopted to allow the participants to feel confident and maintain the rapport established between the researcher and study participants. Moreover, this strategy was a way of showing empathy and sensitivity to the feelings and issues that the study participants were communicating. Nevertheless, it was important to ensure that the study participants do not deviate so much from the questions. For that reason, the researcher prompted the study participants any time that they deviated so much away from the question

that was posed to them. This enabled the researcher to keep the focus on the study objectives without losing focus. Also, based on the responses from the study participants, the researcher posed follow-up questions to probe further about what the participant was trying to put forward. These probing follow-up questions were precise and concise, ensuring that they were closely related to the previous question that had been posed to the study participants.

Also, to reduce the occurrence of recall or retrospective bias, the researcher adopted the courtroom style where the questions posed to the study participants were asked chronologically (Besel et.al. 2017; Denzin 1989; Denzin & Lincoln 2000; Tracy, 2019). This strategy allowed the study participants to recount their experiences in a way that reduced their tendency under-report or over-report. Over-reporting times when the study participants deviated in their response to the question that was posed to them. In such instances, the researcher rephrased the question in a way that the study participant could easily comprehend and provide their responses. It must be noted that all of the interviews, whether face-to-face, by telephone or via Zoom meeting (online), were recorded using an audio tape recorder. Of course, the recording was done only after the participant had consented and granted permission for the researcher to record the interview session. Notwithstanding, there were two interview sessions where the study participants were sceptical about being audio recorded. In such instances, the researcher reminded the study participants that their anonymity will be guaranteed by removing any personally identifiable characteristics that might link the data back to them. The reminder about the anonymity of the study participants' identity was sufficient to encourage the study participants to give their consent and permit the researcher to record the interview session.

There were three occasions where the internet connectivity of the study participant was poor. As such, the researcher had to end those interviews and then reschedule another date and time for the interview. In the rescheduled interview, the interview was conducted via telephone. The interviews continued until the 28th interview. By then, the emerging issues from the interviews

were similar to each other. This informed the researcher that theoretical saturation had been reached because no new analytical information was emerging from the interviews at this point.

3.5.2 Data Collection Instrument

The study used a semi-structured interview guide as the data collection instrument. This instrument was developed based on evidence from existing literature on visually impaired persons' entry and transition within employment (Jang, Wang, Lin & Shih, 2013; McDonnall, 2010; Odame, Osei-Hwedie, Nketsia, Opoku & Nanor Arthur, 2021; Odame, Opoku, Nketsia, Swanzy, Alzyoudi & Nsowah, 2021). Afterwards, the designed study instrument was added to the list that ought to be filled on the Brunel Research Ethics Online (BREO) guidelines. The researcher submitted the study instrument so that the Brunel University Ethics Board could assess the capacity of the study instrument to effectively solicit the intended data to inform the attainment of the objectives of the study. The approval of the study by the Brunel University Ethics Board signified that the data collection instrument, that is, the semi-structured interview guide was scientific enough and fit to be used to collect data from the study participants. After this, the researcher proceeded to commence the data collection procedures.

This semi-structured interview guide was structured in four parts. The first part of the interview guide was the introductory section. The aim and objectives of the study, the anticipated duration of the study and some ethical concerns were captured as part of the opening statements. Additionally, the biographical data of the study participants were solicited in the first section of the study instrument. In the second section of the study instrument, the researcher was concerned about soliciting information about how visually impaired professionals entered into their professional occupations. This was meant to understand the facilitating factors and challenges to their entry into employment. The third section, however, solicited information about how the visually impaired progressed in their professional occupation. This section of the study instrument aimed to understand whether the visually impaired professionals

progressed in their occupations, perhaps with resp concerning promotions or receiving salary increases over time. The final sections posed questions that aimed to explore the pragmatic strategies that persons with visual impairment employ in their progression in their respective professional occupations.

3.5.3 Field Notes & Policy Documents

In addition to the semi-structured interviews that were conducted, the researcher kept field notes. These notes were extremely important to the quality of the research for many reasons. First, notes taken during the interviews served as a backup to the audio-recorded data. Thus, should the audio get corrupted or get missing (which was very unlikely), the researcher would have a written backup of the data. Also, there was the likelihood for the audio tape recorder to malfunction in the course of the interview, or poorly record the interview. Therefore, taking notes of the interview session was important for documenting and identifying sections of the audio file that might not have been captured by the audio tape recorder. Also, the field notes served as a benchmark indicator to check the quality of the transcription done. All of the transcripts were compared alongside the notes taken to confirm the accuracy of the transcripts and the textual data in the transcripts. This strategy was very important in the research process as it helped to reduce the possibility of researcher bias (Hardesty, Haselschwerdt & Crossman, 2019). The researcher acknowledges that conducting an interview, asking probing or follow-up questions, and taking notes can be a very difficult and distracting endeavour. Nevertheless, in this study, combining these activities did not prove difficult or distracting. That is because the researcher applied shorthand and abbreviations in writing the field notes. This made it relatively easier and faster for the researcher to take notes of the interview sessions without compromising on the quality of the probing and follow-up questioning processes.

Besides the field notes taken, the researcher also performed an in-depth analysis of Ghana's policy on disability and the provisions made for the visually impaired to participate in active

employment activities. Specifically, the researcher reflected on the Persons with Disability Act, 2006 (Act 715). Section two of the Persons with Disability Act, 2006 (Act 715) is dedicated to the employment issues that pertain to persons with disability including visual impairment. The researcher compared the provisions made in Act 715 of the Persons with Disability Act, 2006 to the emerging issues from the study findings. This enabled the researcher to identify the compliance with the Persons with Disability Act, 2006 (Act 715) as well as the inconsistencies that existed in the accounts of the visually impaired in this study. The analysis of the Persons with Disability Act, 2006 (Act 715) in the context of this study provided rich information that was going to be very beneficial to the discussion of the study findings.

3.5.4 Ethics

Ethics are inseparable from research. History of torture and maleficence towards research participants, as in the case of the Tuskegee syphilis experiment and the Nuremberg trials have shown the danger that unethical research has on the research enterprise and the study participants. In this study, ethical approval was sought from the Brunel University Ethics Board. This approval was granted after the Brunel Research Ethics Online (BREO) guidelines had been fulfilled in their entirety. There was an information sheet and an informed consent sheet that was used to brief the study participants about the objectives of the study and other important details that they ought to be aware of before deciding whether or not to participate in the study. Thus, all visually impaired persons who were identified and screened for eligibility were offered the information sheet and consent form. Both the information sheet and consent form were prepared in brails given the kind of characteristics of the study population. On the information sheet, the title and objectives of the study were boldly written. In addition to that information, the mode of the data collection (i.e., through interviews) and the estimated duration of the interview were communicated on the information sheet. Also, issues about the potential benefits and compensations were in the information sheet that was handed to persons

with visual impairment. Additionally, information about possible risks and discomfort was also stated clearly in the information sheet. The information sheet also had some statements that iterated that the study was highly voluntary and that no participant would be forced to participate. The participants were also assured that the interviews were going to be conducted at their preferred time and place of convenience. Statements that guarantee the anonymity and confidentiality of all study participants were also included in the information sheet.

The interviews started only after the study participants had read and communicated that they understood the issues presented in the information sheet. The participants had to give both oral consent and thumbprint consent to participate in the study. At the beginning of each section of the interview with the participants, the interviewer reminded them of the overall aim of the study as well as the specific objective of that particular section. Again, the interviewer reassured the participants that no identifiable markers will be linked to them during the reporting of the study findings. This was done to sustain the rapport established between the interviewer and the study participants. Intermittently, the participants were reminded that they could decide not to answer questions that they felt discomfort with; also, they could withdraw from the interview at any point of the interview. By practising these ethical considerations, the researcher was able to build a rapport with the study participants and immerse them into the study.

Ensuring that benefits are maximised, and potential risk or discomfort minimised did not end at the data collection period; it extended into the post-data collection phase. After data collection, the audio files from the respective interviews were labelled using pseudonyms which were captured in this format: *Participant ID_Age*. This was done to enable the researcher in the data management and analysis phase. Also, this labelling was to ensure that third parties could not trace the audio files and their corresponding transcript to the actual participant.

Additionally, all of the audio files and transcripts were encrypted with a password that was known only to the researcher. This protocol was implemented to prevent third parties from getting unauthorised access to the qualitative data. After the interviews, five of the transcripts were sent back to the respective participant for them to confirm that the issues captured in the transcript were a true reflection of what they intended to communicate during the interview.

3.5.5 Rigour and quality assurance

In qualitative terminology, rigour is a method of establishing trust or confidence in the outcomes of a research project. It enables the researcher to maintain consistency in the procedures employed across time. It also accurately represents the population under study. Owing to the importance of rigour and trustworthiness in qualitative research, the researcher adopted certain strategies to achieve the utmost rigour and trustworthiness of the study findings. First, the researcher ensured rigour through careful and intentional preparation, thorough and continual use of researcher reflexivity, and open and honest communication between the researcher and the study participants about the study and its findings (Johnson, Adkins & Chauvin, 2020).

The researcher, as part of the measures of ensuring rigour and trustworthiness, ensured the credibility of the study design and the findings. This was achieved by using verbatim quotes from the transcribed data from the participants. By doing so, the researcher ensured that the findings were a true reflection of the study participants. Also, the researcher practised member checking as a strategy for ensuring the credibility of the study. Specifically, five study participants were reached with their corresponding transcripts for them to confirm that the quotes reflected what they intended to communicate to the researcher. This strategy used by the researcher is consistent with what other researchers have also used to ensure credibility in previous qualitative studies (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell & Walter, 2016; Candela, 2019; Dzomeku, Mensah, Nakua, Agbadi, Okyere, Donkor & Lori, 2022).

The researcher also ensured trustworthiness and rigour by maintaining a high level of reflexivity. Reflexivity, in this context, refers to the “turning of the researcher lens back onto oneself to recognise and take responsibility for one’s situatedness within the research and the effect that it may have on the setting and people being studied, questions being asked, data being collected and its interpretation” (Berger, 2015, p. 220). Similarly, Teh and Lek (2018, p. 522) described the researcher achieved reflexivity by putting aside any personal feelings, biases and prejudices about persons with visual impairment. This open-mindedness allowed the researcher to conduct the interviews without influencing the participants’ responses. Thus, this strategy of reflexivity helped the researcher to reduce the potential of interview bias and self-reported bias.

The researcher also ensured the dependability of the study findings. According to Kemparaj and Chavan (2013), in qualitative research, dependability refers to data stability over time and conditions. To achieve dependability, the researcher clearly articulated the main and specific objectives of the study. Additionally, the researcher provided a detailed description of how and why the study participants were recruited and selected. The researcher also provided a thick description of how the data collection procedures unfolded, the duration of the data collection as well as how the data was managed and analysed. All of these strategies adopted by the researcher culminated in ensuring the dependability of the study findings.

In addition to dependability and credibility, the researcher also strived to attain confirmability as part of the strategies to achieve trustworthiness and rigour. According to a related study that sought to evaluate approaches to realising trustworthiness in qualitative studies, confirmability is concerned with the researcher “providing “audit trails” of how analyses can be traced back to original data sources” (Nguyen, Ahn, Belgrave, Lee, Cawelti, Kim, & Villavicencio, 2021, p. 50). When the audit trail is successful and robust, it allows other researchers to follow the

process and evaluate its logic, relevance to study objectives, and ties to findings (Nguyen et al., 2021). Accordingly, the researcher provided an audit trail of the processes and stages of thematic analyses that were performed to arrive at the study findings. Therefore, any other researcher could follow the processes and analytical framework to arrive at similar findings as established in this study. This audit trail included the transcribed audio data files and the corresponding field notes that were taken during each of the interview sessions. Also, confirmability was achieved by asking relevant follow-up questions and probing questions about issues that warranted such follow-ups. For instance, during the interview sessions, the researcher posed questions for clarity, particularly when the participants gave responses that were contrary to earlier responses that they might have provided in response to a particular question. This was done to ensure that the researcher was getting the right understanding of what the participants wanted to communicate.

3.6 Data Analysis

3.6.1 Overview of Approach

When it was determined that no more original notions would emerge and that recurrent patterns in the data obtained would aid create theory, data analysis began (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011; Gioia, Corely & Hamilston, 2013). The key objective was to address the research questions that were the subject of the analysis, looking extensively into how, when, and what affected visually impaired professionals' entry and progression within their work. The analysis was based on inductive reasoning; that is, the researcher was focused on answering the research questions by identifying patterns to develop a theory.

After the data collection, the interviews were transcribed verbatim. Verbatim transcription ensured that the intended meaning and contexts within which each statement was made would be maintained, thus, helping to substantially reduce the possibility of interviewer bias

(Halcomb & Davidson, 2006; Poland, 1995). When this level of analysis was completed, the transcripts were exported to QSR NVivo-12 for onward data management and analysis. After importing the transcripts into QSR NVivo-12, the researcher began an inductive thematic analytical framework as proposed by Vaismoradi, Jones, Turunen, and Snelgrove (2016) thematic analytic framework. Within this framework, themes were developed by undergoing four main processes, namely: initialisation, construction, rectification, and finalisation. All of the field notes that were taken during the interview sessions with the study participants were also typed and translated from shorthand writing to full-text transcripts that would be compared to the verbatim transcripts. This comparison was made to ensure that there was consistency and that the verbatim transcription was a true reflection of the voices of the visually impaired who participated in the study.

3.6.2 Analysis Stage

Stage 1: Initialisation phase

In the first stage, that is, initialisation, all materials involved in the data collection process were read extensively. These materials included field notes and the verbatim transcript. Reading these materials was done on three different occasions. This was to allow the researcher to gain a broad comprehension of the data as well as the major concerns in the phenomena under investigation. In other words, reading the transcripts and field notes enhanced familiarity with the data, and also facilitated full immersion in the study (Vaismoradi et al., 2016). Still, at this phase of the theme generation, the nodes function in QSR NVivo 12 was used to assign code to the text data. Coding helps to significantly reduce the quantum of raw materials that are relevant to answer the research questions (Vaismoradi et al., 2016).

Stage 2: Construction phase

The second face of the theme development was the construction phase. At this point, the assigned codes for each file were classified and compared with codes assigned in other files.

This process was done to detect codes that are frequently occurring in the text data.

The researcher achieved this by using the “compare codes between files” function in QSR NVivo 12. The software was able to identify the codes that were similar to other codes in other files. The researcher later combined the frequently occurring codes as one major theme. Thus, ushering the data analysis into the third phase, which is rectification.

Stage 3: Rectification phase

At this stage, the researcher reappraised the codes, labels and classifications through a process of distancing. The process of distancing aligns with the popular idea of qualitative analysis as a self-correcting and circular process that encourages researchers to travel back and forth between the study method and results to guarantee congruence between the study focus, data collecting procedures and analysis. In effect, reflexivity is achieved, thereby improving the confirmability of the findings. Vaismoradi et al. (2016) argue that this phase is known as the verification phase. The reason is that; it is at this stage that the researcher verifies the emerging issues from the study. Now, in this particular study, the researcher related the generated themes to established knowledge from literature. An in-depth literature review was completed after the themes had been generated to avoid introducing biases into the analysis process.

Stage 4: Finalisation phase

Finally, the last phase was the finalisation stage. The emerging themes and sub-themes are aligned with the literature to provide much context for the interpretation of the findings. Following that, these themes were applied to the whole data set and supplemented with brief

descriptions that elaborated on the main themes (Skjott-Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019). The preliminary findings from the thematic analyses have been presented in Table 3.4.

3.6.3 Methodological Limitations

This section of the chapter reflects the limitations of the research methodologies that were adopted to arrive at the findings of the study. The use of semi-structured interview procedures in conducting data collection enabled the researcher to explore the individual experiences of the visually impaired persons who participated in the study. Nevertheless, this approach to collecting data was limited in some regards. The study relied on the retrospective accounts of the visually impaired persons as to their transitions in employment. This retrospective nature of the research approach had the potential to create recall and self-reporting bias. That is, there is a possibility that the visually impaired might have transitioned between several employments before the study. Therefore, they might not be able to fully recall the challenges and situations surrounding their transition between employment before the study. This difficulty in recalling the past could either result in under-reporting or over-reporting of the issues of interest (Bellman, Bryman, & Harley, 2018). Furthermore, because semi-structured interviews were used as the principal technique of study, the researcher was necessarily implicated in the participants' narration of their experiences (Gioia, Corely, & Hamilston, 2013). Nonetheless, the researcher sought to limit the likelihood of recall bias by carefully selecting research questions, selecting an acceptable data collection technique, investigating persons with a newly diagnosed condition, or employing a prospective design. Also, the use of a qualitative research approach does not allow for the generalisation of the study findings to all visually impaired persons in Ghana.

3.7 Research Philosophy

Philosophy is the heart of research as it shows the epistemological and ontological stance of the researcher. While there are several philosophies including positivism, subjectivism, realism, structuralism, interpretivism, etc., the present study was guided by phenomenology as a research philosophy. Specifically, hermeneutic phenomenology guided the data collection and analysis. This research philosophy aims to explore and describe the essence of the phenomenon under study as experienced by the participants. It acknowledges that individuals have subjective experiences that are influenced by their sociocultural texts. Therefore, this research philosophy aligned with the aim of this study, which was to explore the lived experiences of visually impaired professionals in their job entry and progression.

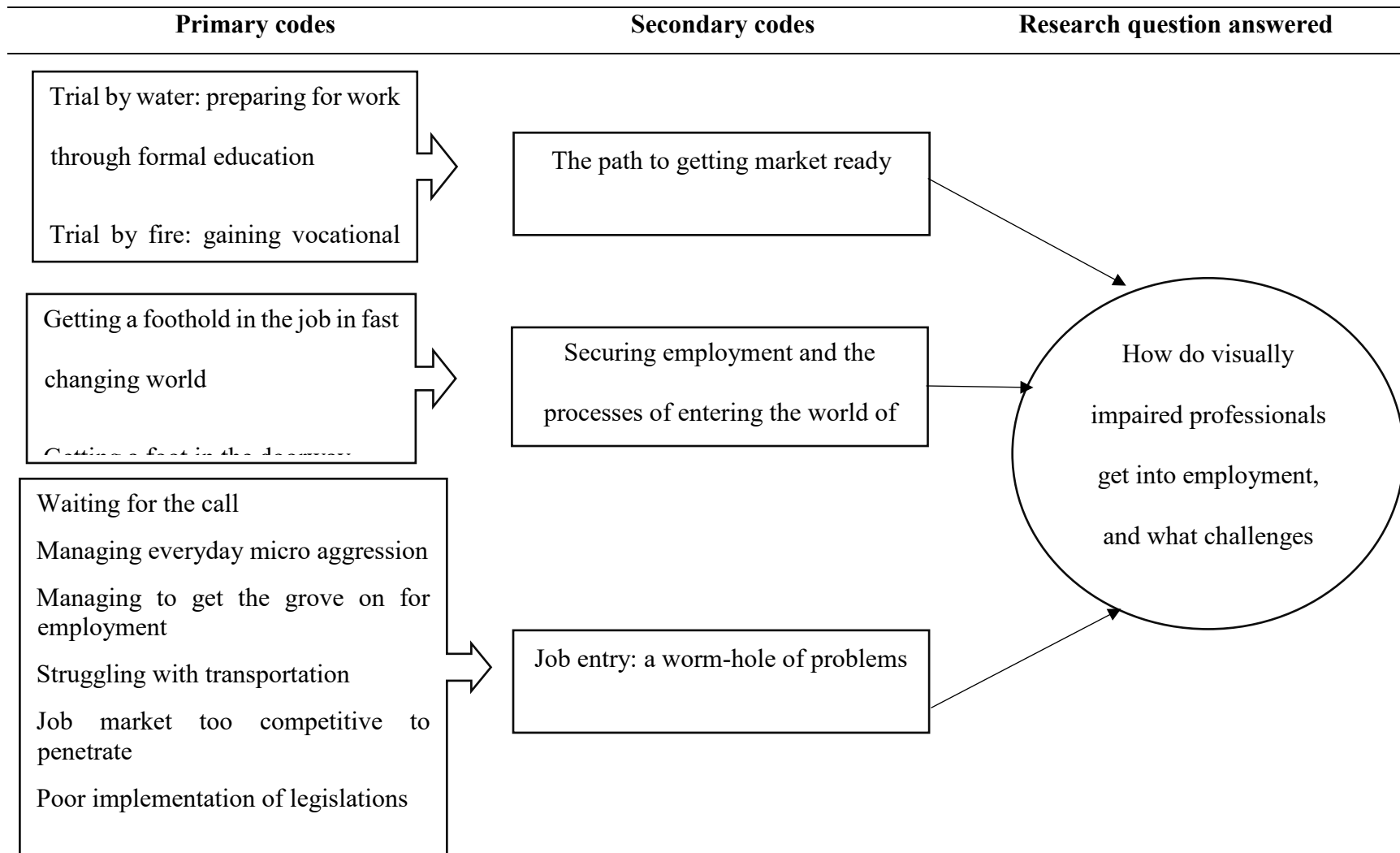
Phenomenology was used to gain insight into the lived experiences of visually impaired persons in many ways. First, the researcher managed to put aside any prior assumptions about the experiences of the visually impaired persons concerning their job entry and progression. Essentially, the experiences of the visually impaired persons themselves were explored and later reflected upon with concerns or theories on the subject. A good rapport was established between the researcher and the participants to ensure that participants were relaxed and comfortable sharing their experiences. All of the lived experiences of the participants were captured in the semi-structured interviews that were conducted. Moreover, each field note taken at an interview session was discussed with the participants and used to prepare and strengthen the subsequent interviews.

