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INCLUSIVE EMPLOYMENT: BARRIERS AND WAYS TO OVERCOME THEM

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Abstract. Inclusive employment is a comprehensive system of measures to ensure equal access to employment for all social groups, including persons with disabilities. Inclusive employment involves developing and implementing policies and practices aimed at creating accessible and supportive work environments, adapting workplaces and providing the necessary resources and training to facilitate the inclusion of workers with disabilities in the workplace. This study aims to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the state of the inclusive labour market and identify the key barriers faced by persons with disabilities in the employment process. Particular attention is paid to employers' perceptions of the problem and the identification of factors that require priority attention from government and business. To achieve this goal, the study used methods of expert survey of employers, as well as the method of in-depth interviews with persons with disabilities. The article focuses on the problems faced by people with disabilities when looking for a job and employers' attitudes towards hiring such employees. The research involved expert interviews with representatives of various companies and in-depth interviews with persons with disabilities. The results of the study show that the main barriers to employment are discriminatory attitudes of employers, lack of information about the opportunities and rights of persons with disabilities, and problems with workplace adaptation. The authors offer a number of recommendations to improve the situation, including developing support and training programmes and information campaigns for employers.

Keywords: employment of persons with disabilities; barriers to employment of persons with disabilities; social vulnerability; social inclusion; inclusive employment; social entrepreneurship

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JEL Classifications: J01, J14

1. Introduction

According to the World Health Organisation, there are more than 1 billion people worldwide (15% of the world's population) living with some form of disability. Disability is usually defined as a biopsychosocial phenomenon that depends on the interaction between the individual and the environment. From this perspective, special attention is paid to promoting individual participation, especially in employment.

The issue of social inclusion is currently very acute in many countries around the world. Research in this area identifies the barriers and challenges faced by persons with disabilities and provides recommendations to ensure their increased participation in society. Many countries are introducing new legislation and developing public policies on inclusive employment and the rights of persons with disabilities. Scientific research can

help assess the effectiveness of government interventions, suggest ways to improve them, and help identify best practices to ensure that persons with disabilities have access to quality education and training, which affects their chances of successful employment.

In the Republic of Kazakhstan, equal treatment of persons with disabilities remains unsatisfactory. This is particularly relevant in the field of labour and is related to the lack of state supervision of compliance with legal principles by individuals in the workplace (Adibayev & Susi, 2023).

Employment policy and addressing unemployment problems, including among socially vulnerable segments of the population, is a priority area of Kazakhstan's social policy. According to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, they have the right to work equally with others. The problem of unemployment among socially vulnerable categories of the population has economic consequences that negatively affect both the economy and the well-being of the citizens of the Republic. However, to assess the policy's effectiveness in relation to socially vulnerable groups of the population, it is necessary to understand how many citizens from among the socially vulnerable in the context of categories are represented in this or that region of the country. Unfortunately, there is no information on some categories of social vulnerability in the context of regions and the country as a whole.

The relevance of the research topic is determined by the need to create conditions for employment of socially vulnerable populations, development of their labour potential and social integration into society. It is necessary to understand that employment and direct work with socially vulnerable people have their peculiarities. In this regard, the team of authors proposes to consider the problems of socially vulnerable populations not through the prism of their vulnerability but through the prism of the labour market and their functional use in enterprises.

Thus, research on the employment of socially vulnerable people, including persons with disabilities, has a vital role to play in the struggle for a more just and inclusive society, as well as in the creation of policies and programmes that can help this vulnerable group.

2. Literature review

The literature search was conducted using Google Scholar, Scopus, and Web of Science databases during the study period.

Increasing the employment of people with disabilities is based on changing people's attitudes and behaviours to be more inclusive of people with disabilities at work (Mahasneh et al., 2023). The academic literature on the employment of people with disabilities describes various factors that hinder this process, among them attitudinal, socio-economic, and organizational factors. Behavioural barriers and lack of reasonable accommodation, excessive workload are barriers to which people with disabilities respond (Levitt et al., 2023)

The employment of people with disabilities faces numerous barriers that hinder their professional activity. These barriers include employers' fears of additional formalities, costs associated with reduced productivity, limited mobility, job adaptations and provision of preventive care (Śledzińska et al., 2022).