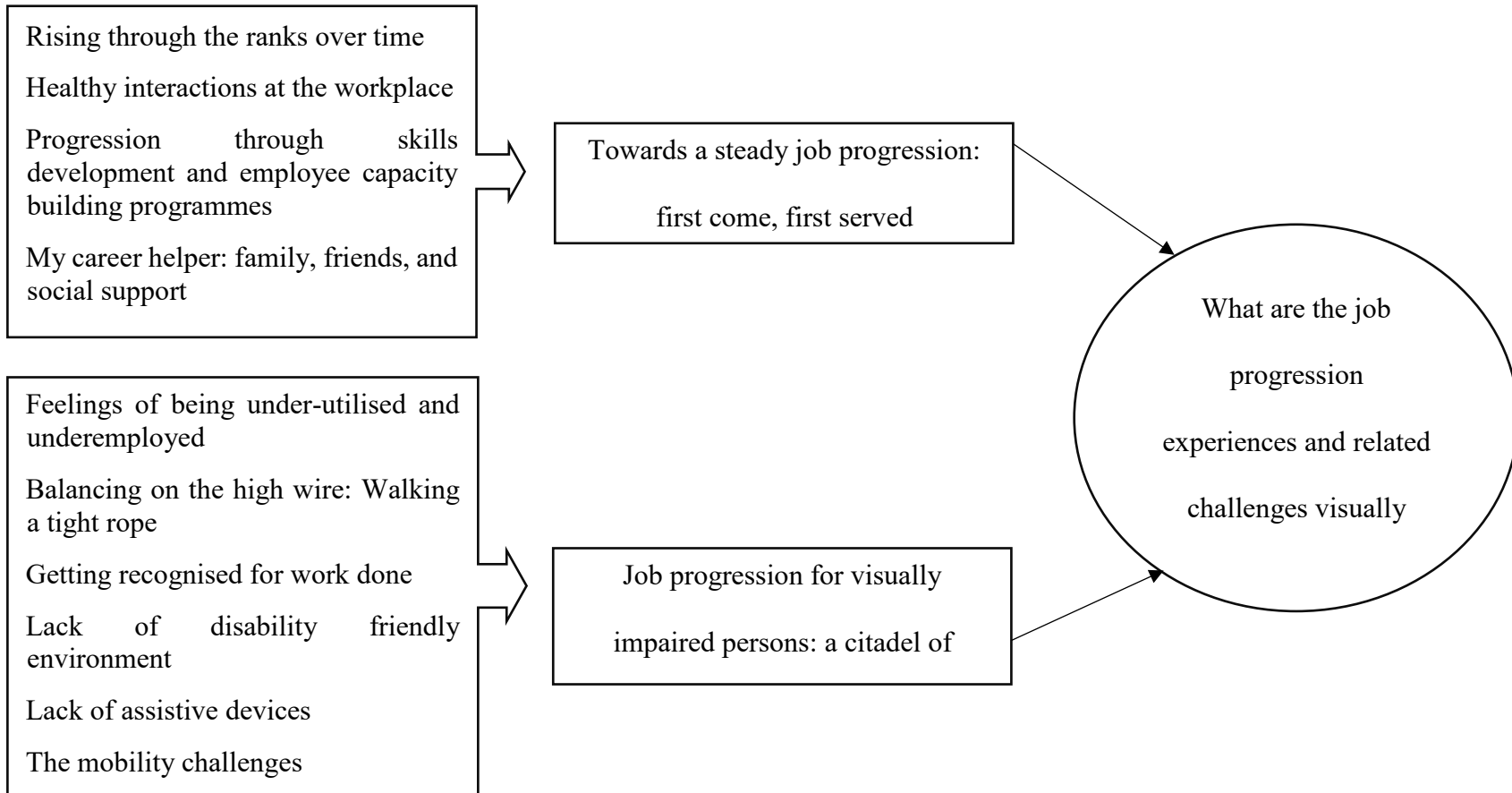
3.8 Chapter Summary

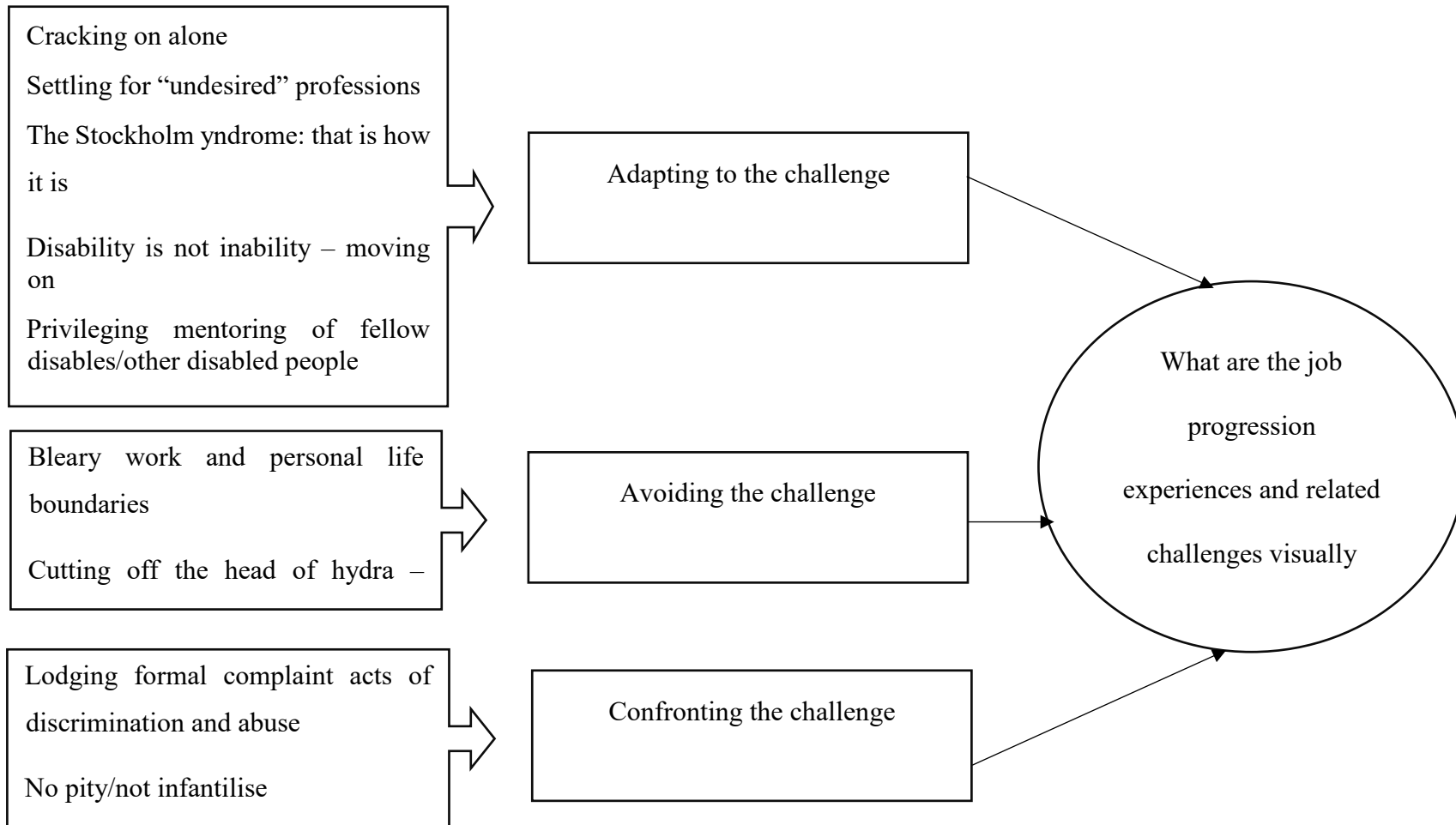
In summary, this chapter was concerned with discussing the research methodology adopted in the study. The study was guided by the interpretive philosophy. Hence, the qualitative research approach was used as the research approach for the study. A combination of purposive and

snowballing sampling techniques was used to sample the population of visually impaired persons to participate in the country. The study relied on semi-structured interviews as the method of data collection, with semi-structured interview guides as the instrument for collecting data from the study participants. In each interview session, the study participants were assured of their autonomy to quit the interview at any point in time and refuse to answer questions that they deem discomforting. Also, the anonymity and confidentiality of the study participants were discussed in this chapter. In all, 28 visually impaired professionals participated in this study. The chapter also discussed how qualitative audio data that was collected from the study participants were managed and analysed. The discussions in this chapter revealed that the researcher applied thematic analysis using the thematic analytical framework by Vaismoradi, Jones, Turunen, and Snelgrove (2016) which occurs in four main processes, namely: initialisation, construction, rectification, and finalisation. The chapter ended with a reflection on the methodological limitations, their implications on the study findings, and how the researcher dealt with these methodological limitations.

Table 3.4: Evolution of codes to themes, and linkages to research questions







Evolution of codes to themes; linkages with research questions

CHAPTER FOUR

GETTING A JOB AS A VISUALLY IMPAIRED PERSON: PREPARATION, PROCESSES AND PROBLEMS

This chapter aims to extend our understanding of visually impaired professionals prepare for and enter the job market. The organisation of the chapter is as follows: the first section draws insights from the participants' narratives to explain the employment pathways of individuals who have visual impairments. The second section highlights how individuals who have visual impairments gain employment. The final section presents and discusses participants' perspectives about the challenges that individuals who have visual impairments endure in their search for employment. The chapter closes with a summary and conclusion.

The themes and sub-themes are summarised in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Emerging themes and sub-themes from the qualitative thematic analysis

Themes	Sub-themes
<i>The path to getting market ready</i>	Trial by water: preparing for work through formal education Trial by fire: gaining vocational skills to meet work job demand
<i>Securing employment and the processes of entering the world of work</i>	Getting a foothold on the job in a fast-changing world Getting a foot in the doorway
<i>Job entry: a wormhole of problems</i>	Waiting for the call Managing everyday microaggression Managing to get the grove on for employment Struggling with transportation Job market too competitive to penetrate Poor implementation of legislation to compel organizations to employ visually impaired persons

4.1 The path to getting market ready

Persons living with visual impairment are a vulnerable population (Blanco, 2021; O'Donnell, 2014). The participants narrated that to get employment, they must get themselves market ready. That is, they had to improve their employability prospects. To achieve this, the participants mainly undertook either vocational and craft training or formal higher education based on the sector of employment that they intended to enter.

4.1.1 Trial by water: preparing for work through formal education

Mainly, individuals with some form of visual impairments who had the aspiration of getting employment in the mainstream formal employment capacities enrolled in formal education. Visually impaired professionals who went through this pathway were mostly those who aspired to be teachers, lawyers and those who yearned to work in the civil or public service. According to Razak, a male between the ages of 40-45 years:

“They think that I cannot work. And so, if I am looking for a job, I have to make sure I have the requisite qualification and expertise for the job. For me, I enrolled in school at the University of Cape Coast where I read a bachelor’s degree in Arts. So, essentially, when I was looking for a job, I was confident that I will find one because I had the qualifications and expertise for the job.” **(Razak, Social Worker)**.

Arhin also narrated:

“It has also been my hope to be a professional teacher. I loved chemistry a lot. And so, I prepared myself for the job by schooling. At the university, I studied for a Bachelor of Science (BSc.) in Chemistry.” **(Arhin, Professional Teacher)**.

Similarly, Nina, a female social worker between the age of 20-29 expressed that:

“For me, I got totally blind at the age of 12...I was enrolled in an inclusive school and then proceeded to the university where I had my bachelor’s degree in Social Work. Currently, I am reading a Master of Arts degree in Management because I hope to take up a managerial position in the foreseeable future... It is all about getting the right qualification and having a bit of luck and the God factor; you will sail through and get the job.” **(Mina, Social Worker)**.

Lawyer Appiah also stated:

“Becoming a lawyer is a very specific profession that requires a specialised set of skills... I had the requisite skills and certifications to get me there. I have a Master of

Arts degree in Alternative Dispute Resolution so that was what did the trick for me.”
(Lawyer Appiah).

Another participant also expressed:

“Well...I enrolled myself in the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC) radio and TV training school. So, right after the training, I was employed. So, the training I received from GBC was what helped me because we did some practical lessons and my supervisor realised that I was good with the console” **(Kwame, Radio presenter).**

It is indicative from the extracted narrations of the participants that one of the key pathways in getting market ready for employment was to have professional qualifications through formal and higher education. This finding is consistent with earlier reports from related studies (Bean-Mellinger, 2019; Jahan & Holloway, 2020). According to Jahan and Holloway (2020), visually impaired persons as well as other PWDs who had an easy entry into the job market were those who had formal education and possessed the necessary academic qualifications that fit the job. On the other hand, those who did not have higher levels of education and lacked the requisite qualifications were bound to have a difficult time finding a job. A plausible explanation for this finding could be that higher education empowers individuals who have visual impairments to be assertive, proactive, innovative, and risk-taking. These are high-level qualities that pitch individuals who have visual impairments at the high end of the employability spectrum, thereby becoming significantly attractive for employers to consider for employment or placement in a firm (Jahan & Holloway, 2020). An important aspect of this finding was that, like Mina who got completely blind at an early age, visually impaired persons who had their condition at an early age or from birth were enrolled in the supportive educational environment that shaped their employability prospects. This finding, thus, underscores a need for all stakeholders including the government, parents, and persons with visual impairment to prioritise the pursuit of formal or higher education because it is evident from the narrations that it does improve the

employability prospects of the person living with visual impairments and subsequently makes entry into the job market easier.

4.1.2 Trial by Fire: gaining vocational skills to meet work job demand

As indicated, while some individuals who have visual impairments maximised the pathway of higher education to increase their employability prospects and gain an easy entry into the job market, others who did not have the opportunity of receiving higher education followed the pathway of vocational skills training to prepare themselves for employment. Some of the participants enrolled in skills training programmes organised by the Ghana Blind Union and National Vocational Training Institute (NVTI). These vocational training programmes equipped visually impaired persons with employable skills in basketry, artwork, electrical works and other handicrafts. These skills made it easier for individuals who have visual impairments to develop a skill set that matches the current industrial needs. Hence, making them more attractive for employment.

In Eric's statement:

“I went for training at the rehabilitation centre. At the end of the training, I was given a National vocational training institute (NVTI) certificate. It was through this training that I got the job. After completing the training, I was offered a job at the rehabilitation centre. That is where I continue to work.” **(Eric, Senior Crafts Instructor).**

Doe also stated that:

“To ensure that I will get employment, I needed to have some skills so that I can find some form of employment. So, I heard of a craft training that was being organised by the Ghana Blind Union. So, I joined the training and learnt basket weaving. After the training, there was an opportunity for them to recruit some of us to become craft instructors. Because I excelled during our training, I was shortlisted and later offered the job as a crafts instructor.” **(Doe, Crafts Instructor).**

Some visually impaired persons who had their condition during their adulthood while in active employment, resorted to enrolling in vocational skills training as a pathway to continue in their employment so that they would feel more comfortable. Some of the participants who faced this

experience trained in computing skills as these created more opportunities for them and made them more useful to be retained in their current employment.

Austin narrated:

“So, when I came to Ghana Blind Union for my computer training, they saw my inputs. And after the training, I was asked to fill in some recruitment forms. Two years later, I had a call from them that a German IT company was looking for PWDs to employ”
(Austin, Accountant).

Vocational training entails instructing students in a specific skill that will help prepare them for a certain vocation (Markowitsch & Hefler, 2019). Every nation's social and economic progress depends heavily on vocational education. This is because the availability of suitable skills paves the way for underprivileged and disadvantaged groups, such as persons living with visual impairments, to effectively participate in the job market (Mprah, Gyamfi, Edusei, Dogbe & Owusu, 2015). The account from the participants supports this assertion that vocational training is an important pathway that prepares visually impaired persons for employment. Similar findings have been reported in other studies conducted in Nepal (Prasai, 2010), Bangladesh (Nuri, Hoque, Waldron & Akand, 2012), and Ghana (Mprah et al., 2015). The results revealed that individuals with visual impairments who could not enrol in formal and conventional education relied on vocational training to gain employable skills that facilitate their employment prospects and ultimately reduce dependency and poverty. However, unlike the findings from Mprah et al.'s (2015), the study showed that vocational training programmes were not very relevant to the employment needs of visually impaired persons. This study revealed that visually impaired individuals who participated in vocational training programmes gained employment as a direct outcome of the training received. This finding highlights the significance of vocational training as an employment pathway for individuals who have visual impairments. Therefore, policymakers, the government, and other relevant stakeholders involved in the welfare of persons living with visual impairments must work collaboratively to

develop policies and interventions that promote vocational training skills. Vocational skills training such as woodcraft, liquid soap making, goods packaging, computer software operation skills, etc. should be made available to all visually impaired persons. This could include strengthening already existing vocational training opportunities for visually impaired persons living in Ghana through the provision of more financial and material resources as well as creating a conducive environment to support the development of vocational training for persons with visual impairments.

4.2 Securing Employment and the Processes of Entering the World of Work

While visually impaired persons were prepared to be market ready for employment through the pathways of formal education and vocational training, their actual entry into the job market was complex and nuanced. This section discusses the participants' narrations about the sources of information about employment and how they got into their current employment.

Mainly, participants described their entry into the job market through advertisements, recommendations, and the completion of related entry examinations.

4.2.1 Getting a Foothold in the Job in a fast-changing world

In the ever-changing world of work, getting employment is difficult for most people including individuals who have visual impairments. Therefore, having an effective source of employment information is imperative to securing employment. The most often stated sources of information about employment for individuals who have visual impairments are advertisements and job assistance services. For instance, it was reported in a study conducted in Ireland that advertisements gave individuals who have visual impairments the requisite information needed to facilitate employment (McLoughlin, 2017). The participants from this study alluded to this assertion by also indicating that advertisement was the main source of information to get a foothold in the job.

Austin narrated that:

“After my computer training, I heard of an advertisement about a new company that was opened by a German company. So, I followed up on the advertisement I heard to go to the Ghana Blind Union to fill out some forms which were later sent to the company. Later I was called for an interview at the company, but I got the call for the job two years later.” **(Austin, Accountant).**

Mina also stated:

“I heard an advertisement for recruitment into the civil service. So, I went through the examination, and interview before the final selection. After passing the interview, I was called to come for the appointment letter.” **(Mina, Social Worker).**

Abena, programmes manager also reported that:

“Oh! I would say it was through an advertisement I heard about. A friend at the Ghana Federation of Disability Organisations (GFD) sent me an advertisement for a job opening for a programme manager. And so, I followed the information and requirements stated and then applied for the job. After a while, I was called for an interview for the job. I went for the job interview, spoke my mind, and then left. After a couple of weeks, I was called that I was selected for the position.” **(Abena, Programmes Manager).**

Previous studies have shown that access to employment information through advertisement is a significant barrier to employing individuals who have visual impairments

(Ghapark, Azman, Faudzi, Baskaran & Rahim, 2022; Opoku, Mprah, Dogbe, Moitui & Badu, 2017; Verulava & Bedianashvili, 2021). However, the present study showed that individuals who have visual impairments had access to employment information mainly from advertisements. These advertisements provided information about job openings that individuals who have visual impairments could apply for. The findings also revealed that this source of employment information was an effective way of getting a foothold on the job. This is because advertisements opened up opportunities for individuals who have visual impairments to apply for the job and get called for an interview which is an important milestone in the job search journey.

4.2.2 Getting a Foot in the Doorway

The study also revealed that for visually impaired professionals who were employed in the social welfare service or educational sector, there were substantial bureaucracies. As such, their entry into the job market was mainly through recommendations from persons whom they already had some relationship with, such as family members, friends, and social networks formed during the period of their mandatory national service. These social networks (which include friends, family members, and acquaintances) were key in identifying employment opportunities and communicating employment opportunity information to individuals who have visual impairments. Moreover, this network of people lobbied for visually impaired persons who were qualified for the job but were struggling to get a job. In other words, they were responsible for recommending visually impaired persons they knew to employers and on some occasions compelled employers to offer individuals who have visual impairments a placement in their organisation or company.

Razak, a social worker had this to say:

“It was through the office of the national chief Imam. A letter was written through the then Minister of Employment and Social Welfare, E. T. Mensah, as a way of appealing to him to help me get a job. There was employment that I got during my national service period. But I had a problem with that job which forced me to go to the national chief Imam’s office to complain. So, in response to that, the office of the national chief Imam wrote that letter to the then employment minister, appealing to him to grant me a job. That is how come I ended up as a social worker although my background was in education” **(Razak, Social Worker)**.

Bismarck also narrated:

“I got into the Ghana Blind Union per a piece of information that was given to me. They were looking for a project coordinator somewhere in 2016. So, I applied and God being so good, I was selected for the job. So, I got here through the recommendation of a friend” **(Bismarck, Social Development Officer)**.

These participants also expressed similar experiences with their job entry:

“I got into my current job based on a recommendation from the Ghana Blind Union to the regional director for Ghana Education Service. Had it not been for the regional director, then I would not have gotten a job. I didn’t know him at all but when he listened to me he followed up on the issue. So, if I had not insisted on seeing the

director, they would have just taken the letter and not given it to the director” (**Isaac, Principal Superintendent**).

Similarly, Ansah stated:

“I got this job through the recommendation of a friend. She asked me to submit my CV and cover letter. Then she followed up on the application from the CEO. They invited me for an interview which I attended, and after that, I was employed.” (**Ansah, Community Relations Officer**).

The result highlights the importance of social networks and relationships in securing employment for an individual who has a visual impairment. Previous studies have also found similar findings that indicate that social networks and relationships formed serve as an important source of recommendation in linking individuals to employment information and opportunities (Baffour, Twum & Baah-Boateng, 2019; Buettner, 2017; Cingano & Rosolia, 2012; McDonnall & Crudden, 2015; Trimble & Kmec, 2011). For example, McDonnall and Crudden (2015) asserted in their study that employers tend to have an intimate relationship with vocational rehabilitation agencies. Hence, these vocational rehabilitation agencies recommend individuals who have visual impairments for any employment opportunity that comes along the way. Thus, providing the individual with a foot in the doorway. This finding, thus, iterates a need for visually impaired persons to effectively build their social networks because these networks serve as an employment support system to them. These notwithstanding, the findings suggest that visually impaired persons are on their struggle to get employment, and therefore have to rely on their families, friends, and social networks to lobby to get into the workforce (employment). This is an important issue that calls for greater attention by all stakeholders who are concerned with the welfare of individuals with visual impairments and their livelihoods, especially in the area of employment. Although not stated by the participants, a plausible explanation for this situation may be the existing bureaucracies

and institutional unwillingness to employ visually impaired persons (Colella & Bruyère, 2011; Vornholt, Villotti, Muschalla, Bauer, Colella, Zijlstra & Corbière, 2018).

Another possible explanation for this finding may be the ineffective implementation of the Disability Act of Ghana which calls on employers to have a quota in their workplace for PWDs, including individuals with visual impairments (Attipoe, 2017; Wickenden, Thompson, Mader, Brown & Rohwerder, 2020). Therefore, organisational interventions to enhance the employment process for visually impaired persons must focus on eliminating or limiting the existing bureaucracies that compel individuals with impairments in their vision to move through social networks to lobby for job placements. Moving forward, disability organisations can serve as an employment support centre or create an employment support centre to link qualified visually impaired persons to job placements that suit their expertise and skills. The need for a dedicated support system cannot be overemphasised because the current status quo implies that persons with visual impairment who lack well-connected social networks would suffer to get employment information and the necessary support services to get a job placement.

4.3 Job entry: a worm-hole of problems

From the inductive thematic analysis conducted, it was revealed that visually impaired professionals faced some challenges in getting recruited into their trained profession. Under this section, six main themes were generated, namely: waiting for the call, managing everyday micro aggression, managing to get the groove on for employment, struggling with transportation, the job market too competitive to penetrate, and poor implementation of legislation to compel organisations to employ visually impaired persons.

4.3.1 Waiting for the call

It is evident from the literature that the road to getting employed or receiving a job placement is a long process (Jayamanne & Ramanayake, 2017; Kerekes, 2005). In this long process, there

is that hope that burns deep in the hearts of the applicant waiting patiently for the call. However, there are times that this wait for the call that an offer is being made for a position can be very long and frustrating, hence, becoming a significant challenge to visually impaired professionals (Getie, Ayaneh, Dessie & Ayele, 2020). For instance, Getie et al. (2020) found in their study that new graduates spend an average of 15 months waiting for the call for job placement. This was the case for most of the visually impaired professionals who participated in this study. For visually impaired professionals who are fortunate to pass the CV screening phase to the interview, they were faced with another challenge of having to wait for a long time to get a reply from the recruitment team. According to the participants, such long wait periods subjected them to psychological distress as they became anxious and depressed. Eric, a senior crafts instructor reported that:

As usual, whether you are disabled or not, you are going to face challenges in finding a job. But once you are a PWD, and in my case being visually impaired, it becomes worse because you don't have the sight to go around looking for jobs. For my job, after I applied to be a crafts instructor, I had to wait for an entire year before I was finally given the job offer **(Eric, Senior Crafts Instructor)**.

Alex also expressed that:

For me, the long period that I had to wait was by far the biggest challenge. You go for an interview, and you expect that they will call you to let you know whether you have been employed or not. I even became depressed as a result of this. **(Alex, Assistive Technology Manager)**.

Visually impaired individuals face long waiting times to be called for employment. This finding implies that many of the visually impaired persons who participated in the current study remained unemployed for a long time. As postulated by Gilmore and LaRochelle Cote (2011), unemployment can be categorised under three main categories, namely: R1, R2, and R3. According to Gilmore and LaRochelle Cote (2011), unemployment in R1 includes discouraged searchers, those recently laid off and those who have been waiting for replies. Thus, indicating the long wait times for replies from employers suggests high unemployment among individuals

who are visually impaired revealing that these long waiting periods had adverse effects on the mental health of the individuals with visual impairments who participated in the study. Similar findings have been reported in a previous study that showed that long waiting times resulted in frustration which exacerbated the risk of psychological distress including anxiety and depression (Donaldson, 2017). This finding has significant implications for policy and practice. The result highlights a need for employers to reduce the wait times of individuals who apply for a job. This could include providing regular updates and timely feedback to visually impaired persons who apply for employment opportunities. Such timely feedback is imperative to reduce the frustrations that visually impaired persons endure during the wait for a call from an employer.

4.3.2 Managing Everyday Microaggression

Managing everyday microaggression was one of the most recurring challenges that were common across all the study participants. According to Sue (2010, p. 5), “microaggressions are the brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioural, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial, gender, sexual orientation, and religious slights and insults to the target person or group”. In other words, microaggression embodies an act of discrimination against members of a minority group (including visually impaired persons) that is considered to be indirect, subtle, or unintentional.

Consistent with evidence from previous literature (Donaldson, 2017), employers are hesitant to employ individuals with visual impairments. Visually impaired professionals who participated in the presented study opined that in the quest to find employment in their trained professions, they are labelled and denied employment due to their condition. According to the participants, employers deny them the opportunity of being interviewed immediately after they realise that the applicant for the job is a visually impaired person.

Kwame, a visually impaired radio presenter had this to say about microaggression:

I had some knowledge of radio and so I decided to go to some private radio stations for employment. But they rejected me. Some of them told me that their equipment is not compatible with the visually impaired. I went to several radio channels, but they did not offer me a job. I completed my degree in 2007 and did my national service in 2008. The employers did not even check my certificate. They would just tell you that they think you cannot do the job. Sometimes, I listen to the voices on the air, and I think I am better than them. So, if they are employing these people, then why are they not employing me? (**Kwame, Radio Presenter**).

Bismarck also expressed that:

There are times when I apply for a job and they [employer] see that I am disabled, they don't call me for an interview. They think that you will use brail to work instead of asking us about how we will work. Some of them [employers] can even pass comments like, "Abled people are struggling to do the work and so what can someone without sight do to make the company productive? Such utterances are so derogatory and demeaning. Sometimes, I wonder whether they have considered that they [employers] can also become disabled (**Bismarck, Social Development Officer**).

Similarly, Isaac, a visually impaired teacher, narrated that:

The new headmaster who was posted to my school after my national service knew nothing about my competence. All he knew was that I was visually impaired. I think that was where the hatred started. He didn't care to find out whether I could do the work. He just had a problem with me being a visually impaired teacher in a mainstream school. He argued that I should be in the school for the blind, and not in the mainstream school. (**Isaac, Principal Superintendent**).

Ansah, a community relations officer also stated:

Mainly, people are ignorant about the capabilities of people with disabilities. So, when you write to any organisation for employment, they look down upon you because they define you by your disability. So, they disqualify you based on your disability. Secondly, those who do not disqualify you outright tend to doubt your capability to work. I think these were the main reasons why it took me a long time to get employed as a visually impaired person. It is more or less like they don't offer you the chance to prove yourself as capable and efficient (**Ansah, Community Relations Officer**).

The UNCRPD expressly states that any discrimination against persons living with visual impairments that result in them being denied employment opportunities or having their professional advancement slowed down because of their disability status is categorically regarded as a complete violation of their dignity and fundamental rights (Fraser Butlin, 2011;

Mégret, 2017). Also, section one of the Persons with Disability Act, 2006 (Act 715) states that under no circumstance should a visually impaired or any other person with a disability be subjected to any form of discrimination either by their place of residence or even by an employer (Asante & Sasu, 2015). Discrimination occurs when a candidate for a job is turned down without being given the chance to demonstrate that he or she is qualified for the position based on their disability status. Nonetheless, this study revealed that there were substantial cases of discrimination that were manifested through microaggression. According to the study participants, there were incidents whereby employers refused to employ individuals with visual impairments. This denial of employment was often not backed by any evidence systematically evaluating the competence of the individual to perform work-related obligations and responsibilities.

This result corroborates previous quantitative and qualitative studies that have reported similar findings. For instance, this result is consistent with a study in England (Coffey, Coufopoulos & Kinghorn, 2014) that reported that visually impaired persons endure micro-aggression from employers. Similarly, a study conducted in New Zealand found that microaggression was a recurring barrier to job entry of the visually impaired who seek employment (La Grow & Daye, 2005). Tobias and Mukhopadhyay (2017) also conducted a qualitative study in Namibia that revealed that discrimination against visually impaired persons was a major challenge to their job entry. The findings could be explained by several factors. One of the plausible explanations for this finding could be that employers hold stereotypic views and misperceptions about visually impaired persons, their capacity to work effectively and their role in contributing to overall work performance (Colella & Bruyère, 2011; Jans, Kaye & Jones, 2012; Kaye, Jans & Jones, 2011; Maina, 2016; McDonnall et al., 2013; Rao, Horton, Tsang, Shi & Corrigan, 2010; Vornholt, Villotti, Muschalla, Bauer, Colella, Zijlstra & Corbière, 2018). For instance, McDonnall and Antonelli (2018) reported in their study that, implicit attitudes of employers

such as their attitudes about the performance of visually impaired individuals were a significant factor that was associated with micro aggressionism. As such, employers hastily result to denying individuals who are living with some visual impairment the opportunity of being employed.

Another possible explanation for this finding could be employers' concerns about the additional costs that are associated with employing visually impaired persons. This postulation is substantiated by the extract narrative from one of the participants who asserts that "employers think that you will use brail to work instead of asking us about how we will work". This implies that employers have the perception that employing a visually impaired person will mean that they have to invest in providing assistive devices and enabling environment which often comes with additional cost. Hence, becoming a disincentive for employers to accept visually impaired persons. Similar evidence has been reported in a related study that found that visually impaired persons struggled with discrimination from employers who thought that the employment of an individual with visual impairment required making a significant adjustment at the workplace and was associated with increased production cost (Coffey, Coufopoulos & Kinghorn, 2014). Analogously, other studies have also corroborated the findings that employers' concerns about providing individuals who are visually impaired with supportive assistive devices are an inseparable factor that influenced the employment experience of persons with visual impairments (McDonnall & Crudden, 2018; McDonnall et al., 2014).

Essentially, the findings from the current study illustrate most employers often respond negatively when they meet a candidate for a job who is visually impaired. Employers have doubts about the employment performance of those with visual impairments. The survey also revealed that companies have little understanding of the visually impaired population and their potential. Microaggression and prejudice towards those who identify as visually impaired are

made worse by these issues. Therefore, policies and interventions targeted at improving the employment prospects and acquisition for visually impaired persons must place a high priority on awareness, advocacy, and education of employers. Employers need to be oriented and sensitised about the rights of visually impaired persons to be employed. Also, the findings from this study underscore a need for the Ghana Blind Union and the Federation of Persons with Disabilities to strengthen advocacy efforts and increase educational campaigns that strive to bring to the fore the everyday microaggression that visually impaired persons suffer at the hands of employers. Such interventions would be worthwhile in drawing the consciousness of employers to the realities of individuals who identify as having some form of visual impairment. Evident in the findings from this study was the fact that employers were hesitant to employ individuals who are visually impaired because they felt employing them would be accompanied by significant cost and liability. Therefore, if the government effectively implements the policy of providing tax relief for employers who employ visually impaired persons, then employers would be highly motivated to employ individuals who have some form of visual impairment.

4.3.3 Managing to get the grove on for employment

The world of work has undergone massive transitions and transformations over the last three decades. These days, it is not enough to be the most qualified candidate or individual for the job. The individual's "grove", self-confidence and sheer bravado for the job are unquestionably important in helping individuals to secure employment. The situation appears not to be different for visually impaired individuals. From the accounts of the study participants, they sometimes felt unsure about themselves and their competence to be selected for employment. One of the participants puts it this way:

As I said before, some of these employers don't even allow us to showcase what we have as visually impaired persons. Because of that, I sometimes felt like I was not the

best. Because of my blindness, I sometimes feel like I don't have what it takes for employers to find me attractive enough to decide to employ me. **(Anisah, Community Relations Officer).**

Bismarck also asserted that:

My sister, it is not easy oh! There were times that because of the long period, it took for them [employers] to get back to me, I began to feel like maybe I am not fit for the job. They just didn't help us at all and so, we also get discouraged and feel inferior to our colleagues who have no disabilities. Even among persons with disability, we the ones with visual disabilities are the most disadvantaged because we have no sight to see the facial expressions of the employer when they are interacting with us. So, that alone reduces your confidence **(Bismarck, Social Development Officer).**

It is evident from the present study that struggles with self-confidence were an important challenge to visually impaired persons who try to navigate their way to securing employment. This finding aligns with a plethora of literature that has also documented that a lack of self-confidence adversely affects the job-seeking behaviour of individuals who are living with some form of visual impairment (Chhabra, 2021; Low, Cao, De Vos & Hickman, 2020; Jahan & Holloway, 2020; Salleh & Zainal, 2010; Schwartz, Blue, McDonald, Giuliani, Weber, Seirup & Perkins, 2010; Vornholt et al., 2018). Jahan and Holloway (2020) in their study revealed that a lack of confidence on the part of individuals who have visual impairments contributed substantially to the difficulties that they encountered in the employment search.

The findings from the present study are synonymous with that of Shaw, Gold and Wolfe (2007) who reported that individuals with visual impairments lost confidence to search for jobs after failed attempts from previous job search activities.

For visually impaired persons who developed their condition on the job, the fear of not having the skills and capacity to perform as before was the reason for their reduced self-confidence.

This situation significantly impacted their integration into work. Austin expressed that:

“For me, I was trained as a professional accountant, and I had been working for years before I had this condition. And so, when that happened, I lost my groove. I thought I

was not going to be fit to work as an accountant. I think that thought was one of the most damaging things that happened to my career because I stayed a while away from anything related to accountancy.” **(Austin, Accountant)**.

This result is consistent with previous studies that have shown the lack of employable skills appropriate to the job applied for by the individual who is visually impaired accounts for low self-confidence among this marginalised population (Bean-Mellinger, 2019; Jahan & Holloway, 2020; O’Malley & Antonelli, 2016). The result is an indication that individuals with visual impairments require employment or job support services to enable them to measure their employability skills and help those with limited employability skills to gain access to additional training modules to augment their skill set and make them attractive to employers to provide a job offer. This is corroborated by O’Mally and Antonelli (2016) who reported in their study involving college students who are categorised as legally blind. The authors concluded that providing employment support services such as mentoring had a statistically significant positive effect on job hunting and job-seeking self-efficacy. In the case of Austin, he hoped to overcome this challenge by springboarding or leveraging on Ghana Blind Union as an employment support service provider. Similar findings have been reported in a study by Capella McDonnall and Crudden (2015) that employers had strong ties with vocational rehabilitation agencies; therefore, individuals who are visually impaired and use the services of these vocational rehabilitation agencies were more likely to get employment.

Also, the current findings call for more targeted efforts to provide individuals who are living with some form of visual impairments with empowerment programmes and advocacy. This is extremely given that several visually impaired individuals who participated in the study reported having low self-confidence. These advocacy programmes must strive to develop the self-worth and self-identity of individuals who have visual impairments. Visually impaired persons need to be encouraged to persevere and develop grit. In other words, individuals who

have visual impairments ought to be motivated to not easily give up when it takes a long time for employers to get back to them on their employment status, or when they are refused employment opportunities. A combination of perseverance and an enabling job entry environment that has effective employment support services would ultimately culminate in the successful entry of the individual who has visual impairment into the world of work. This must be the grand end game of all policies and interventions that are developed to enhance job navigation, job search and securing of employment for individuals who live with one form of visual impairment.

4.3.4 Struggling with transportation

Transportation and mobility play a pivotal role in job seeking for visually impaired individuals. This assertion was re-echoed in the present study. Visually impaired persons who participated in this study revealed that they had challenges with getting a reliable source of transportation to job interviews and follow-ups on jobs applied for. According to the participants, this situation made them late for job interviews, thereby painting a picture that individuals who are visually impaired are not committed to work responsibilities.

Joshua narrated that:

For me, I think that being able to get an easy means of transportation to the interview session is the most important thing for me. I recall that when I was searching for a job, I sometimes had to go outside of Accra for job interviews. This meant that I had to get a means of transport that was reliable, and I could trust the driver. So, I usually boarded Bolt or Uber, and that was very expensive for me. **(Joshua, Manager).**

Abena, programmes manager also reported that:

Transportation is the main problem for people like me. I say this because I sometimes get job offers from locations that are far away from where I stay. As such, if I don't have money for transportation, then it means that I have to forfeit that job interview. **(Abena, Programmes Manager).**

Other visually impaired persons who participated in the study opined that challenges in transportation impacted the type of employment or job offers that they showed up for and

eventually accepted. The informants exhibit a very distinct trend of actively researching transportation alternatives to decide which jobs to apply for and actively reflecting on transportation options about available opportunities. After performing this cost and benefit analysis, the individual with visual impairment now decides which job application would be the most feasible and which job offer will result in less stress on transportation.

Ansah is a visually impaired community relations officer who rides on Bolt and Uber each day. Due to the high cost of transportation, he preferred jobs that were near them to avoid high transportation costs. In the voice of Ansah, he narrates:

For me, transportation is everything to me. I know my condition [that is, being visually impaired] and so, I don't want a situation where I will suffer to get to work or get to the location for an interview. That is why I purposed not to apply for any job that was far away from me. **(Ansah, Community Relations Officer)**.

Sam also expressed that:

For us as teachers, it is the government that posts us to the schools. We do not go for interviews of any sort but when it comes to taking a job posting, I am concerned about the distance of the place to where I live. If the posting is to a remote area or a place that is too far and I need to spend a lot of money on transportation each day from school to home, then I will not accept it. I will rather go for a position that is close by so that I can get support from my family and spend less on transportation each day. **(Sam, Teacher)**.

Marfo, a trained teacher also narrated:

When my posting came after my national service, I just listened to the information about where I had been posted to. At that time, I was posted to Agoti in the Volta region. I don't know if you know there but it is one of the rural communities in the Volta region. And here I was in Accra as a visually impaired person. I knew that this was not going to work for me because I would not get money to transport myself to the Volta region. Moreover, I have all my family members who would support me in Accra. And so, it was a not satisfactory thing for me. **(Marfo, Professional Teacher)**.

Also, visually impaired persons who participated in this study reported that they were more akin to accepting a job offer if the employer had intentions to provide them with a means of transportation. Here is what one of the participants had to say about the situation:

When I am accepting any job offer, I consider whether the employer is going to provide me with some form of transportation allowance or a means of transportation. So, if the employer has no plans to provide me with any support for my transportation, then I would have to defer the job offer (**Mina, Social Worker**).

The findings from this study indicate that transportation is a serious challenge that affects the job-seeking and job prospects of individuals who are blind or have some form of visual impairment. It is evident from the findings that challenges associated with transportation reduced the job options available to visually impaired individuals. This result is consistent with the findings of a previous study that found transportation challenges to have a significant adverse effect on the type of jobs that individuals with visual impairments can apply for and the kind of employment offers that they can accept (Bjerkan, Nordtømme, & Kummeneje, 2013). Similar findings have also been reported in a quantitative study by Lubin and Deka (2012) that showed the significant association between transportation challenges and the employment opportunities available to individuals who have visual impairments. The results from the present findings are consistent with a related study that revealed that visually impaired persons' challenges in terms of accessing and navigating transportation had an adverse effect on the job offers that individuals with visual impairments apply for (Lindsay, Cagliostro, Leck & Stinson, 2021).

Based on the findings from this study, it is imperative for policies and interventions geared towards improving the job entry of individuals who have visual impairments to prioritise transportation systems for this vulnerable population. Also, the finding is a call for employers to invest in electronic or remote job interviews to reduce the transportation burden of individuals who have visual impairments. It is also important for employers to assure individuals who are blind or have some form of visual impairment that they would be provided with support systems like transportation allowances or free and reliable means of transport. Additionally, individuals who are blind or have some form of visual impairment require special

education about mobility. This will be significant in psyching individuals with visual impairments to be willing to take up job offers that may not be necessarily near their place of residence. When these interventions are initiated and effectively implemented, it would increase the wealth of job opportunities that are available to individuals who are blind or have some form of visual impairments, as well as increase their chances of accepting job offers that hitherto, they would have refrained from accepting.

4.3.5 Job market too competitive to penetrate

The competitive nature of the job entry market was one of the emerging challenges associated with employment access for individuals who are blind or have some form of visual impairment. According to the visually impaired informants who participated in this study, they felt the job market entry was too competitive for them to access. To these participants, a little competition is good, however, the status quo is such that the job market automatically filters individuals seeking entry into the job market and places visually impaired persons at the lower end of the employability spectrum. One of the participants had this to say concerning how competitive job entry is a challenge to their eventual access to employment:

My sister! It is not easy at all oh! Hmm...I don't know if it is a general issue but getting into the job market these days has become very competitive. It is too competitive for my liking. Because of the competitive nature of entry into the job market, even your colleagues and other people who could have helped you to get access to information or links to job openings will be hoarding this information. **(Joshua, Manager)**.

Razak, a visually impaired social worker also contended that:

These days, there are limited job opportunities and so, there is tight competition. So many people are chasing few job openings. You will apply a billion times and you will be rejected. If you are not lucky, they will not even call you for an interview. Once they see on your CV that you are visually impaired, you will be automatically kicked out of the competition because there are a lot of people who are equally qualified and not having any disabilities. That is the reality that we face regularly, and I am afraid things might get worse because of the rising population **(Razak, Social Worker)**.

Bismarck also shared his perspective on the issue:

These days it is not easy to get employment oh. Sometimes, the company needs only two development officers but about 100 people will apply for the job. Out of that 100 people, you might be the only visually impaired person amongst them. So, you can just imagine. The probability that they will choose you among those two people who are to be employed is so slim because they have the competitive advantage of their sight which you do not have (**Bismarck, Social Development Officer**).

It is evident from the current study that individuals who have visual impairments perceived entry into the job market as being too competitive, hence, making it difficult for them to get their foot into the job market. Analogous findings have been reported by Antonelli, Steverson and O'Mally (2018) who revealed in their longitudinal study that job market competition was a significant challenge to the eventual entry of individuals who have visual impairment into the job market. This finding implies that visually impaired individuals who are qualified for a particular job opening may not go ahead to apply for the job because they bear the perception that the job entry is too competitive. A plausible explanation for this finding could be attributed to the fact that individuals who have visual impairments often experience self-stigma and decreased self-confidence (Chhabra, 2021; Low et al., 2020; Schwartz et al., 2010; Vornholt et al., 2018). Therefore, employers must demonstrate fairness in their evaluation of employment applications from both individuals who have visual impairments, and those who have no disability. Employers must ensure that job offers are based solely on merit and not because of the disability status of the individuals. By doing so, the rhetoric and current narrative surrounding the competitiveness of entry into the job market would be dispelled, thereby raising the confidence and competitive spirit of individuals who are blind or have some form of visual impairments.

4.3.6 Poor implementation of legislation to compel organisations to employ visually impaired persons

To provide an equitable environment to support individuals who have visual impairments to have access to employment, several laws and conventions from the international community

and locally have been initiated. These include the UNCRPD and the Disability Act of Ghana. Despite the availability of these legislative instruments, visually impaired persons who participated in this study contented that the ineffective implementation of the legislation is what accounts for the many challenges that they face in trying to get employment. According to the participants, the challenges that they faced with entry into their current occupation could be attributed to the absence of clear laws to force an organisation to not discriminate against individuals who are blind or have some form of visual impairment. In the view of the participants, in situations where there are legislations, the poor implementation creates a leeway for employers to leverage and go contrary to the tenets of the laws and conventions guiding the employment of visually impaired persons. One of the participants shared this view:

There are no legislations to compel organisations to employ those of us who have visual impairments. So, if you are not trained to be a teacher, then you are in trouble because it is difficult competing to get employment. So, the entry point is the problem (**Isaac, Principal Superintendent**).

From the perspective of Mina:

For the laws, there are a lot of things that have been said about making access to employment easy for us. In fact, the Disability Act even mandates employers to have a quota of their employees to be people with disabilities, and this includes us as people who are blind or have some form of visual impairment. The problem is the implementation of these laws. Plenty of laws but very little is being done to implement all of those laws. (**Mina, Social Worker**).

From the above narratives of the participants, it is evident that the poor implementation of legislation governing the employment of individuals who are blind or have some form of visual impairment was considered an important challenge to job entry. This finding is corroborated by earlier studies from Ghana (Attipoe, 2017) and Kenya (Wickenden, Thompson, Mader, Brown & Rohwerder, 2020). For instance, the result aligns with Attipoe's (2017) study that found the inaccessibility of the Disability Act as a major challenge to the

employment prospects and journey of disabled persons including individuals who have visual impairments. According to Attipoe (2017), there have been reports that there is no law in place to put the Ghana Disabilities Act's provisions into practice. Due to this circumstance, companies only partially or completely implemented the rules of the disability act, which decreased the number of people with disabilities who could enter the workforce and advance in their careers.

Similar to this, multi-country research found that companies in Kenya did not adhere to the quota system intended to guarantee an equitable distribution of individuals who are blind or have some form of visual impairments across all economic sectors due to the ineffective execution of the country's current disability employment regulations (Wickenden, Thompson, Mader, Brown & Rohwerder, 2020). The findings from the present study are thus, a clarion call to the implementers of the Disability Act of Ghana to strengthen the implementation of the legislation. This would have to be accompanied by effective and regular monitoring and evaluation of the implementation process. That is the surest way of identifying non-compliance to the stipulations of the Disability Act and initiating timely remediating strategies to bring all employers to order. While the focus of the implementers of the Disability Act is a significant step in the right direction, visually impaired individuals should not be excluded from this process. The rights and responsibilities of visually impaired persons as stipulated in the Disability Act of Ghana must be made known to individuals who have visual impairments. As the saying goes, "For the lack of knowledge, my people perish". Therefore, arming visually impaired professionals who go out seeking employment with information about their rights and responsibilities would make them more assertive and likely to insist that employers comply with directives of the Disability Act.

4.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter expands the frontiers of the current discourse and scholarship on the job entry experiences of individuals who are blind or have some form of visual impairment. Mainly, the discussions of the findings were done around three primary themes, namely: the path to getting market ready; securing employment and the processes of entering the world of work; and, job entry as a worm-hole of problems. The findings from this study showed that the path to getting visually impaired professionals ready for the job market was not a strait jacket approach. Some individuals who have visual impairments prepared for the job market through formal education while others prepared for the job entry by developing their employability skills by enrolling in vocational training. This finding highlights the significance of appropriate education and skills in enhancing the employability attractiveness of individuals who are blind or have some form of visual impairment. Moreover, the result underscores a need for visually impaired persons poised for employment to dedicate time and financial resources to gain the necessary skillset and education that would make them valuable to employers. It also suggests that policies, programmes, and activities that are implemented to enhance the job entry experience of visually impaired persons must be tailored towards vocational skills development and formal education acquisition. On that note, the government must strengthen its support to the Ghana Blind Union, Federation of Persons with Disabilities, and non-governmental organisations involved in activities with the necessary resources that will enable them to provide quality vocational training and education to individuals who have visual impairments.

Regarding how individuals with visual impairments gain information and access their current employment, the study revealed that it was either through advertisements or recommendations from friends, families and acquaintances. The findings revealed that visually impaired persons who needed information and access to employment had to rely on their friends, family members and social networks to lobby for employment. However, if the disability organisations were

adequately resourced, they could have served as an employment support centre or created an employment support centre to link qualified visually impaired persons to job placements that suit their expertise and skills. The need for a dedicated support system cannot be overemphasised because the current status quo implies that persons with visual impairment who lack well-connected social networks would suffer to get employment information and the necessary support services to get a job placement. Therefore, policy priority must be channelled towards resourcing disability organisations like the Ghana Blind Union to serve as effective employment support agencies.

In line with the theoretical framework of this study, that is, the bio-psychosocial model, the study revealed that some psychological and social factors served as challenges to the successful entry of individuals who are visually impaired into the job market. Among the emerging themes included waiting for the call, managing everyday micro aggression, managing to get the groove on for employment, struggling with transportation, the job market being too competitive to penetrate, and poor implementation of legislation to compel organisations to employ visually impaired persons. The results show that waiting periods for job applicants need to be shortened. This can entail giving prompt feedback and regular updates to visually impaired people who seek jobs. To lessen the frustrations that people with visual impairments experience while waiting for a call from an employer, such prompt feedback is essential.

The finding from the study suggests that employers need to be informed about the employment rights of people with vision impairments. The study's findings also highlight the necessity for the Ghana Blind Union and the Federation of Persons with Disabilities to step up their advocacy efforts and educational programmes to highlight the frequent microaggressions that employers inflict on people who are blind. Such interventions might be beneficial in bringing employers' attention to the realities of people who identify as having a visual impairment of some kind. The results of this study made it clear that companies were reluctant to hire people who are

visually impaired because they believed doing so would result in high costs and liabilities. Employers would, therefore, be heavily incentivized to hire people who have some sort of visual impairment if the government successfully executes the policy of offering tax exemption for employers who employ visually impaired people.

This study also advocates for more focused efforts to offer advocacy and empowerment programmes to those who are living with some type of visual impairment. This is particularly noteworthy because numerous visually impaired research participants expressed poor self-confidence. The goal of these advocacy programmes must be to help people with visual impairments grow in their sense of self-worth and self-identity. People who are visually impaired need to be inspired to endure and grow fortitude. In other words, people with visual impairments need to be encouraged to keep trying even when they receive a slow response from an employer on their employment status or when they are turned down for job prospects. Patience, a supportive atmosphere for job entrance, and effective employment support services would eventually lead to the successful integration of the individual with visual impairment into the workforce. This must be the ultimate objective of all regulations and programmes designed to facilitate work navigation, job searching, and employment for those who have some form of visual impairment.

It is evident from the study that prioritising mobility networks are critical to policies and interventions aimed at facilitating employment entrance for those with visual impairments. Additionally, the finding is a plea to employers to spend money on electronic or remote job interviews to lessen the strain of travel for those with visual impairments. Employers must ensure that those who are blind or have other visual impairments get supportive services, such as transportation allowances or access to affordable, dependable transportation. Additionally, specific mobility instruction is needed for those who are blind or have other visual impairments.

This will be important in motivating people with visual impairments to accept job offers that might not be conveniently located near where they live. When these interventions are started and successfully carried out, it will increase the number of employment opportunities that are available to people who are blind or have some other form of visual impairment, as well as their likelihood of accepting job offers that they would previously have declined.

In summary, job search and navigating into the job market is a complex, non-linear process that is nuanced by a plethora of challenges. There is, therefore, a need for a collaborative effort from all stakeholders including visually impaired individuals, disability organisations, employers, and the government to ensure a smooth transition into the world of work. Ultimately, attitudinal change on the part of employers would result in a greater positive outcome on the employment entry of individuals who are blind or have some form of visual impairment. These attitudinal changes must be met with an enabling work environment to motivate individuals with visual impairment to apply for jobs that they qualify for.

CHAPTER FIVE

PROGRESSING ON THE JOB: EXPERIENCES AND CHALLENGES

This chapter explores the career progression of the visually impaired. It is organised around two lines of attention: the first section leverages the narratives of visually impaired professionals to explicate, their job progression experiences. The second goes further to unpack the situated challenges that confront them as they aspire to progress through the ranks in their respective employments. The chapter closes with a summary and conclusion.

5.1 Towards a steady job progression: first come, first served

At this point, the study explored how visually impaired professionals progressed in their jobs. The main issues were to assess whether visually impaired professionals in employment were optimally utilised and whether they had been promoted or received on-the-job training to enhance their human capital. The results from the study revealed distinct, yet interrelated patterns of individuals rising through the ranks with time, experiencing healthy interactions at the workplace, and progression being possible by the support of friends and families.

5.1.1 Rising through the Ranks over Time

Moving from one position to a higher rank in an organisation is a critical marker and indicator of job progression. From the study participants' accounts, they had been promoted in their respective job. Almost all of the participants had been promoted from their entry-level position to a higher position over the period that they have been employed. Persons with visual impairments had to serve a stipulated number of years in their place of employment before they could become eligible for any sort of promotion from one level to another. According to the participants, the availability or the opportunity for them to get promoted after being employed for some time brought about some feelings of self-actualisation and a sense of fulfilment.

Eric, who is a senior crafts instructor shared his experience by stating:

“I have been promoted about two times since my point of entry. My first employment offer was as an Assistant Craft Instructor, then I was promoted to Senior Assistant Craft Instructor before I was finally promoted to Senior Craft Instructor.” (**Eric, Senior Crafts Instructor**).