Discriminatory attitudes of employers, lack of education and skills, and non-compliance with government regulations are also significant barriers (Ebuenyi et al., 2018). Lack of disability awareness, concerns about costs, and fear of legal liability are reported to be significant barriers to hiring workers with disabilities (Kaye et al., 2011).

Negative societal attitudes and low levels of education and skills among people with disabilities are identified as major barriers to employment (Pinilla-Roncancio & Caicedo, 2022). According to some scholars (Ballo & Alecu, 2023), the presence of higher education among persons with disabilities and their parents is associated with the likelihood of obtaining stable employment.

The lack of disability registers where employers can find suitable candidates with the necessary skills is identified as a significant barrier (Paušić et al., 2021).

Discrimination, especially against women, has been identified as a major barrier to employment of people with disabilities (Naami, 2015).

In addition, misconceptions, myths and prejudices about disability continue to limit understanding and acceptance in the workplace (Moghazy & Sheriff, 2017). Research shows that people with disabilities face challenges such as discrimination, inaccessibility, lack of training and lack of employment skills (Blackmore et al., 2022). Barriers to employment for people with developmental disabilities are multifactorial, requiring stakeholder engagement and collaboration to develop policy solutions (Khayatzaadeh-Mahani et al., 2019).

Employers' attitudes towards hiring people with disabilities, the demand for work, and the attitudes of people with disabilities themselves are cited as barriers to employment (Anuaruddin et al., 2018). Employers consider personal hygiene a significant barrier to employment for people with developmental disabilities (Gushanas & Thompson, 2018), and people with disabilities report lower quality of work compared to people without disabilities (Shahidi et al., 2023), which also illustrates the challenges.

In some post-Soviet countries, negative stereotypes and prejudices of employers and their lack of awareness are behavioural barriers to an inclusive labour market on the part of employers (Yusupov & Abdukhalilov, 2022).

Another barrier is that managers avoid hiring people with cognitive disabilities due to misconceptions about the obstacles they pose (Eftring & Kjellstrand, 2022). In conclusion, employment of people with disabilities is hindered by a complex interplay of factors, including societal attitudes, lack of awareness, discrimination, and misconceptions. Addressing these barriers requires a multi-stakeholder approach, policy change, education and information campaigns to promote inclusion and equal opportunities in the workplace.

The study (Olsen, 2022) noted that employers perceive the reluctance of people with disabilities to disclose information about their characteristics as a barrier to hiring people from this category. At the same time, according to the people with disabilities interviewed in the study, previous experience of interacting with employers strongly influences their willingness to disclose information about themselves, as they believe this makes them less likely to be employed.

People with intellectual disabilities are also vulnerable in the labour market, even more so than people with physical disabilities. The study found that people with intellectual disability have positive attitudes towards employment, and there is gender inequality in the employment situation of people with intellectual disability in the Nordic countries. The authors point out that support for such people in the workplace is critical and that the level of employment depends on the education these people have previously received (Garrels & Sigstad, 2021).

One of the challenges of employing people with disabilities is their socialization into segregated school and workplace systems, where they do not have the opportunity to acquire the skills and qualifications needed to enter the labour market (Jochmaring & York, 2023).

In some countries (e.g., Latin America), unemployment rates for people with disabilities are much higher than the same rate for normotypic people. Given the barriers to formal employment in the labour market, informal employment is increasing due to the lack of policies that should guarantee the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the formal labour market (Pinilla-Roncancio & Gallardo, 2023).

Social enterprises play a significant role in promoting the employment of persons with disabilities, whose development should be supported through the application of public support instruments, such as subsidizing the wages of employees with disabilities and supporting long-term investments in such social enterprises (Lall & Park, 2022; Kruse et al., 2021; Licite-Kurbe & Sevcuna, 2023; Bonfanti et al., 2023).

An example of a social enterprise employing persons from socially vulnerable categories in Kazakhstan is the company 'GreenTAL', whose primary mission is to train and further employment of people with disabilities, former prisoners, single mothers, mothers raising children with disabilities, etc. (Okutayeva & Askerov, 2021).

In some countries, the possibility of employment for people with intellectual disabilities is provided by micro-enterprises created by such people. Still, their development is constrained by limited funding and staffing problems. However, the activity of such enterprises has a synergistic effect on all stakeholders: income generation, employment opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities, and reduction of benefit payments (Hutchinson et al., 2022).

3. Research Methods

The research aims to study the state of the inclusive labour market in the Republic of Kazakhstan and analyze the barriers to employment of people from social categories.

To achieve the research objective and identify barriers and ways to overcome them in inclusive employment, two qualitative research methods were applied: expert interviews with employers and in-depth interviews with persons with disabilities.

As part of expert interviews with employers, 9 semi-structured interviews were conducted with employers representing different sectors of the economy. Experts were selected based on their experience and direct involvement in the processes of employment and adaptation of persons with disabilities in the workplace. The interviews covered questions about perceptions of barriers to employment of persons with disabilities, existing inclusion practices and policies, and suggestions for improving inclusive workplace environments.

The in-depth interview method with people with disabilities was used to gain a detailed understanding of personal experiences and perceptions of barriers faced by people with disabilities in employment. Eighteen respondents with different disabilities participated in the study. The interview questions aimed to identify challenges related to job search, the employment process and workplace adaptation and to gather suggestions for improving an inclusive work environment. Participants with hearing impairments were given paper questionnaires, and participants with visual and mental impairments were asked the survey questions orally. The interview questions were in two languages, Russian and Kazakh, at the respondents' choice. Respondents who were not located in Astana were interviewed online using Zoom software.

Informed consent was obtained from study participants by providing detailed information about the aims of the research study and the expected risks and benefits of participation. All interviews were recorded with the participants' consent and transcribed for subsequent analysis. The data was analyzed using a thematic analysis approach that identified key themes and patterns related to barriers and ways of overcoming them in the inclusive employment process. This approach enabled the collection of comprehensive data reflecting multiple dimensions of the problem and the development of recommendations based on practical experience and the real needs of employers and people with disabilities. All recorded semi-structured interviews were transcribed verbatim in local languages: Kazakh or Russian, depending on the language the research participants spoke. The qualitative interview data was processed inductively according to the main themes.

4. Research Results

Kazakhstan is implementing measures to encourage the inclusion of citizens with disabilities in the labour market. As of 1 January 2024, the proportion of working persons with disabilities in the Republic of Kazakhstan was 36 per cent (138,800 out of 385,800 working-age persons (Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of the Republic of Kazakhstan)).

According to some scholars (Ikutegbe et al., 2024) successful employment of people with disabilities is influenced by certain factors, including the nature of the disability, personal motivation, employer attitudes, job characteristics, community attitudes and others. The same results are confirmed by our research on the example of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

As part of the research on inclusive employment of persons with disabilities, semi-structured interview questions were developed and used with employers, predominantly social entrepreneurs. The primary purpose of these questions was to identify the current status, barriers and prospects for inclusion of persons with disabilities in the labour process. Social entrepreneurs participated in the survey, and 70% of them were women and 30% were men. The average age of respondents was 40 years old. The sphere of activity of the employers who participated in the expert interview is social entrepreneurship, namely social cafes, production, and education. On average, the experience in this sphere is about 10 years. Table 1 presents a set of questions for interviews with employers.

Table 1. Structure of questions for employers

Area	Questions
Introductory	Your full name, age, gender, place of residence
Professional	1. Field of activity 2. Work experience in this field
Employment experience of persons with disabilities	1. Do you have experience in the employment of people with disabilities? 2. what is the reason for businesses' low interest in employing people with disabilities? 3. Does your recruitment company interact with the Human Resources Development Center (Employment Center)?
Recommendations	1. What suggestions can you give to address the employment issue of persons with disabilities? 2. is it necessary to improve the legislative system concerning the employment of persons with disabilities?

Source: compiled by the authors

The first set of questions was aimed at finding out the existing experience of employers in the employment of persons with disabilities. The interviewees were asked whether they had previous experience working with this category of employees and what difficulties and successes they had noted in integrating persons with disabilities into work teams.

The second set of questions focused on analyzing the reasons for the low interest of businesses in employing persons with disabilities. Employers shared their views on possible barriers and obstacles that prevent companies from more actively recruiting employees with disabilities. They discussed the problems of stereotypes and the lack of information about the potential benefits of inclusion.

The following essential aspect of the interview included questions about the interaction of employers with state and public organizations involved in employing persons with disabilities, such as the Centre for the Development of Labour Resources (Employment Centre). This made it possible to assess the level of cooperation and support entrepreneurs receive in this context.

In addition, employers shared their suggestions for improving the employment situation of persons with disabilities. They considered possible measures that could contribute to increasing the employment rate of this category of citizens, including recommendations for adapting workplaces, training and skills development programmes.