Similarly, Isaac narrated that:

“I was recruited as senior superintendent 1. But later, there was a policy that said that newly graduated teachers should start at a level higher than Senior Superintendent 1. Currently, I have been promoted to Assistant Director 1. So, I have been promoted about three times. I moved from Senior Superintendent 1 to Principal Superintendent then now as an Assistant Director 1.” (**Isaac, Principal Superintendent**).

In the view of Bismarck, getting a promotion at work as a person living with some form of visual impairment is easier because the organisation operates on a time-bound promotion scheme. Therefore, individuals who are employed at about the same time are promoted as a cohort. He states that:

...I am saying this because for us in the civil service, it doesn't matter whether you have disabilities or not, you will be promoted based on the date you were employed and the number of years that you have served in your current employment. For my place, you have to do three years of employment before you will become eligible to apply for a promotion. Once you have fulfilled that time criteria for promotion, there is no way you will be denied a promotion. (**Bismarck, Social Development Officer**).

Austin also shared his experience with promotion:

As I said, I got my condition while I was gainfully employed. As such, I had to go to the Ghana Blind Union for training and also change my job. When I got my new job, I was not denied the opportunity of promotion because of my disability status. I have been promoted about two times already. Next two years, I will be eligible for another promotion. So, I think that my experience with promotion has not been bad at all. It has been smooth. (**Austin, Accountant**).

It is indicative from the accounts of visually impaired persons who participated in the present study that, the road towards job progression has mainly been through the conduit of promotions.

To the participants, promotions were the surest way to progress on the job. Also, the results revealed that in most settings, the disability status of the individual was not a factor that informed the promotion opportunity to persons living with visual impairments. Rather, it was premised on the time that the individuals were employed. Therefore, a visually impaired person who was employed at the same time as a person without any disability would be eligible for

promotion at about the same time. That is, it indicates a system of first-come-first-served. The results from this study are in agreement with the findings of a related study that showed that traditionally, the career success and progression of employees, including individuals who live with some form of visual impairments, is measured by the number of promotions that they experience over the tenure of their employment (Beatty, Baldrige, Boehm, Kulkarni & Colella, 2019). Thus, suggesting that visually impaired professionals who receive several promotions over their tenure would have had greater career success and a steadier job progression.

5.1.2 Healthy Interactions at the Workplace

For visually impaired professionals to be able to successfully progress in their respective jobs, there is a need for them to have a healthy working environment where they are at peace with themselves. This is important to maintain a work-life balance. The present study revealed that visually impaired professionals had healthy interactions with their colleagues which created an enabling environment for them to progress in their job.

Mina also stated:

“I thank God for that. It has been good. They [colleagues] see me as their senior because of my experience and expertise. So, I can say that the majority of them respect me. There may be some bad nuts, but they are very few. Because of that, I can focus on my task and exhibit the best version of myself to my colleagues, subordinates and seniors. So, when there is an opportunity for a workshop or training to advance our skills and competence as employees, I am always among the first choice of my boss. It is all because of the good working relationship that exists here.” (**Mina, Social Worker**).

Marfo, a trained teacher also narrated:

“So, my employers were not strict on me. They accommodated my new status as a visually impaired teacher. For example, I was not queried for absencing myself from staff meetings. Even if we are having staff meetings and it is getting late, my headmistress will permit me to exit much earlier. They all know my status, so they understood my condition. Besides, I was the only PWD at the school. My colleagues treated me with a lot of respect and love. Their attitude was welcoming. When my headmistress came, she took me to the eye clinic twice; she paid for those two visits.” (**Marfo, Teacher**).

Notwithstanding this positive feedback, some of the participants opined that at the initial stage of their employment, there was some friction with their colleagues at the workplace which was a threat to their successful progression had it remained unabated.

A visually impaired radio presenter shared his experience:

I had a lot of friends there. So, indeed I had a decent working experience. There was no discrimination whatsoever on the job. It was the very first day when I reported to work that some of the people at the studio were murmuring because they did not know what I was going to do there.” (**Kwame, Radio Presenter**).

Ansah also expressed this sentiment:

I must say that I have been promoted several times at my place of work. At the initial stage, my colleagues were giving me a tough time because they thought that after all, I was visually impaired, so I was not going to work and that I was just going to stay in the background and leave all the work to them. But after a while, they got to see how competent I am. I am not boasting but most of them know that I am far more competent than they are. Because of this hard work and perseverance I showed on my job, I became the favourite of my boss. That has opened up loads of opportunities for me to participate in capacity-building programmes like workshops and conferences. So, it has been a wonderful journey after getting employed (**Ansah, Community Relations Officer**).

This study shows that maintaining healthy interaction among employees in the working environment is an important pathway that facilitates the job progression of professionals who are living with some form of visual impairment. Throughout the study, the participants reiterated the point that the interactions at their respective workplaces were a factor that made them feel accepted and confident to work and progress in their daily tasks. The result is corroborated by a related study conducted in Cape Town, South Africa where the authors revealed that the positive perceptions of disabled people about their working environment and the supportive interactions were critical to the job progression of PWDs including individuals living with some form of visual impairments (Soeker, De Jongh, Diedericks, Matthys, Swart & van der Pol, 2018). A plausible explanation for this could be that when there is a healthy work environment and interaction between visually impaired professionals and their fellow

non-disabled colleagues, it brings about a sense of meaning, significance, and purpose (Williamson, 2011).

Another plausible explanation for this finding could be that, through the healthy interactions and working conditions experienced by individuals who are living with visual impairment, there is a sense of meaningfulness that is related to the point that the visually impaired person feels he or she would receive a substantial return on the investment of their physical, cognitive and emotional energy (Eide & Loeb, 2005). Essentially, these healthy interactions between professionals with visual impairments and their colleagues at the workplace provide a sense of belonging, meaningfulness, purpose, drive and satisfaction for their jobs. These are important tenets in promoting steady job progression and career development for employees who are living with some form of visual impairment.

5.1.3 Progression through skills development and employee capacity building programmes

There is unequivocal evidence to show that staff capacity-building training modules are imperative to the job progression of any employee (Berdahl & Malloy, 2018; Briscoe-Palmer & Mattocks, 2021; Carter, Cook & Dorsey, 2009). Often, job progression from an employee's perspective is seen as simply being promoted from one level to another or receiving a gradual increment in one's salary. Such a perspective is myopic and limited. Beyond having the qualifications for the job and being promoted from one level to the other, job progression includes the capacity of the employee to advance significantly in terms of their competencies. That is, the employee, including professionals who have visual impairments, must develop competencies around key issues such as "critical thinking and problem-solving, written and oral communication, digital technology, professionalism and work ethic, teamwork and collaboration, leadership, and global and intercultural fluency" (Briscoe-Palmer & Mattocks,

2021, p. 47). These skills and competencies are often not developed directly on the job; rather, they are gained through conscious skills development and capacity-building programmes such as seminars, workshops, and conferences. The participants from this study alluded to the point that, not only did they progress on the job through conventional promotions that come after serving in a particular role over some time, but they also benefited from skills development and employee capacity building programmes either organised by their employers or a third party. In situations where these capacity-building programmes are organised by a third party, the employer of the visually impaired person financed the individual's participation in the workshop or conference.

Enoch, a Programmes Officer who has been working for five years shared his experience regarding his career progression through skills development and employee capacity-building programmes:

For me, I will always say that my employers are the best. My reason for saying this is simple. Throughout the five years that I have been working with them, I have participated in about three workshops. Through these workshops, I learnt some new approaches that I finally brought to support the project that we are running in my organisation. Because of how successful I was at transferring knowledge from the workshops that I attend onto the job, my boss has decided to make me a constant employee who will attend any workshop or conference presentation that is related to our work activities. **(Enoch, Programme Officer)**.

Greg, an Assistant Development Officer also shared that:

I think that the workshops and conferences that I have attended throughout my stay here as an employee of this organisation also count as a type of job progression. I think that these capacity-building programmes have shaped me as an individual, made me confident and assertive, and much more competent when it comes to my job performance. So, I can confidently say that it has helped me to develop and progress steadily as a visually impaired professional. **(Greg, Assistant Development Officer)**.

Ansah also opined that:

Like I said initially, I have become the favourite of my boss, and that has opened up opportunities for me to attend conferences and workshops necessary to assist me progress faster in my career compared to my colleagues who do not get the opportunity to attend these programmes.

The results of the study are indicative that having the opportunity to develop one's skills and competencies on the job was regarded as a significant marker of job progression and career development for individuals living with some sort of visual impairments. The study showed that skills development and capacity building of the visually impaired professional was mainly through the conduits of workshops, seminars, and conferences. Similar findings have been reported in Cape Town, South Africa where PWDs including visually impaired persons reported that they progressed on their job through skills development that was made possible by the availability of active participation in workshops and career skills training programmes (Soeker et al., 2018).

The role of skills development and capacity building programmes is to ensure that the visually impaired person is equipped and abreast with the current skills necessary for the open labour market (Soeker, Van Rensburg & Travill, 2012). This ensures that the person living with visual impairment remains competitive and relevant to whatever organisation that they have been assigned to for employment. Therefore, should the visually impaired person decide to exit from their current employment, they are most likely to leverage the skills and competencies that they have built to secure a new job and progress through the employment ladder in their new role. The findings suggest a need for stakeholders of employment for visually impaired persons as well as employers to prioritise skills development and capacity building pieces of training for employees who have some form of visual impairment, be it total blindness or partial visual impairments.

5.1.4 My career helper: family, friends, and social support

The participants from this study revealed that their job progression was not only limited to the activities and nuances at the workplace. They asserted that the influence of other factors such as the support they received from their immediate family and friends was a facilitating factor

that allowed them to easily progress in their jobs. From the accounts of the study participants, their friends and families provided them with the necessary tolerance, flexibility, and information that prepared them and assist the transition through the journey of work.

Appiah shared this experience:

For me, I will say that I was able to progress in my job as a lawyer because of the support that I have from my family. Being visually impaired, married, having a child and working is no child's play. Initially, it was difficult for me to juggle all of these responsibilities. However, with the support I had from my family, I was able to juggle all of these responsibilities without forgoing any of them. Moreover, I had the opportunity to pursue a Master of Arts degree in Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), and that is a plus to me in terms of my progression at work. (**Appiah, Lawyer**).

Joshua also stated that:

My partner has been very supportive because when I was struggling to get a job, she was there with me. When I got the job, she was considerate. She did not give me any unnecessary pressure. As such, I was able to focus and dedicate my time and effort to my work and my development in my career. That is how come I moved from being just a sales guy to a manager. (**Joshua, Manager**).

Alex, an Assistive Technology Manager also shared his experience:

My friends and family have been my career angels. One of my friends was the one who introduced ICT to me and encouraged me to take that bit seriously because there are a lot of employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. So, I followed his advice and studied information technology as a skill. Through that, I ended up getting the opportunity to work in my current workplace. I have applied those skills here and now I have become a manager. (**Alex, Assistive Technology Manager**).

The results highlight the role of family and friends in the job progression of visually impaired professionals. Similar findings have been reported by Costello (2020) who revealed in a study conducted among female academics that job progression, in general, was influenced mainly by the availability of social support from important support networks such as one's family and friends. That is, this social support received by visually impaired persons helps in "bridging social capital" to assist them in "getting ahead" (Johnson, Honnold & Threlfall, 2011, p.12). What this means is that for individuals with visual impairments who have access to social networks, their progression on the job would be easier and smoother as compared to individuals

with visual impairments who have access to no social network support as in receiving support from friends and families to effectively juggle work and life responsibilities. Hence, individuals with visual impairments who have no access to support from their family and friends are likely to face serious challenges with maintaining a work-life balance.

If left unabated, this struggle to maintain work and life balance may derail the focus and attention off the job and activities that would have placed them on the path of progressing easily and quickly through the employment ranks. Rather, their attention will mostly be on trying to strike that balance between work and life outside the workplace. Not only is the availability of support systems important to the progression of the visually impaired professional; but it is an important factor that also influences the mental health and psychological well-being of the employee who has visual impairments. Therefore, there is a need for visually impaired persons to widen their social networks when they are employed. Through these networks, the individual who is living with some form of visual impairment is likely to receive the necessary psychological, physical, and emotional support to churn out positive energy around the person. This positive energy would eventually motivate the visually impaired person to also take conscious actions to progress in the employment ladder.

5.2 Job progression for visually impaired persons: a citadel of unending challenges

The present study revealed that visually impaired professionals experienced innumerable challenges at their workplaces. These challenges included feelings of being under-utilised and underemployed, exclusion from managerial positions, lack of assistive devices, stereotypes and misperceptions about visually impaired professionals, transportation challenges, and lack of a disability-friendly environment.

5.2.1 Feelings of being under-utilised and underemployed

Under-utilisation and underemployment are real phenomena that occur in the workspace. Underemployment can be defined as a time-related factor (i.e., working fewer hours than one desires), or as encompassing issues of “over qualification, uncertainty about the job, underpayment and a lack of formal working conditions” (Zhu & Chen, 2022). The present study revealed that despite the promotions, participation in skills development and capacity building programmes that visually impaired professionals enjoyed, and the concomitant healthy interactions they had with their colleagues, they experienced feelings of underutilisation and underemployment. This feeling of being underemployed or under-utilised was borne out of the view that visually impaired professionals were often given fewer tasks than what they are capable of achieving.

Doe shared his experience of feeling unemployed and under-utilised:

My work is not that demanding of me. That is also a challenge because it brings about under-utilisation. Sometimes, you feel under-utilised. But my colleague gets more used than me because, for her, this is her field. **(Doe, Crafts Instructor)**.

Marfo also narrated that:

Apart from the head teacher, I was the next person with the highest educational attainment. But because of my disability, they had to choose someone from kindergarten to become the assistant head teacher. So, it means that the responsibilities that I had to play were passed to somebody. So, I felt under-utilised **(Marfo, Teacher)**. Kwame expressed his sentiments about feeling under-utilised with regard to how gradually the company reduced the number of radio shows that he did:

Because we are in a human institution, it is just normal for us to have a situation where there will be some challenges. For instance, I used to do both lunch and nighttime programmes. But for no reason, I was taken off the lunchtime programme. So, currently, I work only on the night programme and the health programme. Thankfully, it did not have any effect on my remuneration. But I felt that I was being under-utilised because I can do more than just the night show. I can do a lot, but I am only given this role. **(Kwame, Radio Presenter)**.

Melisa also had this to share:

I think that things are not right when it comes to promotion. Can you believe that ever since I got employed, I have not been promoted? They have not increased the number of responsibilities that I have to perform. So, it is more or less like I am stuck where I am. There is no progress whatsoever. But most of my colleagues that I got employed with about the same time have been promoted. You can see that they are doing more for the organisation because they have been given that opportunity. But for me, I don't know if it is because of my disability, I am just where I started. Because of that, I have developed the feeling that I am not going anywhere. (**Melisa, Social Worker**).

Ato a social worker who has been working for about five years shared his experience concerning the issue that he has not been upgraded to the status of a permanent worker since his employment some five years ago. The narrative below encapsulates Ato's perspective about the issue:

Hmm...my sister. It is not easy oh! Ever since I was employed, I have not been promoted. I have stayed in my designation as a temporary worker on probation. I just don't know any probation that lasts as long as this. It is frustrating and irritating but what can I do? At least, I am employed and paid for something that can cater for my everyday needs. (**Ato, Social Worker**).

A similar view was shared by Gladys. This is how she states it:

Since I had employment as a social worker, I have not progressed. Apart from the occasional training that we have, it is like I am going nowhere. I say this because I am still regarded as a temporary worker instead of as a substantive worker. The problem with this designation is that any time there is a challenge and there is a need to lay people off, we that are in the category of temporary workers would be the first to suffer. (**Gladys, Social Worker**).

Feelings of under-utilisation, stagnation, and underemployment were recurring issues among the study participants. They expressed their frustrations and anxieties about their capacity not being optimised to the fullest capacity, while others lamented being stuck in a monotonous system where they are perpetually regarded or designated as temporary workers. These findings are consistent with evidence from previous studies conducted in other jurisdictions such as Australia (Milner, King, LaMontagne, Aitken, Petrie & Kavanagh, 2017), Canada (Benoit,

Jansson, Jansenberger & Phillips, 2013), South Africa (Soeker et al., 2018). For instance, Milner et al. (2017) have revealed in their study that many persons with disabilities, including those with some form of visual impairments, experienced significant underemployment; that is, there was a significant mismatch between the number of hours they were assigned to work and the actual capacity or desire of the individual with disability.

In a related study by Goliath (2005), it was revealed that under-utilisation and stagnation of persons with disabilities including those with visual impairments in their respective occupations was a serious issue. According to the findings by Goliath (2005), individuals with visual impairments or other forms of disabilities who were able to advance in their career to a supervisory role experienced stagnation as they remained in that particular role instead of advancing and transitioning further into the open labour market. Corroborative, Soeker et al. (2018) in their study situated in South Africa also found that individuals with disabilities including visual impairments felt like their employment was taking them nowhere; that is, they were not progressing in the job.

Moreover, Milner et al. (2017) showed that not only is this feeling of underemployment and under-utilisation frustrating; it impacts significantly on the mental health of individuals living with visual impairments, or any other form of disabilities. Specifically, individuals with visual impairments, or other forms of disabilities who were underemployed were 1.38 times more likely to experience a significant decline in their mental health. Similarly, in the United Kingdom (Angrave & Charlwood, 2015) and Germany (Wunder & Heineck, 2013), evidence points to the existence of underemployment and under-utilisation of individuals who have some form of visual impairment.

The emerging issue of underemployment and under-utilisation of individuals who have visual impairments is a stain on the spirit of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons

with Disabilities (UNCRPD). In Article 27, the UNCRPD states that State Parties must acknowledge PWDs' right and capacity to work, and further calls for actors to *“protect the rights of persons with disabilities, on an equal basis with others, to just and favourable conditions of work, including equal opportunities and equal remuneration for work of equal value”* (Assembly, 2006, p. 17-18). Therefore, under-utilisation and underemployment of visually impaired professionals is a direct contradiction to the tenets of Article 27.

A plausible explanation for the persistent underemployment and under-utilisation of visually impaired individuals in their respective places of employment could be the misguided perceptions about the capabilities of this special population (Colella & Bruyère, 2011; Maina, 2016; Vornholt, Villotti, Muschalla, Bauer, Colella, Zijlstra & Corbière, 2018). In most instances, employers regard disability as inability. Therefore, after making an effort to employ a visually impaired person, employers' doubts and fears about the disabled person take over. This eventually influences every step that they take from that point in time. Based on the findings, it is postulated that another possible explanation for this result could also be due to the lack of a challenging environment at the workplace due to the work tasks not being interesting, being monotonous, or a lack of internal motivation of the workers. To overcome the challenge of under-utilisation, stagnation and underemployment, there must be continuous advocacy for employers, employees with disabilities, and advocacy that target individuals with visual impairments. Such holistic advocacy programmes can ensure that employers are well-educated and knowledgeable about the capabilities and competencies of employees who have some sort of visual impairments. Also, such an intervention is likely to boost the confidence, morale and assertiveness of individuals who have visual impairments to demand initiatives and actions at their organisations to facilitate their job progression and career development.

5.2.2 Balancing on the high wire: Walking a tightrope

Similar to the issue of stagnation, under-utilisation and underemployment, the experiences of the study participants can be likened to balancing on a high wire. As visually impaired professionals did their best to navigate through the occupation, there were latent factors like the stereotypic, myths and misperceptions of colleagues and employers that drew them back. Participants from this study expressed that both employers and employees who have no disability have certain stereotypes and misperceptions about the capabilities of visually impaired professionals. According to the participants, employers have the perception that they are incapable of working effectively. As a result of these misperceptions and stereotypic attitudes towards individuals with visual impairments, they were unable to advance in their occupations. The following extracts and narratives reflect the participants' views about these attitudinal challenges that retard the career development of visually impaired persons.

Melisa, a social worker had this to say:

It all boils down to stigmatisation, discrimination, and the cultural understanding of disability in the country. It got to a point where I wanted to quit local government service because it was obvious that they were not ready to work with visually impaired persons like me. They always expected me to be at the office doing nothing even though I had also been fully employed. (**Melisa, Social Worker**)

Similarly, Arhin shared his experience:

During my time as a teacher, I was discriminated against and stereotyped. The headteacher did not trust my competence to teach more subjects. So, I was allowed to teach only one course. So, the head teacher was monitoring me while I taught. It was done at my blindside and I felt offended. (**Arhin, Teacher**)

Another participant opined that:

My headmaster took me off some of the lessons that I was previously teaching. Sometimes, my colleague teachers pass some silly comments like, "Eiii...are you sure you can teach this course?" Whenever I hear something like that, I become so much offended because it is an indictment of my personality and competence as a professional teacher. (**Sam, Teacher**).

The present study shows that visually impaired professionals have to struggle to balance on a high wire while walking on a tightrope. Their efforts to prove themselves competent on the job were mainly fraught with their employer's and colleagues' misperceptions and stereotypical attitudes that make them feel inferior and less likely to progress in their career journey. The result is in alignment with Chabot (2013) who reported that employers' biases and stereotypes significantly influenced the job progression of individuals with visual impairments, or other forms of disabilities. Similar to the findings from this study, a related study conducted in the United States (Chan, Strauser, Maher, Lee, Jones & Johnson, 2010) has also revealed that unreceptive attitudes, stereotypes and biases from both employers and co-workers are a threat to the job progression of individuals living with visual impairments, and other forms of disabilities. The findings are also corroborated by evidence from previous studies (Copeland, Chan, Bezyak & Fraser, 2010; Fraser, Johnson, Hebert, Ajzen, Copeland, Brown & Chan, 2010). This result may be explained from the perspective that these stereotypes, biases, and unreceptive attitudes towards individuals who are visually impaired are likely to impact negatively their outlook and appreciation of their job. Eventually, they become dissatisfied, uncomfortable and unhappy with their jobs. This could incite intentions of quitting or not contributing much to the organisation, hence, resulting in low progression in their chosen career.

What these findings imply is that the UNCRPD and the provisions in the Ghana Disability Act are not being fully implemented in the working environment. Therefore, the findings from the present study are a call for the government through the social welfare and other implementing bodies to ensure that the provisions in the Ghana Disability Act are implemented to the latter. Also, the findings suggest a need to intensify the sensitisation of employers about the need to be supportive of visually impaired employees. As a matter of practice, employers must exercise a high level of confidence in visually impaired employees. That is a cost-effective activity that

can be easily implemented to improve the job progression prospects of individuals who are living with some form of visual impairment.

5.2.3 Getting recognised for work done

As social beings, humans yearn for recognition and commendation. This is an important extrinsic motivation for one to aspire for quality and progress to the highest level that their abilities can allow them. Similarly, in the world of work and employment, employees require that recognition as an external source of motivation to develop and progress along their professional journey. Sometimes, this recognition in itself can be progress. In the hierarchy of an organisation, there is top, middle, and lower management. Evidence has shown that most individuals with disabilities, including visual impairments, are often at the lower spectrum of this organisational framework (Ali, Schur & Blanck, 2011; Lindsay, 2011). This issue was reiterated by the participants of this study. Closely knitted to the issue of stereotypes and misperceptions about visually impaired professionals, the study revealed that often, visually impaired professionals are excluded from occupying managerial positions. This, according to the participants, is a result of the stereotypes and misperceptions that employers have about visually impaired professionals.

Mina, who is a Social Worker, expressed that:

Even though it was a disability organisation, they do not have a deeper understanding of the potential of visually impaired persons. For instance, if you are visually impaired, they assign an assistant to you. So, sometimes, they see the assistant doing the work rather than yourself, and that is challenging. Also, they [the employers] allowing you to occupy authority where you will have a lot of responsibilities too is challenging. So, you will see that PWDs like myself are not in any management positions. So, progression on the job is somewhat questionable. (**Mina, Social Worker**).

In the same way, Ansah narrated that:

There is no way you will be given any managerial or administrative role in the school if you have a visual impairment. It doesn't matter what your qualification is. They will always choose someone who is not disabled to take up any vacant managerial or administrative role. I just don't understand this system. They just don't give us the

recognition that we deserve even after working our bodies and minds out (**Ansah, Community Relations Officer**).

Kojo, who is an Assistant Director shared this perspective:

My sister. As I told you at the start of our interaction, I have been promoted to the rank of Assistant Director I. Someone would say I should be happy about that, but I am not happy because it is a shame. Yes! It is a shame because I am way qualified in comparison to the current director. But because I am visually impaired, when my former boss retired, they brought in someone different from elsewhere to become the director here. Like, I was astonished because, in the natural order of things, I was the next senior most and most experienced person to become the director. But they just decided to bring in someone else who doesn't have the amount of experience that I have. (**Kojo, Assistant Director**).

The participants expressed that they strongly believe such unfairness is because of their disability.