Finally, the need to improve the legislative system in employing persons with disabilities was discussed. Employers expressed their opinions on what changes in legislation could contribute to creating more favourable conditions for inclusive employment.

The following are the detailed responses to the semi-structured interviews with employers.

Question: "What do you think is the low interest of business in employing persons with disabilities?"

All respondents answered that they have experience in employing persons with disabilities. 30% of respondents noted that the attitude towards this category of people has not changed in our country and that there is no notion in our society that people with disabilities have the same rights as other citizens and that they can benefit society. 20% of respondents noted the difficulty of adaptation, instability, lack of knowledge and skills of personnel, and fears and risks. 50% of the surveyed employers said businesses lack knowledge, fear, and stereotypes about people with special needs. There is also a lack of accessible environments for people with disabilities.

Question: "What suggestions can you make to address the employment issue of persons with disabilities?"

Almost all surveyed employers noted that it is necessary to carry out explanatory work for HR to develop a programme for adapting persons with disabilities in workplaces. 25% of respondents noted that it is necessary to conduct training for businesses that want to create jobs for persons with disabilities. 15% of respondents said that it is required to provide information support and amendments to legislation to stimulate entrepreneurs to create jobs. In addition, 10% of respondents recommended studying the experience of advanced countries that have passed this way and using their laws and rules suitable for Kazakhstan.

Question: "Is it necessary to improve the legislative system in the employment of persons with disabilities?"

All respondents answered unanimously that it is mandatory to improve the legislative framework, such as support for persons with disabilities on quota compliance. In addition, all respondents answered that their enterprises cooperate successfully with the Centre for the Development of Human Resources (employment centre) on the issues of personnel recruitment.

Question: "Does your enterprise cooperate with the Centre for the Development of Labour Resources on personnel recruitment?"

6 out of 9 experts applied to the Labour Resource Development Centre, where they were matched with employees. The other employers hired only citizens who applied independently.

Question: "In your opinion, what are the main reasons that deter employers in Kazakhstan from hiring persons with disabilities? And people from other categories."

5 employers responded that there is a stereotypical mindset in Kazakhstan whereby many employers believe that people with disabilities will not do their jobs well, will have health problems, and will take frequent sick leave.

3 employers agreed that many employers fear that particular jobs for persons with disabilities must be created, which requires significant financial investments.

One expert replied that he had encountered a problem with the employment of orphanage graduates due to their unwillingness to work permanently in one place. In the expert's opinion, this category of workers is looking for a "warmer" workplace, so they do not linger in any one job. Most likely, the expert believes, this is because graduates of orphanages are «hungrier» and are looking for better conditions.

The following results were obtained from the expert interview:

1. There is stereotypical thinking about persons with disabilities in Kazakhstani society, both among employers, businesses and the general population. In addition, it can be noted that among persons with disabilities, there is also a dependent state - "everyone owes me".
2. The state attempts to employ persons from social categories by offering various employment programmes. For example, the Centre for Human Resources Development in Astana has several employment directions: the programme "Social Jobs"; the programme "Special Workplace for Persons with Disabilities"; grants to start their own business, etc. The Centre for the Development of Human Resources in Astana has several employment programmes.
3. All large organizations should observe compliance with state quotas on employing persons with disabilities. Increasing fines for non-compliance with this quota may help to "discipline" this process. According to

experts, the low compliance with the quota of jobs for persons with disabilities may be due to a lack of awareness and knowledge of employers, as well as the lack of adapted workplaces and infrastructure for persons with disabilities. In addition, there are stereotypes and prejudices in society regarding work opportunities for persons with disabilities.

4. The low interest of employers in employing persons with disabilities in Kazakhstani society can be explained by the lack of information about the benefits and opportunities for creating such jobs, as well as the lack of readiness and resources to adapt to the working environment and infrastructure.

To better understand this issue, research was also conducted through in-depth interviews with persons with disabilities. These interviews revealed the immediate difficulties and barriers faced by persons with disabilities.

In-depth interviews with persons with disabilities revealed another side of the employment problem. Interviews were conducted with 18 respondents who differed in gender, age, disability group, and type of impairment. All respondents had a permanent job at the time of the interview—the in-depth interview aimed to identify the difficulties the respondents faced in finding a job.