Our boss was promoted and given the opportunity to appoint someone to take her position. She rather went for someone who is my junior from another organisation to come to take her position. Meanwhile, I was the one doing most of her work when she was occupying that position. (**Bismarck, Social Development Officer**)

Marfo shared this sentiment:

Also, some of the allowances do not come on time. And also, scholarship for further studies is not easy to access. When you struggle to do it yourself, you will not be compensated. We no longer get the transfer grant. I was transferred from Volta to the Greater Accra region, but I was not given my transfer allowance. (**Marfo, Teacher**)

Another participant expressed that sometimes their colleagues with other disabilities are the ones who unfairly treat visually impaired professionals:

There are times that I have had some people speak rudely to me because they have only social welfare certificate, but I have a master's degree. So, that envy is there. Surprisingly, this behaviour is from my colleague who is disabled. He is physically challenged. He can see me, but I cannot see him. He can see me alright but will not even say hello to me (**Mina, Social Worker**).

While visually impaired persons who participated in the study were employed, they shared concerns about not receiving the needed recognition for the job that they do. The result also revealed that the employers were not enthused with the idea of allowing visually impaired

persons to occupy top managerial positions. This result is corroborated by Ali, Schur, and Blanck (2011) who revealed in their study that only a few visually impaired persons (10.9%) have access to employment in management positions or occupations. The possible explanation for this result is the continuous perceptions of employers that visually impaired persons are unfit and unable to perform the job (Schur, Kruse, Blasi & Blanck, 2009; Sundar, O'Neill, Houtenville, Phillips, Keirns, Smith & Katz, 2018).

5.2.4 Lack of disability-friendly Environment

In the view of the study participants, the built environment of their workplace was not friendly to visually impaired professionals. The absence of ramps and rails to guide visually impaired professionals as they climb the stairs to their offices was a challenge to their work. Not only is this disability unfriendliness limited to the built environment; the mode of communication and correspondence at the workplace was challenging. According to the participants, there are times that correspondence and documentation have been presented in print hard copy. Such modes of communication and documentation made it difficult for visually impaired professionals to independently work on those documents, thereby creating a situation that paints the visually impaired as incompetent.

Appiah shared her views about the situation:

The social welfare department is supposed to work for the vulnerable. So, at least our work should be disability-friendly in the area of physical infrastructure and documentation. Cases and all those things are brought in hard copy form. So, how can we be comfortable with this? We want the documents in brail or soft copy. (**Appiah, Lawyer**)

Razak, who is a social worker shared this perspective:

The built environment is not disability-friendly because there was no provision for visually impaired persons or any disabled person in the building infrastructure. There are no rails to guide you when you are climbing the stairs. (**Razak, Social Worker**).

Another participant narrated that:

Things are not as smooth as we think they are. It is difficult getting into the building each day because my office is not located downstairs but rather on the first floor of our office. As such, it would have been much better if there were rails to support us as we climb the stairs to the office. But there is nothing like that. The last time, I nearly fell off the steps because I missed one step. So, it is not friendly at all. (**Joshua, Manager**).

Consistent with previous empirical literature, this study showed that the non-existence of a disability-friendly working environment is a major organisational-level barrier that truncates the job progression of individuals living with some sort of visual impairments. Related findings reported by Kaye, Jans and Jones (2011) have also shown that when there are no disability-friendly systems in place, then the individual who has a visual impairment, or any other disability is likely to find it difficult to access the work environment. In effect, there is reduced job satisfaction and a heightened sense of turnover intentions (that is, the intention to quit one's current occupation). These factors affected one another thereby culminating in the low motivation or drive for the visually impaired professional to seek to progress in their current career or professional capacity.

Similarly, Kayess and French (2008) have also documented that when the work environment proves to be extremely difficult for individuals with disabilities, including visual impairments, to access, then there would be a lower likelihood of job progression. Rather the continuation of such actions would demotivate the individual and truncate their professional progression in the occupation that they find themselves in. Analogous to this, Kim, Kim, and Kim (2020) in their study of workplace disability facilities showed that employees whose place of employment provided more disability-friendly facilities were significantly more likely to perceive their work environment as safe and had higher levels of job satisfaction; thus, they tended to have higher chances to wish to maintain their present jobs than those whose place of employed offered no or fewer disability supportive facilities. The tendency for visually impaired persons to retain

their jobs also implies that they are more likely to progress in their chosen careers. Given that both the UNCRPD and the Ghana Disability Act call on employers to ensure that their buildings and infrastructure are disability friendly, there is a need to ensure compliance with this policy.

5.2.5 Lack of assistive devices

The potential for IT-based assistive technologies to promote a higher quality of life for people with disabilities, including visual impairment, is expanding as a result of advancements in information technology (IT), particularly mobile technology (Hakobyan, Lumsden, O'Sullivan & Bartlett, 2013). Technology has the potential to improve people's capacity to live freely and fully engage in society. These technologies have evolved to become known as assistive devices or technologies. Common assistive devices such as computers, screen readers and scanners are critical to the work of visually impaired professionals. In recent times, there has been the development of mobile assistive devices that are more specialised and comprise (or are provided by) a variety of portable digital devices, including commonplace ones like smartphones (Billi, Burzagli, Catarci, Santucci, Bertini, Gabbanini & Palchetti, 2010; Hakobyan, Lumsden, O'Sullivan & Bartlett, 2013). Notwithstanding the benefits of assistive technologies to the work and job progression of visually impaired persons, the study revealed that participants had challenges with accessing assistive devices. From their perspective, employers do not provide them with the requisite assistive devices for their work. The following narratives and excerpts reflect the perspectives of the study participants. Abena narrated that:

I have been in the office for about two years now and I am still using my personal computer for official duties. Also, there is no screen reader for me to use. If there was an office computer, I could have pushed for them to have a screen reader. Then I can also push for them to get a scanner so that I can scan all physical documents that come through and respond appropriately. (**Abena, Programmes manager**).

Arhin also shared a similar disposition:

There are no assistive devices for me. So, I bought the computer that I use for teaching and for sending messages to my colleagues. That is what I use. If I rely on the education office, then I will not be able to teach, and they will have the basis to tell me that I am not competent or fit to teach because of my visual impairment. (**Arhin, Teacher**).

In as much as some visually impaired persons reported the absence of assistive technologies or devices, some participants expressed that their employers provided them with a computer and software needed to access documents in the softcopy format. Thus, highlighting the sector variations concerning access to assistive devices and technologies.

Austin, who is an accountant, had this to say about the issue:

In my current employment, we have an office computer that we use for official work. So all I have to do is to install the NVDA. With that, I can easily do more than 80% of my work. I can fill and sign documents online without any assistance from anybody. We also need an integrated development environment (IDE) which is software that is friendly for persons with visual impairment (**Austin, Accountant**).

Appiah also narrated that:

When I get a hard copy document, I get someone to read it out to me. Ideally, they should have provided me with soft copies of every document. Sometimes, when the post something on the notice board and someone does not prompt me, I will not know about it. Before I realise it, time would have passed, and I would have missed the information. (**Appiah, Lawyer**).

The study corroborates previous studies that have shown that the lack of assistive devices and technologies is a threat to the job progression and career development of individuals who have some form of visual impairment (Billi et al., 2010; Hakobyan et al., 2013; Yeager, Kaye, Reed, & Doe, 2006). For instance, in a study conducted in California, United States, it was revealed that the lack of assistive technology was a major barrier to the employment and onward progression of individuals living with disabilities, including visual impairments (Yeager, Kaye, Reed, & Doe, 2006). Relatedly, a study conducted in Bangladesh corroborates our findings that visually impaired persons lack access to assistive technologies to support their job search, retention and progression (Borg, Larsson, Östergren, Rahman, Bari & Khan, 2012). The result

is further corroborated by Stumbo, Martin and Hedrick's (2009) study that found that the lack of, or inaccessibility to assistive technology is a threat to the job progression of individuals who have some sort of disabilities including visual impairments. It is, therefore, unequivocal that the absence of, or inaccessibility to assistive technology is a major challenge that impacts negatively the job progression of the person who has visual impairments. Nevertheless, the study recognises the unique sector differences where employees in foreign-owned enterprises were provided with the requisite assistive devices to aid their work.

The findings, thus, highlight a need for all employers to provide their employees who have some sort of visual impairment with appropriate assistive technologies that match their needs and particular type of visual impairment. This could include making screen readers, software, computers, etc. The governmental agencies in charge of employment and labour relations also need to step up and conduct periodic monitoring of organisations and institutions to ensure that all employers are strictly adhering to the regulations stipulated in the Ghana Disability Act, calling on employers to make assistive technologies readily available and accessible to individuals with disabilities, including persons living with some form of visual impairments. With this oversight in place, employers would be forced to comply with the directives of the Ghana Disability Act and ensure that they have the necessary assistive technology that is tailored to the specific work needs and disability needs of the individual who has some form of visual impairments. Moreover, there is a need to empower visually impaired persons so that they would be more assertive and capable of voicing out their grievances about the non-availability or inaccessibility of assistive technologies. There is no one-size fits all approach. Each organisation must conduct an introspective analysis of the needs of its visually impaired employees and provide the most appropriate assistive technologies that will support the execution of their work duties and facilitate their job progression.

5.2.6 The mobility challenges

Every form of employment may require some level of mobility. That is the ability of the employee to move about freely and easily. Right from the point of job search, the issue of mobility and transportation are key factors that determine how effective an employee would be at performing his or her duties. The present study revealed that visually impaired professionals, in their quest to fulfil their work duties, encounter a lot of challenges in terms of transportation to work and from work. There are no bus arrangements for them, although some of them are provided with some amount of money as a transportation allowance. Some participants narrated how they had encountered some falls and accidents as a result of trying to get a car to take them home. Additionally, due to the nature of their condition, most visually impaired professionals preferred the services of trusted online ride brands such as Uber and Bolt, which tends to be expensive as compared to walking to the taxi rank to get a car home. The perspective of the study participants is reflected in the subsequent quotes, extracts, and narratives. Austin expressed his sentiments as:

There is no bus for transporting us to and from our homes. It is only for work-related activities. Also, because of my condition, when I am walking around, people think I am a beggar. So, they will forcefully want to give you money. Some will also discriminate against you. So, I have to board a lift which is costly and risky but that is what I have to work with. (**Austin, Accountant**).

In the same way, Ansah shared his perspective:

If I don't pick an Uber, then I will have to walk a distance to get a car to a point, then walk another distance to get to my house. So, I resort to Uber which is expensive for me. In terms of security, I try to stay secure by using the screen reader on my phone any time I order a ride. And so, I can monitor the driver's movement. Because of the financial burden of ordering an Uber each day, I applied for a transportation allowance. I pay about GHS 25 each time I take an Uber. (**Ansah, Community Relations Officer**)

One participant shared a narration of how his colleague who was also visually impaired fell into a gutter and got hurt:

Personally, I do not have a problem. But my other colleagues who are visually impaired struggle with transportation or mobility. We try to get apartments closer to work but

we don't get it. One of my friends fell into a gutter after closing late. He got seriously bruised. (**Kwame, Radio Presenter**)

From the perspective of the participants, not only was it challenging for them to get a reliable and safe means of transportation to and from work; because of the challenge they have with mobility, they had to forgo some opportunities that would have propelled them to higher levels in their work progression.

Greg, an assistant development officer had this to say:

My sister, can you believe that there was a time that I was supposed to go for a workshop, but I had to let that opportunity pass by because of my condition and the fact that I can't just take any public transport to a place that I have no idea about. It pained me because if I had attended that workshop, I would have met other people who could become my partners in the future. You never know; those people could become my next employers but because of my inability to easily move about, especially to places that I don't have an idea about, I had to let that opportunity slip by. (**Greg, Assistant Development Officer**).

The biggest obstacle for individuals with disabilities worldwide is transportation (Frye, 2019). It is still difficult to gauge transportation access or even identify those who are most badly impacted. The UNCRPD has, nonetheless, had considerable influence on transportation-related national and international policy. Although there isn't a single transport-related article in the CRPD, it does highlight the importance of transportation for allowing persons with disabilities to access a variety of services, such as homes, schools, healthcare facilities, workplaces, and leisure [CRPD Article 9]. The right of individuals with disabilities to access transportation on an equal footing with others is enshrined in the CRPD. Nevertheless, there are three basic categories into which obstacles to the exercise of these rights can be generally classified: institutional (legislation, political will, policy, etc.); environmental (infrastructure, vehicles, information); and attitudinal (transport staff, other passengers, lack of accessible information, etc.) (Kett, Cole & Turner, 2020). Consistent with previous literature, the findings of this study

showed that transportation and mobility challenges are major threats to the job progression of individuals living with some form of visual impairment.

This finding is consistent with the findings of Crudden, Antonelli, and O’Mally’s (2016) study that showed that the complexities of transportation challenges among persons with disabilities including visual impairment are a major barrier to job progression. Bascom and Christensen (2017) have also indicated that transportation challenges faced by persons with disabilities including those who are visually impaired results in substantial inward looks, social exclusion and poor employment prospects. Possibly, this result could be explained from the perspective that having substantial challenges with mobility and transportation means the individual may not be able to leverage every opportunity that comes for them to progress in their career. For instance, where there is an opportunity for a conference that is far away or will close late, visually impaired persons may not be able to attend on their own. Hence, limiting their chances of progressing in their chosen fields of profession.

This result implies that employers must do well to provide an organised busing or transportation system for all persons living with disabilities, especially, visually impaired persons. It is not enough to provide transportation allowances. It would be more effective to support the job progression of visually impaired persons by providing them with a reliable means of transport. Where this is not possible, an aide should be assigned to visually impaired persons to support them with their mobility and limit their mobility challenges.

5.3 Chapter Summary

This chapter pushes the boundaries of existing studies and conversations on how people with visual impairments—whether they are blind or not—progress in their careers. Primarily, two broad themes emerged from this study. The first theme was captured as “towards a steady job progression: first come, first served”; while the second theme was designated as “Job

progression for visually impaired persons: a citadel of unending challenges”. Thus, the first theme explored the visually impaired persons’ experiences with job progression whereas the second theme explored and discussed the challenges that are associated with the job progression of individuals who have some form of visual impairment. Under the experiences of job progression, it was revealed that there were distinct, yet interrelated patterns of visually impaired individuals or professionals rising through the ranks with time, experiencing healthy interactions at the workplace, and progression being possible through the support of friends and families. The findings from the experiences of job progression from the perspective of visually impaired persons suggest a need for stakeholders of employment for visually impaired persons as well as employers to prioritise skills development and capacity building training for employees who have some form of visual impairment, be it total blindness or partial visual impairments.

Under the theme that explored the challenges associated with the job progression of individuals living with some form of visual impairments, it was revealed that there were several existing barriers which included feelings of being under-utilised and underemployed, exclusion from managerial positions, lack of assistive devices, stereotypes and misperceptions about visually impaired professionals, transportation challenges, and lack of disability-friendly environment. The results, therefore, emphasise the necessity for all organisations and employers to offer their employees with some kind of visual impairments adequate assistive technology that is tailored to their requirements and specific type of visual impairment. The exposition from the challenges identified signifies a call for organisations and employers to take immediate steps to ensure that all people with disabilities, particularly those who are visually impaired, have access to a well-organized busing or transit system. Offering transportation allowances is insufficient. It would be more efficient to promote visually impaired people's advancement on the job by giving them a dependable mode of transportation. Where this is not practicable,

visually impaired people should be given assistance to assist with mobility and lessen mobility issues.

Additionally, there is a need to empower blind people so that they would be more aggressive and able to voice their complaints about the lack of or difficulty in using assistive technologies. There has to be ongoing lobbying for companies, for workers with disabilities, and for those with visual impairments. Such comprehensive advocacy programmes will help to make sure that employers are well-informed on the skills and capacities of workers who have some form of visual impairment. Additionally, such an intervention is likely to increase the self-assurance, motivation, and assertiveness of people with visual impairments so they may demand initiatives and actions from their employers that will help them advance in their careers.

CHAPTER SIX

COPING MECHANISMS AND ADAPTATION STRATEGIES FOR VISUALLY IMPAIRED PERSONS IN EMPLOYMENT

The previous chapter explored the progression of individuals with some form of visual impairments in their respective job placements – their experiences and the challenges they faced. However, this chapter brings to the fore the various coping mechanisms and adaptation strategies that visually impaired persons employ to rise above the whirlwind of unending challenges that confront this cohort of the population as they navigate through the world of work. The emerging themes were broadly classified into three categories: adapting to the challenges, avoiding the challenges, and confronting the challenges.

6.1 Adapting to the Challenges

In the search for a job and progressions after gaining employment, visually impaired individuals suffer several challenges which sometimes emanate from employers, the working environment, policy context and the visually impaired person's perspectives (Benoit, Jansson, Jansenberger & Phillips, 2013; Milner, King, LaMontagne, Aitken, Petrie & Kavanagh, 2017; Soeker et al., 2018). A common pattern of coping with these challenges is what this study refers to as adaptation or adapting to the challenges. This description of “adapting to the challenges” denotes situations where visually impaired persons try to adjust to whatever challenges might be affecting their job entry and subsequent progression on the job. Under this category of coping mechanisms, four themes or adaptations emerged. These include the adaptation of ignoring stereotypic comments and attitudes of colleagues and employers; counting the stairs; settling for undesired professions; and the proliferation of the Stockholm effect among individuals with some form of visual impairments.

6.1.1 Ignoring stereotypic comments and Attitudes of Colleagues and Employers

Previous studies have shown that visually impaired persons suffer injustice, and discrimination and therefore, have to deal with loads of micro-aggression daily. This has mainly been due to the stereotypic views and misperceptions held by employers and co-employees (Colella & Bruyère, 2011; Jans, Kaye & Jones, 2012; Kaye, Jans & Jones, 2011; Maina, 2016; McDonnall et al., 2013; Rao, Horton, Tsang, Shi & Corrigan, 2010; Vornholt, Villotti, Muschalla, Bauer, Colella, Zijlstra & Corbière, 2018). These actions account for many of the challenges that visually impaired professionals face in their entry into the world of work, and their subsequent job progression. However, the participants from this study revealed that to cope with this challenge, they adapted to the situation by ignoring the stereotypic comments and attitudes of colleagues and employers. According to the participants, ignoring these comments and negative attitudes helped them to avoid confrontations that would have otherwise jeopardised their job progression prospects. Moreover, by not taking these stereotypic comments and discriminatory attitudes seriously, they were able to prove to both the employers and other employees of the organisation that they [i.e., the visually impaired person] were professional and had the tolerance to work under stressful working conditions. This, according to the participants, was a sign to dispel the perception people have about visually impaired people being too sentimental to work under stressful working conditions.

Kwame, a visually impaired radio presenter shared his experience of how he coped with micro aggression and feelings of underutilisation at his place of work:

My sister! Like I said to you, my bosses thought I could not operate the console because of my disability status. Some of them passed derogatory comments like, “Who is this one too”. Yet, I decided to ignore all of these comments and focus on showing my worth. So, for me, I don’t give a damn about what you think of me. Even if you are my superior; I will not let the negative things you say about me discourage me in any way. I will rather try and see the negative perceptions and comments as a dare for me to prove myself worthy and fit to work just like my colleagues who are not disabled (**Kwame, Radio Presenter**).

Bismarck also shared this view:

I just ignored all the nay Sayers. Throughout my life, a lot of people have told me that I cannot do a lot of things because I am visually impaired. And consistently, I have proved them wrong. In my search for a job, there were several instances when some employers will pass comments like, “Even abled people are struggling to do the work and so what can someone without sight do to make the company productive”. But in all of these, I was not discouraged. I ignored their negativities and tried my luck with other places until I finally got this job. So, if you ask me about coping with problems, I will say that ignoring your challenges is the best way to handle issues. **(Bismarck, Social Development Officer).**

Isaac, a teacher expressed this sentiment:

[laughs]. It is funny to me. When I was posted to the school, the then-headmaster said I should be in the school for the blind, and not in the mainstream school. That should tell you how bad, from the word go, they made me feel about teaching in a mainstream school. But in all of these, I will say that I was able to cope because I was not listening to the negative comments from them. I tried my best to ignore whatever they said so that I could remain psychologically sound to go about my duties. And I must state that this approach paid off. Because I was ignoring their comments, I never had any confrontations with any of my superiors or colleagues. **(Isaac, Principal Superintendent).**

However, some of the participants stated that they went for the approach of ignoring the stereotypic comments and negative attitudes of employers and their colleagues because they thought that reporting such cases would lead to further confrontations between them and the parties involved. Moreover, they thought there was no robust policy enforcing system to ensure that cases reported would not be repeated. Hence, the easiest approach was to simply ignore individuals who show discrimination or negative attitudes towards visually impaired professionals.

For instance, Isaac opined that:

“You know; there are times that I feel like escalating the discrimination that I have faced in my employment to those who matter. But when I double-think about it, I conclude that it is needless. Nothing will be done even if you report a colleague who has discriminated against you or passed derogatory comments because of your disability status. Nothing will be done. So, it is best for you to

just ignore them so that it does not lead to other problems.” **(Isaac, Principal Superintendent).**

The findings that visually impaired professionals cope with the challenges they face in the job entry process, and job progression by ignoring the derogatory and stereotypic comments or negative attitudes from both employers and other co-workers are synonymous to those of a related study in the South Eastern state of Nigeria that showed that ignoring negative comments and attitudes was the preferred coping strategy of many individuals who have some form of visual impairments (Esere, Okonkwo, Omotosho, Olawuyi & Ojiah, 2016). Similarly, Trezzini, Schüpbach, Schuller, and Bickenbach (2022) have reported that visually impaired professionals often take the trajectory of ignoring negative comments and attitudes directed at them because they think confronting the issues head-on would yield no positive outcomes. While ignoring negative comments and attitudes emerged as a common coping strategy, it is an ineffective and maladaptive approach because it does not make room for the working environment to identify challenges and work to solve them. Rather, it paints a picture where the visually impaired professional has to struggle to not vent out their frustrations. Thus, the findings highlight a desperate need for robust enforcement of policies that protect the rights of visually impaired professionals so that they would be more assertive in tackling the existing challenges in a more active approach rather than the current passive strategy of ignoring the problem. Also, the result underscores a need to empower visually impaired persons to know their employment or labour rights. This is essential to foster assertiveness in requesting what is due them.

6.1.2 Cracking on alone

Available literature has shown that visually impaired persons do not only adopt healthy or good coping strategies; sometimes, they adopt negative and unsupportive coping mechanisms. In this study, some of the participants asserted that they preferred to “crack on” alone than to seek support from their colleagues. From their perspective, there is a wide acceptance of the perception that individuals with some form of visual impairments are incapable of working effectively as a person without any disabilities. Therefore, in the view of visually impaired professionals, seeking assistance or support for any aspect of their work would be equivalent to vindicating or giving credence to the stereotypic views and misperceptions about them. Hence, they coped by dealing with any work-related challenges on their own.

Melisa, a social worker, had this to share:

“As I told you at the beginning of the interaction, I was due for promotion, yet I was denied. This is even when I am not asking for any assistance from anyone at work. So, you can imagine what will happen if I were to be the type who will be constantly requesting assistance. Yes. That is why I do not ask for assistance from anyone at my workplace. I could have brought in a personal assistant to support me but doing that will just fuel the misperceptions that they already have about me. So, to save my job, I do not ask for any support. Even if you offer to assist me, I will not accept it because there are people all over who are just waiting for an opportunity to say that they were right. I will not give them that chance” (**Melisa, Social Worker**).

Arhin also narrated his experience of cracking on alone:

“I prefer to do things on my own when I am at school because my headmaster does not trust my competence to teach. He is constantly monitoring me. I can always sense that he is in my class any time I teach. Therefore, I prefer to not involve any of my colleagues in my instruction. Even when I am tired or I feel pains in my eyes, I continue with my teaching. That is what will keep me employed. If I show signs of weakness or dependence, he will write to the director that I am not committed to the work. (**Arhin, Teacher**).

Sam also shared a similar view:

“In my school, I do not have the luxury of asking for help. If I do that, I will be branded as incompetent. Already, my headmaster thinks that I am stressing myself and that I cannot achieve that target. He has already taken me off some of the lessons that I was previously teaching. Because of that, I cannot be seen asking for help. So, if I have a problem, I prefer to crack on by myself than involve my colleagues. They will snitch on me and that will escalate the whole issue. Besides, it feels embarrassing to seek assistance from your colleagues.

What do you think they will think of me if I start asking for assistance now and then? I prefer to be in my corner. (**Sam, Teacher**).

Consistent with previous literature, the findings from this study show that visually impaired professionals prefer to handle work challenges on their own (Stevellink, Malcolm & Fear, 2015; Weber & Wong, 2010). There are several plausible explanations for this observation. First, as stated by the participants, the decision to crack on alone is due to the existing perceptions that visually impaired persons cannot work as effectively as those without any disabilities (Burke, Bezyak, Fraser, Pete, Ditchman & Chan, 2013; Lamont, Swift & Abrams, 2015; McDonnell & Antonelli, 2018). Hence, seeking assistance becomes synonymous with giving the accusers evidence to support their claim. Another plausible explanation could be the point that visually impaired professionals may interpret seeking assistance from co-workers as a sign of defeat, inferiority, embarrassment and a key cut in the pride of the individual (Stevellink, Malcolm & Fear, 2015). Hence, it is imperative to educate visually impaired professionals to understand that seeking assistance does not imply giving impetus to already existing stereotypes and misperceptions about them. Visually impaired professionals could be sensitised to see seeking assistance as a means of showing their collaborative and team-playing skills. Such actions can dispel misperceptions about them and would subconsciously result in a behavioural change that will be to the advantage of individuals who have some form of visual impairment.

6.1.3 Settling for “Undesired” Professions

It is ubiquitous knowledge that visually impaired persons suffer more in securing employment as compared to other individuals without any form of disabilities (Ali, Schur & Blanck, 2011).

The present study also found similar findings. Due to the challenges faced by visually impaired professionals in their job entry search, and job progression, some of the participants settled for professions that they felt uncomfortable executing. As part of the data collected from the study participants, the trained professions and actual professions of each visually impaired person were solicited. From the analysis, it was evident that some participants were working in industries and roles that were in direct contradiction with what they had been trained for. For instance, there was a social worker who was now working in the capacity of a development manager. Also, there was a respondent who had a Bachelor of Education degree in Arts but was now forced by circumstance to work as a social welfare officer. For most of these visually impaired persons who were working in professions outside of what they have been originally trained in, the decision to settle on their current professions was mainly based on the point that they had searched for a job for a long time and found none. Therefore, to ensure that they do not become a burden to their family and society, they settle for recommended jobs from significant others such as religious leaders (Imams and pastors), friends, relatives, and acquaintances. One such participant is Razak, a social worker who expressed this sentiment:

“I was trained professionally as an educationist but that is not what I am doing now. I am now a Social Worker. Actually, I was employed as a technical instructor instead of a Social Development Officer. That took several months for them to rectify it. That was a challenge because as a technical instructor, you have to know how to make crafts like baskets which I had no skills in. So, I had to switch to doing the actual social work. It took a recommendation from the office of the national Chief Imam for them to even agree to give me a job in social welfare. So, it was more or less like I had no choice. Because employers **were not willing to employ me due to my visual impairment, I had to settle for** what I had received through the kind benevolence and recommendation from the office of the National Chief Imam.” (Razak, Social Worker).

A similar view was shared by Gladys. This is how she states it:

“I was not trained to be a social worker but rather to be a teacher. But because I was struggling to find employment, I had to rely on the expert opinion of the executives of the Ghana Blind Association. So, they informed me that most of our people are employed as social workers so that we could attend to other persons with disabilities who may be facing some social challenges. That is how

I was able to cope with the many rejections from employers.” (**Gladys, Social Worker**).

Regarding job progression and matters relating to on-the-job, some participants asserted that as a way to cope with the system, they had to take on roles at their workplace that was below their capacity. For instance, Kwame expressed that:

“Because of the perceptions my employers had about me and my capacity to work effectively as a visually impaired person, I was forced to step down from my original shows where I was doing a lunch and night programme. So, I was now doing only the night programme. If I had refused to step down, they would have sacked me or something, and that would have come with a whole lot of issues. So, since they think I am not capable of working on both a lunch and night programme, I also stepped down to prevent further damage to my career.” (**Kwame, Radio Presenter**).

The findings as presented above show how individuals with some form of visual impairments are forced by the existing challenges to settle for employment and roles that in their view are undesired. Similar findings have been reported in Switzerland where disabled people including individuals with some form of visual impairments cope with employment challenges by enduring and taking up employment offers that they would have ordinarily not taken (Trezza et al., 2022). The findings highlight the tenacity and grit of visually impaired professionals to adjust and learn new skills to be able to work in different roles that they may not have received any professional training (Stevenson, Malcolm & Fear, 2015). At the same time, the findings unearth a poor work system that does not allow visually impaired professionals to be employed in their trained profession. Consequently, policies and interventions targeted at improving the job progression of visually impaired persons would have to place much emphasis on guaranteeing equal opportunity for individuals who are impaired by sight to have access to a job that fits their professional training and education.

6.1.4 The Stockholm Syndrome: that is how it is

Amidst the stereotypes and misperceptions, as well as the lack of assistive devices, an interesting finding emerged. The study revealed that visually impaired professionals coped with the existing challenges by adopting what is known as Stockholm Syndrome (SS). Generically, the term Stockholm Syndrome refers to a coping mechanism where victims develop positive feelings toward their abusers and defend them (Rahme, Haddad, Akel, Khoury, Obeid, Obeid & Hallit, 2021). Stockholm Syndrome (SS) appears to be an instinctive, most often unconscious emotional reaction to individuals who have experienced some trauma, injustice or violence (Kuleshnyk, 1984). Nils Bejerot, a Swedish psychiatrist, first used the word "Stockholm Syndrome" in 1973 to describe three women who were held hostage for six days in the heart of Stockholm (Rahme et al., 2021). Thus, a person who exhibits Stockholm Syndrome unites with or shows devotion to their captors to save their lives or make the torment they are subjected to more bearable (Åse, 2015). This strong emotional connection between the victim and the subject serves as the ego's stress-relieving strategy.

According to Bejerot, the SS happens when kidnappers and captives come into direct touch with one another and the captors severely frighten their victims, rendering them completely defenceless and submissive (Logan, 2018; Namnyak, Tufton, Szekely, Toal, Worboys & Sampson, 2016). Eventually, the victims dread their life since they can see no way out. In these situations, any act of goodwill on the part of the captors or even the lack of beatings, abuse, or rape makes the captives appear to the victim to be "nice guys" (Rahme et al., 2021). Stockholm Syndrome may prevent saving the life of both the victim and the subject since it lessens the subject's propensity for violence and the potential need for a security force seizure (De Fabrique, Romano, Vecchi & Van Hasselt, 2007). Previous studies have applied the Stockholm Syndrome as a coping strategy in cases of child sexual abuse (Jülich, 2005), and in the understanding of violence against women (Rahme et al., 2021).

Regarding the applicability of the Stockholm Syndrome in the current study, it was revealed that employers acted as captives who had trapped visually impaired professionals (victims) hostage in unsupportive employment and working conditions. The proliferation of such ill working conditions and employment processes against visually impaired professionals led to a process of internalisation and normalisation of these conditions. For instance, in situations where individuals with some form of visual impairments were not provided with the necessary assistive devices to facilitate their work, they interpreted the situation as a normal process. This situation did not encourage visually impaired professionals to voice out their concerns about the existing working conditions.

Appiah, a Lawyer, shared this perspective:

“The facility’s computer is dysfunctional. But I rely on my personal laptop. It is the speech software that we need but we haven’t gotten it. I have not even requested it because I know that it is really expensive. But there is the brail for us to use. Mainly, you have to request logistics and assistive devices before they are provided to you. (**Appiah, Lawyer**)

A similar exhibition of the Stockholm Syndrome was demonstrated in Isaac’s quotation:

“I use my laptop to make lesson notes and make correspondence. That is the norm for the most visually impaired person who is employed in professional capacities. I often ask them to make all documents in softcopies so that I can access them and make use of it.” (**Isaac, Teacher**).

Kwame also narrated that:

“I have my laptop. It is a laptop that I need so, I can work with it. All that I need to do is to connect to the console. It is my personal laptop. So, the company itself has not provided me with any assistive devices. Even the sighted people come with their own laptops, so I think it is normal.” (**Kwame, Radio Presenter**).

It is indicative from the findings that the Stockholm Syndrome plays a significant role as a coping mechanism adopted by visually impaired professionals who face challenges during their job entry processes, and subsequent progression on the job. Evidently, the study showed that even though visually impaired persons require assistive devices and a supportive working

environment to function and progress steadily, the lack or absence of these factors was interpreted as a normal system. Individuals with some form of visual impairments perceived the absence of these critical working tools as an opportunity for them to also contribute to the work environment. For some of them, they considered this as a normal process because individuals without disabilities were not offered such opportunities. Hence, the visually impaired professionals felt it was not a serious issue. This result has significant implications for the fight for equality and for leaving no one behind agenda in this era of Sustainable Development Goals (Samboma, 2021; Usman & Projo, 2021). If left unabated, the Stockholm Syndrome that runs across as a major coping strategy among visually impaired professionals would not facilitate the direct issues that challenge the job entry and job progression of this cohort. Therefore, there is a need for employment agencies, social welfare and various disability organisations to conduct regular sensitisation and advocacy programmes to build the capacity of visually impaired professionals to be assertive in voicing out challenges rather than falling prey to normalisation and the Stockholm Syndromic system. It will require a comprehensive effort from employers, employees, individuals with visual impairments, the government, disability organisations, state agencies in charge of disability issues and other relevant stakeholders.

6.1.5 Disability is not inability – moving on

According to the visually impaired professionals who participated in this study, they adjusted to working by developing a protective psychological or cognitive defence. While many employers and co-workers had doubts about the competence and capacity of visually impaired persons to work, the participants psyched themselves by continuously encouraging themselves that their disability does not translate to inability. This self-determination exhibited by visually impaired professionals encouraged them to persevere amidst the misperceptions, stereotypic comments and absence of disability-friendly physical space.

Kwame had this to share:

“If you would remember when we started our interview, I told you that some of the private radio stations that applied to before coming to this place told me that their equipment was not compatible with the visually impaired. I was like what do mean by it is not compatible? I just realised that they said that because they did not want to offer me a job. But I was not perturbed by that at all. In fact, I said to myself that my disability does not mean that I am incapable of operating a console. So, I kept my head up and moved forward to look for another place that will appreciate my knowledge and skills.” (**Kwame, Radio Presenter**).

Isaac also shared similar sentiments:

“As visually impaired people, we belong to the Ghana Blind Association and the Federation of Persons Living with Disabilities. One of the key things I picked up from my involvement in these associations was that disability is not inability. That has been my motto throughout my employment search and how I live my professional life. So, even when my head teacher told me that I should be in the school for the blind, and not in the mainstream school, I was not discouraged. Initially, I felt bad; but thinking about it again, I knew I was much better than most of my colleagues at school. And so, I consoled myself with that assuring words that disability is never inability. I can work as effectively as someone who has no disability” (**Isaac, Principal Superintendent**).

Ansah, a community relations officer also narrated that:

“Mainly, people are ignorant about the capabilities of people with disabilities. So, when you write to any organisation for employment, they look down upon you because they define you by your disability. So, they disqualify you based on your disability. Secondly, those who do not disqualify you outright tend to doubt your capability to work...But in all of these, I did not lose hope. I kept telling myself that disability is not inability. That was the only thing that kept me sane and going through those difficult times. I was able to press on and finally secure a job” (**Ansah, Community Relations Officer**).

It is evident from the findings that visually impaired professionals adjust to challenges related to their job entry and job progression by developing a positive psychological outlook on their disability status. Similarly, a related study conducted in Kenya (Karlsson, 2014) also reported that individuals with disabilities adopt coping mechanisms like perceiving disability as not being inability. According to the self-determination theory, when the needs of people for competence, relatedness, and autonomy are met, they can become self-determined (Adams, Little & Ryan, 2017; Deci, Olafsen & Ryan, 2017). This means that the availability of good

working conditions, availability of assistive devices, and employers' willingness to employ and work with visually impaired persons are imperative to the perseverance and self-determination of individuals with some vision impairments. However, this was not the case for the visually impaired professionals who participated in the study. In the context of this study, individuals who have some sort of impairments with their vision were self-determined to go through the job entry and job progression process when there was a plethora of challenges that they had to deal with. Thus, the findings from this study affirm the old English saying that "Necessity is the mother of invention". What this implies is that there must be sufficient social support and welfare services to cushion visually impaired professionals as they search for employment. Such social support and welfare services can also equip individuals who have visual impairments with the skills and empowerment to be self-determined and overcome the challenges that they encounter in their job entry and job progression processes.

6.1.6 Privileging mentoring of fellow disabled/other disabled people

From the study, some visually impaired professionals adopted passive adjustment strategies such as becoming mentors for other employees and clients who have some sort of disability. According to the participants, because they did not receive sufficient support and information to guide their job entry and job progression, they had to suffer several challenges. However, the challenges they encountered taught them a lesson in empathy and mentorship. That is, the prevailing challenges that embattled visually impaired professionals prompted them to want to take up mentorship roles so that they could provide the kind of support and information that they lacked to other employed individuals with some sort of visual impairments or other disabilities. For that matter, they served as mentors and facilitated the integration of other disabled people who were also recruited into their organisation.

Razak narrated that:

“I use my position to identify other people living with disabilities who come to our office for services and help them in whatever they need. Also, when they employ new people and there are visually impaired, hearing impaired or physically challenged persons in there, I volunteer to serve as a mentor to these recruits so that they will have an easy pathway to their employment and not suffer the same ordeal that some of us had to endure. So, it was more of like a mentorship and guiding other disabled people within my workplace to adjust to the new environment, and better cope with all the negative things that some people with do or say to affect them.” (**Razak, Social Worker**).

Lawyer Appiah also had this say when she was asked to share her experience about how she coped with the challenges related to job entry and job progression:

“I did not face many challenges in my job entry. But when I came here to work as a lawyer, I was more or less like the very first person with a disability who had been employed by the firm. Later on, two other people with disabilities were also employed. So, to prove to everyone that I am competent and independent, I decided to act as a mentor to these two people. I chaperoned them and gave them all the tricks and tips to succeed as a person with a disability working in this kind of occupation. It was such a fulfilling moment because I could see that I was helping my fellow disabled colleague to not experience some things that if I had someone to look up to, I would not have experienced” (**Appiah, Lawyer**).

Evident from the voices of visually impaired professionals, having been able to act in the capacity of a mentor to other people with disabilities was a fulfilling coping mechanism. To them, this strategy was a means to escape from their challenges, and also protect others from experiencing similar challenges. The result is in alignment with those of Antonelli, O'Mally, and Steverson (2018) who found that individuals who acted as mentors had the opportunity to contribute to the professional growth of individuals who have some sort of visual impairments. This form of coping mechanism is a transformative one because the current visually impaired professionals apply the skills, knowledge, and experiences that they have amassed during their employment search and also during their stay in employment to impart to newly recruited persons with disabilities. In the long run, there is likely to be a wider pool of individuals with visual impairments who are assertive to confront discrimination, and abuse, manage microaggressions and request assistive devices to aid in their professional duties.

Consequently, organisations would be forced to comply with national and international policies and frameworks on the employment of individuals with disabilities including those with some sort of impairments in the vision. Hence, creating an enabling working environment for all visually impaired professionals to work efficiently and effectively.

6.2 Avoiding the Challenges

The thematic analysis performed revealed that individuals who have some form of visual impairments do not only adjust or adapt to challenges. There are times that they cope with the challenges by taking actions that help them to completely avoid the existing bottlenecks. Among the avoiding, coping strategies were the adoption of blurry work and personal life boundaries and quitting jobs that were detrimental to job progression.

6.2.1 Blurry Work and personal life boundaries

There is a plethora of evidence that shows that a major contributor to the challenges faced by visually impaired professionals in their line of work has to do with their capacity to maintain a healthy work and personal life balance and boundaries (Browne & Russell, 2005; Jammaers & Williams, 2021; Saxton, Curry, Powers, Maley, Eckels & Gross, 2001). A breach of clearly defined work and personal life boundaries triggers conflict and creates an unhealthy environment for visually impaired professionals to work and progress in their careers. Therefore, to avoid such confrontations, the participants set clear work and personal life boundaries.

Kojo, an assistant director had this to say:

“Because of my disability, sometimes my subordinates would want to go against my instructions. So, to prevent all of these things from happening, I decided to keep my distance. I do not mix my work with my personal life. Even if I am that free with you, I will still let you know that I am your boss and you have to behave as such. I always make sure I have a strong boundary set to make sure no one capitalises on that to damage me more than my disability status”. (**Kojo, Assistant Director**).

Joshua also narrated that:

“It is not easy to be a visually impaired person who is also a manager. You can never be certain about their gestures when you are giving them instructions or directing them on what to do. So, I had to adopt a leadership style where I separate my work and personal life. That way, I can main command of my people, and no one will undermine my authority simply because I have visual impairments.” (**Joshua, Manager**).

Another participant shared this view:

“Honestly, I just make sure I do not mix my work with personal life issues. So, even though I am visually impaired, I do not allow that to predict or inform what I have to do. So, even if you talk down on me because of my disability, I will not mind you. I will not even entertain you for the issue to escalate. I will just let you know that I have work to do and that any personal issue or problem that you have about me can wait until I am done with my work. Yes, that is one of the things I do to avoid confrontations and biased comments about my work capabilities.” (**Abena, Programmes Manager**).

6.2.2 Cutting off the head of hydra – quitting the job

The present study also showed that quitting was another coping strategy that visually impaired professionals adopted to manage or deal with their job entry and job progression challenges. The participants indicated that when they face challenges on the job due to their disability status but the employer refuses to diligently address these issues, it increases their turnover intentions and eventual quitting of the job. To the participants, it is worth quitting the job than staying employed in the current employment role and suffering psychologically, emotionally and physically. Essentially, by quitting the job as a coping strategy, the barriers that visually impaired professionals face are removed from the life of the disabled person. Some of the participants opined that unfavourable working conditions such as the absence of assistive devices, lack of aids, absence of transportation allowances, poor structured physical infrastructure, etc. were factors that influenced their decision to quit their previous job. The aim was to avoid these barriers.

When asked to say some views about this, one participant narrated that:

“One of my friends in Italy informed me that, visually impaired people are paid very well. Even those who are not working are provided with allowances. But here in Ghana, things are different; we do not have such systems in place. So, you will realise that we have gotten employment alright, but our remuneration is nothing to write home about. Also, the tax regime in Ghana is not favourable to visually impaired persons. If as a visually impaired person, I pay a tax of GhS100 on my earnings, and someone who is not disabled pays the same GhS100 tax, then it means the system is not being fair to us. This issue was worse during my previous work. The remuneration was so small, and they did not offer me any support or financial allowances to help with my daily living and transportation. So, to save myself from any of these challenges, I just resigned to look for another job that will offer me good working conditions. I could not keep working under poor conditions, and the most annoying thing is that when you complain, they [the employer] will tell you that you are not the first visually impaired person to work” (**Eric, Senior Craft Instructor**).

Similarly, Kennedy expressed his sentiments:

“Truth be told, I had to quit my previous job to avoid all the challenges I would have to deal with. To begin, the location of my former workplace was too far away from me. Moreover, the company was not willing to give me an allowance to aid in my transportation to and from work. There was a time that I fell because there were no rails to support me climb the stairs. When I fell, they only gave me an off day. They did not even care to cater for my healthcare. So, from that experience, I realised that if I continue with my work, I would just be wasting my time. So, I had to quit this current work.” (**Kennedy, Assistant Social Development Officer**).

Bismarck also opined that:

“The physical infrastructure in my former school was not disability-friendly. So, I had to struggle to move around. Transportation was also a challenge to my mobility to work. I have to rely on public transportation. This puts a strain on my finances. To limit that, I had to quit and get transferred to another school that would make it easy for me to have access to the workplace” (**Bismarck, Teacher**).

Avoidance coping entails cognitive and behavioural activities aimed at rejecting, minimising, or otherwise avoiding dealing directly with demanding situations (Donald, Atkins, Parker, Christie, & Guo, 2017; Marchlewska, Green, Cichocka, Molenda & Douglas, 2022). It is clear from the findings that some visually impaired professionals coped with challenges by avoiding the challenge. That is, individuals with some form of visual impairments quit jobs that they deem as being detrimental to their health, welfare and well-being. Similar findings have been

reported in a related study by Trezzini et al. (2022) who revealed that quitting was the most obvious and straightforward way to avoid an undesirable work situation for many individuals who have some form of visual impairment. The findings indicate that even though quitting like other avoidance coping mechanisms is considered a maladaptive approach to coping with job entry and job progression challenges, it is not always the case (Hartley & MacLean, 2008; Trezzini et al. 2022).

On the other hand, the findings from this study raise serious concerns about the nature of avoidance coping mechanisms and how it can be the path of least resistance for many visually impaired professionals. Such actions may not help facilitate initiatives that will address the root cause of the challenges that visually impaired professionals experience. Thus, the findings highlight a need for a much more proactive coping mechanism to address and manage challenges encountered with the job entry and job progression processes for individuals who have some sort of visual impairments. This could include supporting group efforts to examine current social structures and assisting individuals who have some form of visual impairments in pursuing transformative coping mechanisms (Trezzini et al., 2022). It is only through the adoption of transformative coping mechanisms that challenges related to job entry and the subsequent progression of individuals who have visual impairments can be effectively managed and prevented in the future.

6.3 Confronting the Challenges

In this coping strategy, a person with some form of vision impairment makes a more or less active and deliberate attempt to confront and overcome challenges related to their job entry and subsequent progression on the job. This type of coping mechanism is in direct contrast to the first two strategies that were discussed, that is, adjusting to the challenges, and avoidance of the challenges. The participants revealed that there were times when they could not adjust to

the harsh working conditions, the unfriendly nature of the physical infrastructure, and the negative attitudes of co-workers. In such instances, they took more direct approaches to bring to the fore their concerns and grievances with the hopes of getting an effective resolution to their challenges.

6.3.1 Lodging formal complaint acts of discrimination and abuse

A common confrontational coping strategy adopted by individuals with some form of vision impairment was to lodge official or formal complaints to superiors and appropriate officers whom they deemed to be capable of reprimanding or addressing the situation. In every organisational set-up, there is an established chain of command. Every employee knows who to make initial complaints to and how to escalate issues that have not been resolved entirely. Similarly, the participants from this study asserted that when they faced discrimination and acts of abuse from their colleagues, they escalated that circumstance to their direct superiors for remediating actions to be taken.

When asked to share their perspectives, Austin had this to narrate:

“I remember very well that when I had my condition, some of my colleagues began to say ill things about me. Some of them said that they think I am incompetent and incapable of working in my role as an accountant. For that reason, they wanted to be treating me as though I was a kid. I really got offended by their actions. But I reported the case to our Human Resource Manager. I complained, and she was able to address my concern during one of our bi-monthly catch-up meetings at the office” (**Austin, Accountant**).

Razak, a social worker had this to say:

“Like I said, getting into the job market was not that easy for me. I faced a lot of discrimination during the recruitment process. There were times when I got to the interview session and the panellist realise that I am visually impaired, I can sense a change in their reception towards me. Because of that, I struggled to secure a job until I lodged a formal complaint at the office of the national chief Imam. Soon, they drafted a letter instructing the social welfare to employ me.” (**Razak, Social Worker**).

Alex also shared this experience:

“You go for an interview, and you expect that they will call you to let you know whether you have been employed or not. I even became depressed as a result of this. For my current job, I had to call the human resource and recruitment office to make formal requests about the job before they even considered selecting me for the job” (Alex, Assistive Technology Manager).

Consistent with previous studies (Blanck, 2020; Terrezini et al., 2022), the current study revealed that individuals who have some visual impairment do not always rely on avoidance and adjustment approaches in coping with challenges related to their job entry processes and job progression. Some visually impaired professionals can confront their challenges by communicating their concerns and grievances to the appropriate quarters for remediating actions to be taken. This is a proactive coping mechanism as it grants the visually impaired person the opportunity to ensure that individuals who display discriminatory attitudes and behaviours towards them are reprimanded to serve as a deterrence to other employees. Without sharing one’s grievances with the appropriate authorities, it is difficult to understand the challenges that visually impaired professionals face. This, in turn, makes it challenging to develop and implement initiatives to control or prevent the occurrence of factors that facilitate an unending trail of barriers for individuals who have some form of visual impairment.

This finding implies that employers must have a well-established system to facilitate effective communication of challenges, concerns and grievances. Also, it is a call for employers and organisations to have a clearly stated policy that will guarantee appropriate actions to protect the rights and dignity of individuals who have some sort of impairment with their vision. Already, there are national policies like the Ghana Disability Act as well as international frameworks like the UNCRPD that call for employers to create an enabling environment and protect visually impaired employees from discrimination and abuse. Therefore, employers have to ensure that these policies are ratified and operationalised in their respective.

6.3.2 No pity/not infantilise

Several studies have already established that both employers and non-disabled employees have stereotypic perceptions about what visually impaired persons can and cannot do (Colella & Bruyère, 2011; Jans, Kaye & Jones, 2012; Kaye, Jans & Jones, 2011; Maina, 2016; McDonnall et al., 2013; Rao, Horton, Tsang, Shi & Corrigan, 2010; Vornholt et al., 2018). Such misperceptions result in the perpetuation of unsupportive attitudes that underutilises the skills and capacity of individuals who have some sort of visual impairments. One such attitude is exhibited through the infantilisation of visually impaired persons. Infantilisation involves conceiving an adult as having the subjectivity or personhood of a child and treating them on that basis (Atkinson, 2017; Flynn, 2021). According to the participants, their employers, and co-workers, alike, made them feel as though they were children who could not do anything on their own. As such, some of them confronted individuals who exhibited acts of infantilisation to not pity them [visually impaired professionals] and to stop the infantilisation.

Appiah had this to say:

“My sister...it is sometimes annoying because some people behave as if I am a kid who does not the left from the right. I know that you may want to show that you care about my disability, but I have not asked for help or even complained. I got pissed on one occasion and walked up to my human resource manager to inform her to talk to the other people in my office to stop treating me like some child. When I need help, I will request it.” (**Appiah, Lawyer**).

A similar view was shared by Gladys. This is how she states it:

“For me, I cannot tolerate nonsense. Sometimes you can see that someone whom you are older than wants to belittle me because of my disability status. They sometimes want to make me feel like a child who requires a lot of attention. For me, if you do that to me, I will just confront you and let you know that I am not a kid for you to be treated like that.” (**Gladys, Social Worker**).