Table 2. Socio-demographic portrait of the study participants (persons with disabilities, n=18)

No.	Age	Sex/gen der	Disabi lity group	Congenital/acquired disability/ childhood invalid	Type of disease	Education	Job place
1	24	Male	1	Acquired	Musculoskeletal Diseases	College	Marketing, Project Manager, SMM
2	31	Male	1	Acquired	Musculoskeletal Diseases	Mba	Entrepreneur Head Of The Asar Rehabilitation Centre
3	29	Female	2	Congenital Disability	Mental Disability	School	Social Workshop
4	40	Female	2	Childhood Invalid	Musculoskeletal Diseases	College	Social Enterprise
5	43	Male	2	Acquired	Schizophrenia	Bachelor Degree	Social Enterprise
6	36	Male	2	Acquired	Mental Disability	Bachelor Degree	Social Enterprise
7	54	Male	2	Acquired	Musculoskeletal Diseases	Bachelor Degree	Social Enterprise
8	21	Female	1	Congenital Disability	Mental Disability	School	Social Enterprise
9	47	Male	3	Acquired	Oncology	Bachelor Degree	State Company
10	40	Female	3	Childhood Invalid	Hearing Disability	College	Secondary School, Technical Staff
11	28	Female	1	Congenital Disability	Musculoskeletal Diseases	School	Social Enterprise
12	33	Female	1	Acquired	Musculoskeletal Diseases	Bachelor Degree	Self-Employed
13	43	Male	3	Acquired	Oncology	Bachelor Degree	Government Employee
14	19	Male	2	Congenital Disability	Mental Disability	School	Social Cafe
15	26	Male	1	Childhood Invalid	Vision Disability	School	Social Enterprise
16	50	Female	1	Acquired	Musculoskeletal Diseases	College	Self-Employed
17	55	Female	2	Acquired	Hearing Disability	College	Social Enterprise
18	36	Male	1	Acquired	Musculoskeletal Diseases	Bachelor Degree	IT Company

Source: compiled by the authors

The information on respondents in Table 2 shows the characteristics of persons with disabilities who participated in in-depth interviews. Respondents can be categorized according to the following characteristics: age, gender, and disability group and education (Figure 1).