The findings from the present study are consistent with previous studies that have established that the infantilisation of persons with disabilities including individuals who have some form of visual impairment is a threat to their innovativeness, creativity and overall personal

development (Chalfin, 2014; Ressa, Daniels & Wells-Jensen, 2021). Therefore, it is not surprising that visually impaired professionals who desired to excel and progress in their chosen professions directly confronted co-workers and employers who infantilised their disability status in relation to the execution of their duties and responsibilities. This observation from the study sets the tone for organisations to consider a general orientation for all employees to sensitise them and raise their awareness about the rights and capabilities of visually impaired professionals. Taking such actions will be quintessential to prevent the incidence of infantilisation of individuals who have vision impairments at their workplace, thereby creating a near-perfect working environment that will facilitate innovativeness, creativity and optimised productivity.

6.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the findings on the coping strategies that visually impaired professionals in Ghana adopt to manage the challenges that confront their job entry and job progression. Mainly, the study revealed that individuals who have some form of visual impairments adopt either adjustment coping strategies, avoidance strategies or confrontational strategies to in managing the numerous challenges that mar the job entry process and eventual progression on the job.

The study revealed that the most common coping strategy among visually impaired professionals was the adjustment mechanisms. Here, the individual who has impaired vision comes to accept that they may have no control over the challenges that they experience. However, they have the power and capacity to adapt their professional lifestyle to meet the working environment in which they find themselves. Among these adaptive coping strategies were ignoring stereotypic comments and attitudes of colleagues and employers; dealing with problems on their own; settling for jobs that they did not desire; accepting or volunteering to

be a mentor to other people with disabilities; living by the mantra that disability is not inability; and falling prey to the whims of the Stockholm Syndrome. Thus, it is evident that while adaptive coping strategies seem to be the commonest coping mechanism among visually impaired professionals, they are not always the best. For instance, an adaptive mechanism such as dealing with the problem on their own and falling into the trap of the Stockholm effect is a maladaptive mechanism that does not address the root cause of the challenges that visually impaired professionals face. Similarly, avoidance coping strategies as exhibited by the participants is not recommended as it denotes running away from the challenges rather than actively addressing them.

The desired coping strategy that this study would recommend is the confrontational coping mechanisms which were manifested in the form of lodging formal complaints of acts of discrimination and abuse and making confrontations against infantilisation. Confrontational coping mechanism shows active effort to address challenges and ensure that they do not recur in the immediate or distant future. However, for visually impaired professionals to be able to adopt confrontational coping strategies, there is a need to empower them by raising their awareness and knowledge about their rights and the responsibilities of their employers as prescribed by the UNCRPD and the Disability Act of Ghana. Empowering visually impaired professionals would make them more assertive to confront the person who instigates micro-aggression at the workplace; it will also make them more likely to request for the right thing to be done to alleviate the challenges that they experience.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of PWDs (UNCRPD) has called for the non-discrimination and inclusion of visually impaired persons in all spheres of employment and enjoins employers to make the necessary accommodations and enabling environment to support persons with visual impairments to have employment (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs [DESA], 2022). The SDG further rehashed the tenets of the UNCRPD by calling on all of its members to ensure the inclusivity of visually impaired persons in employment and guarantee that no one is left behind. Yet, in many resource-constrained settings like Ghana, there is a threat to achieving this inclusivity and sustainable jobs for PWDs including individuals who have some sort of visual impairments. The current scholarship has not explored the dynamics and nuances in the job-seeking, job-entry process, and job progression of visually impaired professionals in Ghana. Moreover, the intersectionality of the identity, situatedness, and positionality of visually impaired professionals in their search for employment, and progress on the job was missing in the current knowledge on the employment trajectory of individuals with visual impairments in Ghana.

The study, thus, attempted to provide answers to the following three questions:

- a. How do visually impaired professionals get into employment, and what challenges do they encounter during their job entry process?
- b. What are the job progression experiences and related challenges of visually impaired professionals in Ghana encounter in their job progression?
- c. How do visually impaired professionals in Ghana cope with the challenges that they experience in their job search and job progression?

The study was divided into seven chapters. Chapter one was the introductory chapter that discussed the background to the study and provides an exposition on the problem that necessitates the conduct of this study. Also, it provides the objectives of the study and the significance of conducting the study. The second chapter reviewed relevant and related literature on disability and employment, visual impairments, and a review of the intersectionality approach as a theoretical lens. In the third chapter, the research methodology is discussed in detail. Chapters four, five and six presented and discussed the findings that emerged from the analyses.

This chapter marks the concluding chapter of the thesis. It begins with a restatement of the key findings that emerged from the analyses and then continues with the contribution of the study to knowledge and theory, as well as a discussion of the implications of the findings for policy, and practice. The chapter then follows with an exposition on the research limitation, direction for future research, and conclusion.

7.1 Restatement of Findings

The research findings provide answers to the three research questions posed in the study:

- a. Visually impaired persons need to have the necessary educational qualifications or technical competencies required for the job to enter the job market. However, they also face micro-aggression and personally intrusive questions when trying to get a foot in the employment doorway. This indicates that the visually impaired encounter similar challenges as other job applicants, but their disability adds an extra layer of difficulty during the job entry process.
- b. Also, individuals with visual impairments progress on the job through time-bound promotions and participation in capacity development programmes, but they frequently face the challenge of working in disability-unfriendly environments. The lack of basic

assistive devices and underutilisation of skills are some of the challenges that impede their potential to progress in practice.

- c. Three differential coping strategies are employed by the visually impaired in their situated work practice to navigate the challenges they face in the workplace. These coping strategies are adaptation, avoidance, and confrontational strategies. The visually impaired use these strategies to manage and deal with the plethora of challenges they face within the contingencies of working and getting work done. An overview of these three main findings is discussed in the subsequent sub-sections.

7.1.1 Getting a Job as a visually impaired person: Preparation, processes, and Challenges

The first empirical chapter of the study sought to address the question regarding how visually impaired professionals get into employment and the kind of challenges they encounter during their job entry process. The study revealed that the path to getting visually impaired professionals ready for the job market was complex and nuanced. Thus, the preparation process for visually impaired professionals differed based on the sector of employment. Those who were seeking employment within the formal sector of the economy needed to have received the necessary higher education qualification and professional training to be considered eligible for employment. The result was corroborated by earlier reports from related studies (Bean-Mellinger, 2019; Jahan & Holloway, 2020). The study further explained that the observed findings could be due to the point that receiving higher education empowers individuals who have some form of visual impairments to be assertive, proactive, innovative and risk-taking. These characteristics of assertiveness, proactivity, innovativeness, and risk-taking place an individual who has visual impairments at the upper end of the employability spectrum; hence, making these professionals attractive for employers to consider for employment or placement in a firm.

On the other hand, individuals who sought employment outside of the formal sector of the employment did not necessarily require a higher level of education. Mainly, such individuals needed some vocational training or skills to enhance their employment prospects. This result was consistent with other studies conducted in Ghana (Mprah et al., 2015) as well as in other resource-constrained jurisdictions including Nepal (Prasai, 2010) and Bangladesh (Nuri, Hoque, Waldron & Akand, 2012). The study, thus, underscores the importance of investing in vocational training for visually impaired persons. By so doing, the unemployment rates among visually impaired persons would significantly decline and ensure that get closer to attaining inclusivity and sustainable jobs for all people who have some form of visual impairment. The findings also revealed that social support groups and empowerment organisations played an essential role in preparing visually impaired persons for employment in the informal sector of the economy. The Ghana Blind Union and NVTI were the main organisations that facilitated programmes and sessions to train and equip visually impaired persons with vocational skills in craftsmanship, electrical works, computing, and artwork. Thus, emphasising the critical role of social support and disability organisations in getting a visually impaired person ready for the job market.

This study also provided insights into the processes through which visually impaired persons gain employment. The results revealed that advertisements were a significant source of employment information. Through advertisements, individuals with visual impairments gained valuable information about available job openings and other information regarding how they could apply for such employment. Also, the study revealed that recommendations provided an opportunity for visually impaired persons to secure job placements. This recommendation was mainly given by social networks (which includes friends, family members, and acquaintances) who rely on their networks to secure a placement for visually impaired persons.

Related studies (Baffour, Twum & Baah-Boateng, 2019; Buettner, 2017; Cingano & Rosolia, 2012; McDonnall & Crudden, 2015; Trimble & Kmec, 2011) have corroborated the findings from this study. However, the downside to this result is, those visually impaired persons who do not have social networks and can recommend them for jobs, would struggle to gain employment.

From this study, it was indicative that visually impaired persons encountered several challenges in their job entry processes. One of the major challenges that emerged from the study was the issue of having to wait for a long time for the call for employment. As firmly echoed by Getie et al. (2020), new graduates, including visually impaired persons, spend an average of 15 months waiting for the call for job placement. Similarly, the findings from this study showed that indeed, the participants were able to apply for jobs. However, they had to wait for a long time for the employers to call them for an interview, or to provide them with information regarding the outcome of their job application. This long wait period was associated with adverse effects on the psychological well-being of visually impaired persons. The long wait period was characterised by feelings of anxiety and depression. Thus, the long wait period that characterises the job entry of visually impaired persons connotes high unemployment rates among this cohort.

Another significant finding from the study was that visually impaired persons had to struggle with managing micro-aggression from employers. Many of the participants asserted that employers were hesitant to employ them due to their identity as visually impaired person. This challenge reflects the intersectionality of identity in job prospects. Moreover, the results suggest that employers are acting in contrast to the tenets of the Disability Act of Ghana which enjoins employers to ensure that no visually impaired is subjected to any form of discrimination (Asante & Sasu, 2015). It is also a violation of the rights of visually impaired persons as stated

in the UNCRPD (Fraser Butlin, 2011; Mégret, 2017). The study explained that the micro-aggression experienced by visually impaired persons in Ghana could be attributable to the stereotypic views and misperceptions that employers have about visually impaired persons, and their ability to contribute to the overall work performance (Rao, Horton, Tsang, Shi & Corrigan, 2010; Vornholt et al., 2018).

It was evident from the study that visually impaired persons often experienced doubts about their capability to work. These doubts and low self-confidence discouraged visually impaired persons from applying for a job and persevering when an employment application failed. Also, the study revealed that means of transportation was a major challenge that many visually impaired persons encountered. Due to transportation challenges, some participants were unable to attend their scheduled interviews or follow up on job interviews that they might have attended. Thus, this study underscores a need to prioritise transportation systems for visually impaired persons. Efforts must be made to incorporate remote or online interviewing as part of the recruitment process to offer visually impaired persons an equal opportunity to enter the job market.

The study also revealed that visually impaired persons perceived the job market to be too competitive for them to enter. Perhaps, this perceived high competition in the job entry market could be due to the low self-confidence and self-stigma of visually impaired persons. Consequently, visually impaired persons who perceived the job entry process to be too competitive were less likely to apply for that job. Also, the study showed that the poor implementation of legislation to compel organisations to employ visually impaired persons was a challenge to the job entry process. Although the UNCRPD and the Ghana Disability Act are available and stipulate that equal job opportunities should be given to visually impaired persons, most of the participants indicated that these legislations were not implemented. In

instances where there was some implementation of these legislations, it was suboptimal. That is, there is a discord between the availability of legislation and its implementations.

7.1.2 Progressing on the Job: experiences and Challenges

The second chapter on the findings sought to provide answers to the question: What are the job progression experiences and related challenges that visually impaired professionals in Ghana encounter in their job progression? As such, the chapter was divided into two main sections. The first section explored the job progression experiences of visually impaired professionals, whereas the second section also explored the challenges that visually impaired professionals face in the course of their job progression.

Mainly, the pattern of job progression among visually impaired persons was on a first-come, first-served basis. That is, irrespective of the employment status of the visually impaired person, their progression was based on the time that they were employed. Therefore, if a visually impaired person who has a master's degree is employed at the same time as a non-disabled person who has a diploma in the same field, they would be promoted at the same time, irrespective of the differences in academic qualification. This situation delayed the job progression of individuals with visual impairments who had higher qualifications compared to their counterparts without any form of disability who had lower professional and academic qualifications. However, the findings from this study were consistent with prior evidence (Beatty, Baldrige, Boehm, Kulkarni & Colella, 2019) that showed that individuals measure their job progression based on the number of promotions that they receive along the continuum of their employment trajectory.

Results from the study also revealed that not only did job progression among visually impaired persons manifest through first come, first served promotions, but it also manifested through the participation of the visually impaired person in skills development and employee capacity

programmes. The participants asserted that their organisation occasionally organised employee capacity programmes in the way of workshops and seminars. It is imperative to understand that visually impaired persons are supposed to have core competencies such as problem-solving skills, professionalism, teamwork, and collaboration (Briscoe-Palmer & Mattocks, 2021). The study revealed that the participants developed these core competencies for job progression during their participation in the various skills development and employee capacity workshops and training programmes.

Notwithstanding the point that job progression principally hinged on the time that the individual was employed, the study went a step forward to understand the factors that facilitated the job progression of visually impaired persons in Ghana. One of the recurring themes that emerged from the analyses was the point that the healthy interactions at their respective workplaces supported their job progression. The study explained that this result could be explained from the perspective that an enabling working environment that is full of healthy interactions between employers, co-workers and the visually impaired person is likely to bring about a sense of meaning, significance, and purpose among the individuals who have some impairments with their vision (Williamson, 2011). Consequently, the visually impaired person who is due for promotion is not denied this right. The study also underscored the essential role of family and friends in the job progression of visually impaired professionals. That is, having social support enabled the visually impaired person to focus on their career development, and that supported their progression on the job.

The study revealed that the job progression of visually impaired persons was marked by several challenges that complicated the progression of the participants. Among the many challenges that confronted the job progression of visually impaired persons was the feeling of being underutilised and underemployed. The participants revealed that there were times when they

felt that their full potential was not being optimised by their employers and co-workers. Consequently, they were stuck in monotonous activities that adversely impacted their mental health and resulted in psychological and emotional distress. Moreover, the under-utilisation of visually impaired persons in their place of employment resulted in job stagnation and ultimately impeded their progression in their respective professions. The result aligned with prior evidence from Australia (Milner et al., 2017), Canada (Benoit, Jansson, Jansenberger & Phillips, 2013), and South Africa (Soeker et al., 2018).

Also, the participants from this study reported that they struggled with stereotypes, misperceptions, and discriminatory attitudes from some of their employers which posed a threat to their job progression. It was evident from the study that the misperceptions and stereotypes of employers created doubts about the competence of visually impaired persons in their organisation. This situation resulted in dissatisfaction and discomfort among visually impaired persons, thereby discouraging them from exhibiting their full potential.

While assistive devices are critical to easing the work of visually impaired persons at the workplace (Billi, Burzagli, Catarci, Santucci, Bertini, Gabbanini & Palchetti, 2010; Hakobyan, Lumsden, O'Sullivan & Bartlett, 2013), the study revealed that there was a lack of assistive devices to facilitate the job progression individuals with some form of visual impairments. This is a breach of the Disability Act of Ghana, and the UNCRPD. For instance, the lack of assistive devices as reported by the participants of this study goes contrary to section two of the Persons with Disability Act, 2006 (Act 715) that mandates all employers to guarantee and provide their visually impaired employees with the requisite facilities and resources that could effectively optimise and ease their transition to work (Asante & Sasu, 2015). These resources or facilities include building structure that is disability friendly. It could mean providing the visually impaired with the requisite assistive devices including computers, screen readers and scanners.

The majority of the participants reported that their employers did not provide them with these assistive devices. Hence, without the assistive devices, visually impaired persons were unable to work as effectively as they desired, thereby limiting their job progression.

The study also revealed that there visually impaired persons struggled with mobility as they yearned to progress in their chosen professions. This study argued that as visually impaired persons experienced challenges in their mobility and transportation, it became significantly difficult for them to leverage every opportunity that comes for them to progress in their careers. For instance, when there was an opportunity to attend or participate in a workshop or conference that was far away or would close late, the visually impaired persons had to withdraw from such participation because they would struggle to find their way back to their homes. Hence, limiting their chances of progressing in their chosen fields of profession.

Crudden, Antonelli, and O'Mally's (2016) study corroborated this result by showing that the complexities of transportation challenges among persons with disabilities including visual impairment are a major barrier to job progression.

7.1.3 Coping Mechanisms and adaptation strategies for visually impaired persons in Employment

The final empirical chapter of this study aimed to explore the mechanisms and adaptation strategies that visually impaired persons in Ghana employed to cope with the challenges of their job entry and progression on the job. That is, it was in response to the research question: How do visually impaired professionals in Ghana cope with the challenges that they experience in their job search and job progression? The findings that emerged from the study were broadly categorised into three main types of coping strategies: adapting to the challenges, avoiding the challenges, and confronting the challenges.

Some participants employed adaptive coping strategies to overcome the challenges that they encountered in the course of seeking employment or progressing in their job. As the name suggests, visually impaired persons who relied on this type of coping mechanism aimed to adjust to the challenge rather than avoid or confront the challenges that they experience. One of the recurring adaptation strategies employed by visually impaired persons was by ignoring stereotypic comments and attitudes of colleagues and employers. As identified in the first and second empirical chapters, the participants experienced discrimination from their employers and had to deal with a lot of micro-aggression from their colleagues who did not have any form of disability. Therefore, by ignoring stereotypic comments and attitudes of colleagues and employers, visually impaired persons were able to focus on executing their tasks as proof of their competence and contribution to the overall work performance. The study further revealed that visually impaired persons employed the strategy of ignoring the stereotypic and discriminatory attitudes of employers and their colleagues because in their perspective, reporting such cases would further exacerbate the confrontations between them and the parties involved. Therefore, ignoring the discriminatory behaviours exhibited by both the employer and co-workers provided an easy means to adjust to the current status quo.

In Ghana, the general sociocultural perception is that visually impaired persons, like other PWDs, are a burden to their families and the larger society; hence, they require constant physical support. This kind of perception about visually impaired persons finds its way into the work environment, thereby leading to situations where the participants were belittled and underutilised. To manage the situation, the participants adopted the strategy of addressing their problems by themselves rather than involving other people. The results suggest that visually impaired persons perceived seeking support and assistance as equivalent providing a basis for employers and their colleagues to feel justified about the low perceived competence of individuals who have impairments with their vision.

Regarding the challenges that confront visually impaired persons during their job search and job entry process, the study revealed that the participants coped by settling for a profession that they were not trained for, or had no interest in. The study showed that visually impaired persons struggled with securing a job. Therefore, to reduce the burden that they pose to their family, they agree to job offers that they ordinarily do not accept. Moreover, the study revealed that visually impaired persons had to cope with the challenges of their job progression by taking up roles that are below their experience and professional qualification.

Another adaptive coping strategy employed by visually impaired persons about the challenges that they experience in their respective employment was settling for the “That is how things are” – Stockholm Syndrome. Evidently, the study showed that even though visually impaired persons require assistive devices and a supportive working environment to function and progress steadily, the lack or absence of these factors was interpreted as a normal system. Individuals with some form of visual impairments perceived the absence of these critical working tools as an opportunity for them to also contribute to the work environment. Hence, the visually impaired person interpreted the challenges as how the system works, and that nothing can be done about it. Although this coping strategy worked for the visually impaired person to sustain their jobs, it is a maladaptive strategy that robs them of the opportunity to have access to assistive devices and enables policies that would enhance the job entry and progression of individuals who have some impairments with their sight. This situation calls for a review of the coping strategies of visually impaired persons to correct the maladaptive strategies and enhance their overall job entry and job progression experience.

Previous studies have suggested that the availability of good working conditions, the availability of assistive devices, and employers’ willingness to employ and work with visually impaired persons are imperative to the perseverance and self-determination of individuals with

some vision impairments. However, this study revealed that the numerous challenges that confronted visually impaired persons reinforced their spirit of perseverance and grit. They based on the mantra that “disability is not inability” to encourage themselves and adjust to whatever challenges they experienced.

The study revealed that visually impaired persons adjusted to the challenges they experience in their job entry and job progression by becoming mentors to other visually impaired persons and PWDs in their workplace. The participants attributed the challenges they experienced to the lack of career mentorship and guidance. Therefore, since they cannot undo what has been done, they decide to mentor other PWDs within their workplace so that these newly employed persons with visual impairments or other disabilities would be able to take active measures to prevent themselves from experiencing challenges. Visually impaired persons, thus, facilitated the integration of newly recruited PWDs into the work environment. This type of coping strategy is transformative because it uses the abilities, information, and experiences that the currently employed visually impaired individual has gained both during the hiring process and while working for the company. Long-term, there may be a larger population of people with visual impairments who are assertive enough to handle microaggressions, address prejudice, and ask for assistive technologies to help them perform their jobs.

Results from the study also showed that some visually impaired persons employed avoidance coping strategies to overcome the challenges that they experience in relation to their job entry and job progression. Avoidance coping strategies are the mechanisms that visually impaired persons adopted to completely avoid challenges. Among the avoidance, coping strategies employed by the visually impaired persons were: setting clear work and personal life boundaries. Visually impaired persons who participated in this study stated clearly defined

work and personal life boundaries to prevent any conflict and create a healthy environment that will enhance their job entry and subsequent progression on the job.

Also, some of the participants adopted the strategy of quitting their job to avoid any challenges that will jeopardise or retard their job progression. Essentially, by quitting the job as a coping strategy, the barriers that visually impaired professionals face are removed. Some of the participants expressed the opinion that their decision to leave their prior job was affected by unfavourable working conditions, such as the lack of assistive devices, assistance, transit allowances, poorly designed physical infrastructure, etc. Similar results have been obtained in a comparable study by Trezzini et al. (2022), who found that resigning was the most obvious and simple solution for many people with some sort of visual impairment to avoid an unfavourable job scenario. The results of this study raise important questions regarding the nature of avoidance coping mechanisms and how many visually impaired professionals may choose this route because it is the easiest. Such activities might not support programmes that tackle the underlying causes of the difficulties that professionals who are blind or visually impaired face. The results show that individuals with some form of visual impairment must have more proactive coping mechanisms to confront and manage difficulties with job entry and career advancement procedures.

The study also showed that visually impaired persons coped with the challenges experienced in their job entry and progression journey by confronting the challenges head-on. This was manifested as visually impaired persons formally lodged complaints to register their displeasure about a particular challenge. Whenever visually impaired persons experienced discrimination and acts of abuse from their colleagues, they escalated that circumstance to their direct superiors for remediating actions to be taken. The study, thus, argued that the confrontational coping strategy is a proactive coping strategy because it gives the visually

impaired person the chance to make sure that anyone who treats them unfairly is disciplined to serve as a warning to other workers. Without voicing one's complaints to the proper authorities, it might be impossible to comprehend the difficulties that professionals who are blind or visually impaired encounter. The development and implementation of programmes to manage or stop the occurrence of elements that promote an endless trail of barriers for people with some kind of vision impairment are thus made difficult.

7.2 Study Contributions

The study makes a significant contribution to the current scholarly discussion of the job entry and job progression experiences of visually impaired people in resource-constrained settings. A major contribution of this study lies in its contribution to the intersectional identities of the participants and how these coalesce to enhance job entry, job progression and adopted coping strategies to challenges that they experience along the journey. The findings from this study further expand our understanding of how intersecting identities influences visually impaired professionals to form varied coping strategies to overcome the challenges that they encounter.

Unlike previous studies that have shown that visually impaired people adopt coping strategies to adjust to the challenges that they face in relation to their job entry and job progression, the current study revealed that people with visual impairments also employ or adopt strategies to either completely avoid the challenge or confront whatever the challenge maybe. The study further revealed that among the three forms of coping strategies adopted by the visually impaired person, the avoidance strategy was the one considered to be maladaptive and a threat to eliminating barriers that confront persons with visual impairments. Confrontational and adaptive coping mechanisms, on the other hand, yielded positive outcomes for the visually impaired person while ensuring that the barriers are addressed to prevent any recurrence in the future.

To fully recognise and take into account each employee's needs, wants, and goals, which have been outlined in the literature, one of the main aims of human resources is to attract, develop, and retain top talent. Responding to the call for a critical focus on people's individualised work experiences is required to accomplish this. The current research helps achieve this goal by utilising the arbitrary experiences of individuals to create a meaningful understanding of the career.

7.3 Contribution to Knowledge and Theory

Using the bio-psychosocial theory and the intersectionality approach as a theoretical lens, the study explored the career journey of visually impaired persons in Ghana. Primarily, the study contributes to knowledge by showing that the visually impaired person's journey to gain employment and progress accordingly in a chosen profession is a complex process that is influenced by a multiplicity of factors. Thus, changing the current school of thought in what we know about job entry and job progression of visually impaired persons. The study suggests that the implementation of any study to understand issues of visually impaired persons and their career trajectory must apply multiple lenses to develop a comprehensive result. This study contributes to the current body of literature on the career journeys of visually impaired persons by showing that there is no linear pathway to facilitate easy job entry and sustained job progression. Rather, there are only multiple factors that intersect to promote the job progression of visually impaired persons.

The study has also made an important contribution to the application of intersectionality as a theoretical lens in exploring issues bothering visually impaired persons in a resource-constrained setting. This study is the first to apply intersectionality to understand the visually impaired person's career progression in Ghana. Given the unique socio-cultural context of Ghana, the intersectionality approach served as an important theoretical lens. The study showed

how identifying as a visually impaired person intersects with the employers' perceptions of visual impairments as a marker of incompetence and also that employing individuals with some impairments in their vision would be an expensive responsibility. This situation resulted in employers being hesitant to employ visually impaired persons. Hence, the visually impaired person struggled to secure employment. Also, the study revealed the intersectionality of identity and situatedness of visually impaired people in relation to their job progression. The participants stated their employers and colleagues at work situated them as medically unfit people. Consequently, employers and co-workers under-utilised the resources that the visually impaired person brings to the progress of the organisation. To the employers and coworkers, the visually impaired person would require constant physical support for their mobility. Hence, they were hesitant to include them in workshops and conferences that aid in the job progression of employees. Moreover, this situation led to instances where the visually impaired person adopted maladaptive coping strategies such as quitting their jobs or completely avoiding the problem.

Still, on the contribution of this study to theory, it was revealed that there was intersectionality between the perceived positionality of visually impaired persons as being socially undesirable, and the perceived situatedness of the participants. That is, once employers and other co-workers in an organisation labelled the visually impaired person as socially undesirable and medically unfit to participate in the activities of the organisation, it raised their doubts and exacerbated their unlikeliness to be supportive of the job progression of visually impaired persons. Specifically, as the positionality and situatedness intersected, the employers considered the visually impaired person as being incapable of assimilating into the daily activities of the work environment. Hence, the feeling of being under-utilised flared up among the participants. The situation was not always negative.

The intersectionality of positionality and situatedness yielded positive outcomes for the job entry process, and job progression of visually impaired people when there was a supportive social network to recommend them for employment and provide a supportive environment for them to work. The study, thus, reveals that once an individual identifies as a visually impaired person, they are likely to experience micro-aggression and discriminatory attitudes from their employers and co-workers. However, the success of securing a job and subsequently progressing in that profession hinges on the perceptions of employers and colleagues about a visually impaired person, the availability of assistive devices, the availability of a disability-friendly working environment, the implementation of policies and frameworks that protect the employment rights of visually impaired people, and the support of social networks.

7.4 Implications for Policy and Practice

Each of the findings from the study has some implications for policy and practice. Regarding the findings on the role of social networks in recommending visually impaired persons to secure employment, it emphasises a need for organisational interventions to focus on eliminating or limiting the existing bureaucracies to enhance the employment process for individuals with impairments in their vision. To ensure the effectiveness of recommendation as a tool of employment for visually impaired persons, the disability organisations can serve as an employment support centre or create an employment support centre to link qualified visually impaired persons to job placements that suit their expertise and skills.

7.4.1 Regular and timely updates on the recruitment status

Concerning the challenge of long waiting times, the study recommends that employers must endeavour to provide regular updates and timely feedback to visually impaired persons who apply for employment opportunities. This is imperative to eliminate or reduce anxiety and

possible long waiting times and thereby contribute to better psychological health outcomes among visually impaired persons.

7.4.2 Sensitisation and Education of Employers and Co-workers

This study showed that visually impaired persons had to endure micro-aggression mainly from employers. Mostly, this micro-aggression was underlined by latent stereotypic and prejudiced perceptions regarding the competence of visually impaired persons. Therefore, to address this challenge, disability organisations (i.e., the Ghana Blind Union and the Federation of PWDs) must liaise with the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE) to sensitise employers about their responsibility to provide equal opportunity of employment to visually impaired persons. This education and sensitisation must focus on raising employers' and co-workers' awareness about the tenets of the Disability Act of Ghana. This is necessary to dispel the misperceptions and stereotypes that employers ordinarily have about persons who have some sort of visual impairment.

7.4.3 Implementation of career mentorship and development programmes

Based on the fact that visually impaired persons often lacked the confidence to seek employment, the study suggests that Ghana must establish and implement various career mentorship and human resource development programmes that will build the momentum of visually impaired persons to be assertive, proactive, and willing to persevere through their job search and job progression journey. These programmes must strive to develop the self-worth and self-identity of individuals who have visual impairments. To effectively achieve the purpose of a career mentorship and development programme, key stakeholders such as the Ghana Blind Union and the Federation of PWDs must work collaboratively to develop a structured mentorship curriculum that will provide opportunities for visually impaired persons. Such programmes must provide internship opportunities that visually impaired persons can

leverage to enhance their employability skills and lessen the challenges that they encounter during the job entry process.

7.4.4 Implementation of remote working options

In both the job entry process and after securing employment, visually impaired persons experienced substantial challenges in relation to their transportation to and from work. This challenge with transportation affected the ability of a visually impaired person to honour job interview schedules. Similarly, transportation challenges served as a hindrance to the ease with which visually impaired persons could participate in training workshops and seminars that require them to stay deep into the night. Therefore, this study suggests that resource-constrained settings like Ghana must consider including remote or virtual work experience, particularly after the country began to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. Employers can provide visually impaired persons with the option of working virtually or remotely from home to reduce the burden of transportation. Where the implementation of remote working cannot be feasible, the employer must provide a reliable source of transportation for visually impaired persons. When these interventions are initiated and effectively implemented, it would increase the wealth of job opportunities that are available to individuals who are blind or have some form of visual impairments, as well as increase their chances of accepting job offers that hitherto, they would have refrained from accepting.

7.4.5 Ensure the enforcement of legislation that protects the employment of visually impaired persons

Throughout this study, it has been articulated that several legislations are meant to support and pave the way for the employment of visually impaired persons. For instance, there is the UNCRPD that calls for the protection of “the rights of persons with disabilities, on an equal basis with others, to just and favourable conditions of work, including equal opportunities and

equal remuneration for work of equal value, safe and healthy working conditions, including protection from harassment, and the redress of grievances” (Assembly, 2006, p. 17-18). There is also the SDG that calls on member countries to “achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including people with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value” by 2030 (WHO, 2019, p. 6). The Disability Act of Ghana also re-echoes this. Nevertheless, the study findings suggest that the enforcement of these legislations remains much to be desired of. In that light, the study recommends that the Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations must ensure that employers are adhering strictly to the postulations in the Disability Act of Ghana, SDG, and the UNCRPD. It is also imperative that the Government of Ghana must compel all organisations and employers to have a quota reserved for the employment of individuals who have some form of visual impairment. To ensure the enforcement of these legislations, there must be regular monitoring of employers and organisations. This will be useful in tracking organisations that abide by the legislation. Organisations that emerge compliant with the legislation that protects the employment rights of individuals with visual impairments can be rewarded with some tax relief to serve as a source of extrinsic motivation for them to continue with the programme. Employers and organisations that do not adhere to the Disability Act of Ghana must be prosecuted to serve as a deterrent for other non-compliant employers.

7.4.6 Providing visually impaired persons with the requisite assistive devices

Given the findings that visually impaired persons lacked the requisite assistive devices to facilitate their work performance and job progress, the study recommends that all employers provide their staff who have some level of visual impairments with the necessary assistive devices including computers, screen readers, brail, and scanners to support the execution of the professional responsibilities. This is necessary in accordance with section two of the Persons

with Disability Act of Ghana. The provision of assistive devices to aid the work and progress of visually impaired persons is not limited to only the employer. The government agencies in charge of employment and labour relations must endeavour to reprimand organisations that fail to provide the requisite assistive devices to aid their employees who have impairments with their vision. Moreover, it is important to also empower the visually impaired person so that they would be able to request for their rights to be upheld when their employers are adamant to make provisions for the necessary assistive devices. Such an intervention is likely to increase the self-assurance, motivation, and assertiveness of people with visual impairments so they may demand initiatives and actions from their employers that will help them advance in their careers. It is also imperative to ensure that the physical infrastructure of the organisation is supportive for the visually impaired person to work effectively to progress through the ranks. Employers must ensure that there are rails to lead visually impaired employees around the work environment.

7.4.7 Advocacy and Empowerment of visually impaired professionals

This study also advocates for more focused efforts to offer advocacy and empowerment programmes to those who are living with some type of visual impairment. This is particularly noteworthy because numerous visually impaired research participants expressed poor self-confidence. The goal of these advocacy programmes must be to help people with visual impairments grow in their sense of self-worth and self-identity. People who are visually impaired need to be inspired to endure and grow fortitude. In other words, people with visual impairments need to be encouraged to keep trying even when they receive a slow response from an employer on their employment status or when they are turned down for job prospects. Patience, a supportive atmosphere for job entrance, and effective employment support services would eventually lead to the successful integration of the individual with visual impairment

into the workforce. This must be the ultimate objective of all regulations and programmes designed to facilitate work navigation, job searching, and employment for those who have some form of visual impairment.

7.5 Research Limitations and Direction for Future Research

Indeed, this study has provided substantial insights into the nuances regarding the job entry and job progression experiences of visually impaired professionals in a resource-constrained setting. However, there were some inherent limitations with regard to the methodology, design and generalisability of the study that must be taken into consideration as one interprets the findings from this study.

Firstly, the sampling procedure used in this study was purposive. This means that the study was limited to a particular sect of visually impaired persons who had specific characteristics.

Specifically, the study does not include visually impaired persons who are self-employed. Therefore, the findings may not necessarily reflect the situation of those who were self-employed. Perhaps, their job entry process and job progression dynamics might be different from what has been revealed in the present study.

Another significant limitation of this study is that it only focused on exploring the lived experiences of visually impaired persons. Other relevant stakeholders who play a key role in the job entry and progression of visually impaired persons (i.e., employers, nongovernmental organisations involved in the wellbeing of visually impaired persons, the social welfare department, the Ghana Blind Union, and the Federation of PWDs) were not included as participants in this study. Therefore, the understanding of the challenges and coping strategies from the perspective of the aforementioned stakeholders could not be captured in the present study.

An additional limitation of this study is the risk of recall bias in the reports of the study participants. The study required visually impaired persons to have a retrospection of how they gained employment, the challenges they experienced and how they have been able to progress on the job. In this process of retrospection, it is possible that the participants may not remember previous events or experiences accurately or omit details about their experiences.

Although the qualitative method employed in this study has helped to unearth the employment situation and challenges confronting visually impaired persons in Ghana, it lacks the power to generalise the findings across the entire country. Moreover, it does not provide evidence to show the magnitude and relationship between the intersectionality of the identity, positionality, and situatedness of visually impaired persons.

Future studies that aim to explore further the emerging issues must include employers, nongovernmental organisations involved in the well-being of visually impaired persons, the social welfare department, the Ghana Blind Union, and the Federation of PWDs as participants in the study. Also, future studies must include self-employed visually impaired persons to explore whether their experiences significantly differ from what has been reported by their counterparts who are not self-employed. In the future, studies employing quantitative methods will be needed to examine the magnitude of the challenges confronting visually impaired persons in Ghana regarding their experiences with entering and progressing on the job. Also, this quantitative study would be useful in testing the mediating role of the intersectionality theory in explaining the experiences of visually impaired persons in relation to their job entry and job progression. Moreover, a quantitative study that relies on nationally representative data would provide the statistical power to generalise findings to the entire visually impaired population in the country.

The present study only included visually impaired persons. It will be important and interesting for future studies to include multiple groups to understand the nuances and differences across a varied population of individuals with disabilities. By including other disability groups, a better understanding will be gained as to whether the challenges experienced in relation to job entry and job progression differ or remain the same across the different disability groups. It will also provide insights into which group of disabled persons are more likely to experience challenges in their job entry process and subsequent progression in their chosen profession.

7.6 Conclusion

In summary, this study aimed to explore the nuances regarding the job entry and job progression experiences of visually impaired professionals in a resource-constrained setting, that is Ghana. The study concludes that the path to getting visually impaired professionals ready for the job market was not a strait jacket approach. Some individuals who have visual impairments prepared for the job market through formal education while others prepared for the job entry by developing their employability skills by enrolling in vocational training. Recommendation from social networks plays a quintessential role in creating or paving the path for visually impaired persons to secure jobs. Based on the findings, the study concludes that visually impaired people who are ready for employment should invest time and money into acquiring the knowledge and training that will make them useful to companies.

Searching for a job as a visually impaired person, and navigating the job market is a complex, non-linear process that is nuanced by a plethora of challenges. There is, therefore, a need for a collaborative effort from all stakeholders including visually impaired individuals, disability organisations, employers, and the government to ensure a smooth transition into the world of work. Ultimately, attitudinal change on the part of employers would result in a greater positive outcome on the employment entry of individuals who are blind or have some form of visual

impairment. These attitudinal changes must be met with an enabling work environment to motivate individuals with visual impairment to apply for jobs that they qualify for.

The finding from the study suggests that employers need to be informed about the employment rights of people with vision impairments. The study's findings also highlight the necessity for the Ghana Blind Union and the Federation of Persons with Disabilities to step up their advocacy efforts and educational programmes to highlight the frequent microaggressions that employers inflict on people who are blind. Such interventions might be beneficial in bringing employers' attention to the realities of people who identify as having a visual impairment of some kind. The results of this study made it clear that companies were reluctant to hire people who are visually impaired because they believed doing so would result in high costs and liabilities. Employers would, therefore, be heavily incentivized to hire people who have some sort of visual impairment if the government successfully executes the policy of offering tax exemption for employers who employ visually impaired people.

Progressing on the job as a visually impaired person is perceived to manifest either through promotions or the frequency of participating in capacity-building sessions. However, this progression is characterised by the existence of several challenges including feelings of being under-utilised and underemployed, exclusion from managerial positions, lack of assistive devices, stereotypes and misperceptions about visually impaired professionals, transportation challenges, and lack of a disability-friendly environment. Therefore, interventions and policy implementation are required to reduce the roadblocks in the job progression pathways of visually impaired persons.

The study concludes that visually impaired professionals in Ghana adopt multiple forms of strategies to cope with the innumerable challenges that they experience in their job entry and job progression. However, the study does not recommend avoidance coping strategies as such

mechanisms denote running away from the challenges rather than actively addressing them. Thus, this study recommends the adoption of confrontational and adaptive coping mechanisms. This is because a confrontational coping strategy demonstrates an active attempt to deal with problems and make sure they don't come up again soon or in the future. However, it is necessary to empower visually impaired professionals by increasing their awareness and knowledge of their rights and the obligations of their employers as outlined by the UNCRPD and the Disability Act of Ghana for them to be able to adopt confrontational coping strategies. Professionals who are blind or visually impaired who are empowered will be more likely to address those who engage in workplace microaggression and to ask for the proper action to be taken to lessen the difficulties they face.

In conclusion, the study provides evidence to show that there is a complex intersectionality of the identity as a visually impaired person with their positionality (being socially undesirable) and situatedness (being medically unfit). Therefore, policies and interventions to improve the job entry process and job progression of visually impaired persons must be sensitive to the complex intersectionality of these components to ensure a holistic approach to resolving the challenges experienced by individuals who have some form of impairments regarding their sight.

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APPENDICES



PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Study title: ‘Diamonds in the Rough’: Exploring the career journeys of persons with visual impairment in their professions in Ghana.

Name of Researcher: Mrs Grace Boakye-Dankwa Akyeampong **Invitation**

Paragraph:

Thank you for your time. You are invited to take part in this research project on the career journeys of persons with visual impairment in their professions. It is important to understand why the research is being done and what participating will involve. Please take time to read the following information. Please ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like further information on any aspect.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information and of course the decision to participate is entirely yours.

What is the purpose of the study?

The Persons Disability Act 715 passed by the Ghanaian Parliament in 2006 urges the social worker to ensure that persons with disabilities’ needs are provided. The Ghana Disability Act mandates that everyone is entitled to equal access to public transit and buildings (Asante, 2015). (Bowman, 2011) argues that a disability is categorized to be “a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.

The aim of this study, therefore, is to look extensively at the factors which influence the labour force participation of visually impaired persons in Ghana and how these persons referred to as

“Diamonds in the Rough”, get into employment, sustain and progress in their various fields in their professions.

The study will be completed by December 2022 and a full report with the findings will be compiled by early 2023 and later published.

Why have you been invited to participate?

You have been invited to participate in this study due to your visual impairments.

Do I have to take part?

Absolutely not. Whilst I hope that you will, the decision is entirely yours. If you decide to take part, you will be given a copy of this information sheet for future reference. I would also ask you to sign a consent form. You can withdraw your data from this study latest by 1st April 2021. If you decide to withdraw your data within this time, then all data that you have supplied to that point will be deleted.

What will happen to me if I take part?

After your given consent, you will be invited to partake in a face-to-face semi-structured interview at a date, time and place convenient to you and the researcher. The interview will take approximately 60 to 90 minutes. You will initially be prepared on what to expect. This will involve being made aware that your voice will be recorded using a device. You will be given a pseudonym in the actual writing of the report to protect your identity. You will be informed about your rights to discontinue or withdraw at any stage during the interview process if you feel uncomfortable and no longer want to partake in the whole exercise. Answering the interview questions will also allow you to express yourself as a person with visual impairment. These include your general views and experience in your career journey in view of your entry into the job, progressing and coping strategies on the job. After the interview, you will be given a debriefing sheet to keep. You will be permitted to voice out any concern(s) you may have regarding the conduct of the researcher. You will be able to find the researcher’s contact details on the debrief sheet.

What do I have to do?

You are required to give consent if you wish to participate in the interview. In the interview please feel free to answer as you wish. There are no lifestyle restrictions in particular that will stop you from taking part and as stated you have met the criteria to fully take part in this research.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

It is highly unlikely that there is any risk from your participation in this study. However, at any stage during the interview process, should you find any of the questions uncomfortable to answer, you will always have the right not to discuss anything you do not wish to. You also have the right to withdraw at any point during the study.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

By taking part, you will be given the right to access the final copy of the report of the study. This may possibly help you to enhance your current research mindset. Please note these are only prospective benefits of taking part in the study.

What if something goes wrong?

In the event of any injury/accident during your involvement in this research project, I would like to make you aware that there are no special compensation arrangements. If you are injured as a result of someone's negligence you may have grounds for legal action, but you may have to personally fund it. Should you have any questions please feel free to get in touch with me using my contact details (please see contact information under the contact for further information and complaints heading). If you have any complaints about your experiences regarding this study, kindly contact David Gallear, Chair College of Business Arts and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee via cbass-ethics@brunel.ac.uk .

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

Data collected during the interview will be kept strictly confidential. Information gathered and the writeup will have your name and address removed to remove any identifying data. To further prevent a breach of confidentiality, a password-protected mobile phone, with no access to the internet, will be used as a recorder. This will prevent accidental sharing online. Data collected will then be transferred via Bluetooth connectivity onto an encrypted (password–

protected) laptop and Brunel University London's computer network. The data would then be deleted from the mobile phone permanently. All electronic data would be stored on a personal encrypted laptop (password-protected) and all printed copies, other than the research thesis, will be destroyed by shredding.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

I, the researcher, will be the only one to have access to the actual raw data. After the transcription of the interview and its analysis, selected quotations may be used in the results and findings section of the final report and journal article to be published. Pseudonymised transcripts will be included in the appendices of the report. All the results and the discussion are likely to be completed by mid-2022. Once fully completed, please do not hesitate to get in contact with me for a copy of the full report (you will be made aware at this point). To reiterate, full confidentiality is guaranteed in this exercise and your identity will be protected in the report.

Who is organising and funding the research?

The research is funded by the Government of Ghana through the Ghana Scholarships Secretariat and is being conducted by myself, Grace B. D. Akyeampong, in conjunction with Brunel University.

What are the indemnity arrangements?

Brunel University provides appropriate insurance coverage for research which has received ethical approval. However, taking part in this study is highly unlikely to affect your health-related insurance.

Who has reviewed the study?

The College of Business, Arts and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has reviewed the study and granted me, the researcher, permission to conduct it.

Research Integrity:

Brunel University is committed to compliance with the Universities UK Research Integrity Concordat. You are entitled to expect the highest level of integrity from our researchers during their research.

Contact for further information:

Researcher: Mrs Grace Boakye-Dankwa Akyeampong, Management Studies Research PhD Student, Brunel Business School, Brunel University, London

Contact Email: grace.akeampong@brunel.ac.uk

Supervisor: Dr David Sarpong, Reader in Strategic Management, Brunel Business School, Brunel University, London

Contact Email: david.sarpong@brunel.ac.uk

Contact for complaints:

Contact Chair of Research Ethics Committee: David Gallear, Professor of Operations Management, Brunel Business School, Brunel University

Contact Email: david.gallear@brunel.ac.uk

Please also note you will be given a copy of this information sheet and consent form for yourself to keep. Thank you once again for taking the time to read this through - please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any further queries. Lastly, please let me know whether or not you would like to participate via email.

College of Business Arts and Social Sciences

Department of Business School Sciences

DIAMONDS IN THE ROUGH: EXPLORING THE CAREER JOURNEYS OF PERSONS WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENT IN THEIR PROFESSIONS.

Grace Boakye-Dankwa Akyeampong

APPROVAL HAS BEEN GRANTED FOR THIS STUDY TO BE CARRIED OUT BETWEEN
22/06/2020 AND 13/12/2023

In the event this interview is conducted online or via telephone, kindly fill out this form as appropriate, scan and email it back to the researcher. Email: grace.akyeampong@brunel.ac.uk.

The participant (or their legal representative) should complete the whole of this sheet.		
	YES	NO
Have you read the Participant Information Sheet?		
Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study? (via email/phone for electronic surveys)		
Have you received satisfactory answers to all your questions? (via email/phone for electronic surveys)		
Do you understand that you will not be referred to by name in any report concerning this study?		
Do you understand that:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">You are free to withdraw from this study at any timeYou don't have to give any reason for withdrawingChoosing not to participate or withdrawing will not affect your rights.You can withdraw your data any time up to 01/04/2021		

I agree to my interview being audio recorded		
I agree to the use of non-attributable quotes when the study is written up or published		
The procedures regarding confidentiality have been explained to me		
I agree that my anonymised data can be stored and shared with other researchers for use in future projects.		
I agree to take part in this study.		

Signature of research participant:
Print name:
Date:

Participant Invitation Document

Brunel Business School
Brunel University London
Kingston Lane
Uxbridge
London UB8 3PH

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am a PhD Management Studies Research student at the Brunel Business School, Brunel University London. I am currently working on a research project titled: ‘Diamonds in the Rough’: Exploring the career journeys of persons with visual impairment in their professions in Ghana.

The Persons Disability Act 715 passed by the Ghanaian Parliament in 2006 urges the social worker to ensure that persons with disabilities’ needs are provided. The Ghana Disability Act mandates that everyone is entitled to equal access to public transit and buildings (Asante and Sasu, 2015). Bowman et al. (2011) argue that a disability is categorized to be “a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities”.

The aim of this study, therefore, is to look extensively at the factors which influence the labour force participation of persons with visual impairment in Ghana and how these persons referred to as “Diamonds in the Rough”, get into employment, sustain and progress in their various fields in their professions.

I am, therefore, through this email requesting your permission to engage you in an interview to explore the career journeys of persons with visual impairment, their challenges, and coping strategies in respect of employment. Should you be able to grant me this request, all the necessary documents will be forwarded to you beforehand to study and know more about your rights as the interviewee, and what to look out for before, during and after the interview process. You will also be given the interview questions beforehand and the participant information sheet which will include the contacts of my supervisor and the Ethics Committee of the Brunel University London should there be any course for concern.

Thank you.

Kind regards,

Mrs. Grace Boakye-Dankwa Akyeampong *Doctoral
Researcher.*

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Section A: Background characteristics

1. What is your age group?
 - a. 20-29
 - b. 30-39
 - c. 40-49
 - d. 50-59
 - e. 60 plus
2. What is your highest qualification?
 - Diploma
 - Graduate Degree
 - Postgraduate degree
 - Doctoral Degree

Section B: Navigating the job entry as a visually impaired person

Get them into a conversation. Get them to tell you a bit about themselves, and their families, and then you can narrow it down to their careers

3. Are you currently employed?
4. What were the challenges you faced in finding a job?
 - b. After school, what challenges did you face in finding a job?
 - c. Was there discrimination? If yes, explain.
 - d. Did you get help from relatives and family friends?
 - e. Why was this needed? Explain.
 - f. Did you ever give up on pursuing particular jobs? If yes, explain.
5. How long have you been employed in your current occupation?
6. How did you get into your current job?
7. How long have you been in the workforce?
8. How many different jobs have you had since you started working?
9. What is your (trained) profession?
10. Are you currently employed in your trained profession?
11. Have you ever been employed in your trained profession?

Section C: Progressing on the job as a visually impaired professional

12. What was your position/rank at your point of entry?
13. What is your current employment position/rank (support, management etc)?
14. Have you been promoted since you joined? Yes/no

15. How many times have you been promoted since you joined?
16. Are you happy with your progression on the job if any?
17. If yes/no, why... can you explain your answer?
18. Have you had any on-the-job training?
19. Would you say you are fairly treated on the job?
20. Do you have any special or specific needs pertaining to your job that are not met?
21. Does your employer make special provisions like equipment or resources to help you achieve your work goals?
22. What are some of the challenges you face at the workplace?
23. Is the office environment disability friendly?
24. Do you have any mobility or transportation issues getting to work on time?
25. What is your job description?
26. Is there any remuneration difference between you and abled-bodied colleagues with the same position/level?
27. How do other members of Staff relate to you?
 - a. With respect
 - b. AS EQUALS
 - c. Avoid you when or if they can
 - d. With a helpful attitude

(Please explain your answer)

Section D: Coping strategies adopted to Surmount Job Entry and progression-related challenges

28. How do you cope with the challenges that you encounter?
29. Do you get any support from your family or spouse in relation to your job?
30. Do you know of any legislation or Laws that concern the employment of Persons with Disabilities?
31. Is there anything they could change to improve their work and prospects?
32. Get them to comment on their fears, anxieties, hopes, and aspirations for the future.