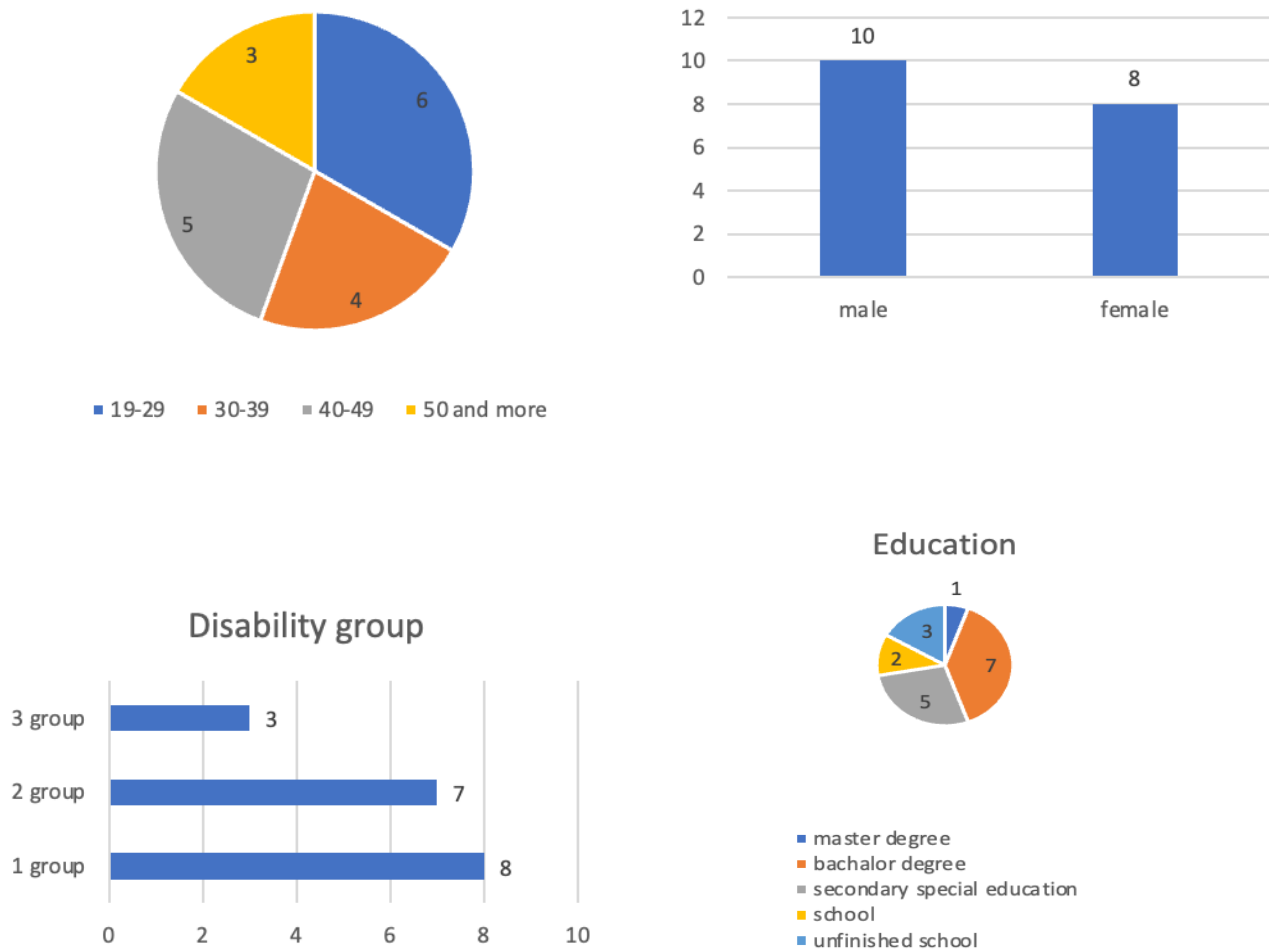


Figure 1. Classification of respondents by characteristic features

Source: compiled by the authors

As can be seen from Figure 1, among the 18 interviewed persons with disabilities, 10 are men and 8 are women. 44% (8 persons) have higher education and master's degree, while 5 persons (28%) have secondary specialized education (college), school education and those who have not completed their entire schooling - also 28%.

The average age of the interviewees with disabilities is 36 years old. More than 80% of interviewees have 1 and 2 disability groups.

In-depth interview questions were designed to address issues related to the barriers that persons with disabilities faced or did not face when looking for a job. One group of questions was introductory to determine their main characteristics (gender, age, type of impairment, disability group). In the other group, questions of a psychological nature were created to highlight their situation in obtaining a disability group or finding a job. For example, what were their motivations for finding a job, whether they received psychological support or needed it? In the third set of questions, we tried to find out whether they had encountered barriers to employment, and if so, which ones and how they manifested themselves. The last block of questions aimed to determine the attitude of persons with disabilities to the state social policy pursued in the country and how aware and satisfied they are with the state measures to support the employment of this category of people.

Table 3. The structure of in-depth interview questions with people with disabilities

Subject	Questions
Introductory	1. Your name and age 2. What is your disability group? 3. What type of impairment do you have (hearing/vision, etc.) 4. At what age did you receive your disability?
Professional competences	1. Do you have higher or secondary specialized education? 2. Did you have work experience before receiving disability?
Psychological	1. Has your life changed professionally since becoming disabled? Have you had to change jobs since then? If yes, for what reason? 2. What motivated you to look for a job? Who motivated you to look for a job (if you are working)? 3. After receiving disability status, who provided you with the most robust psychological support? 4. Do you think that attention should be paid to the psychological recovery of persons with disabilities when they receive this status? If so, who can do this? 5. Maybe it is necessary to open free psychological rehabilitation centres. 6. Have you felt a negative attitude towards yourself at work because of your disability? If yes, how did it manifest itself? What, in your opinion, can change this?
Employment barriers	1. In your opinion, are there barriers to finding a job for people with disabilities? 2. Do you think the disability allowance amount is sufficient? If it is not a secret, please tell me your allowance amount. 3. Are there any restrictions on formal employment and receiving disability benefits? 4. Why do you think some persons with disabilities do not work or do not want to work? 5. Have you encountered barriers (discrimination) to employment because of disability? If yes, what reasons did the employer give? In your opinion, what was the reason for the refusal of the employment objective? 6. What difficulties do you face when looking for a job (no special conditions for you, remoteness from home, low salary, etc.)? 7. Do you think that barriers to an accessible environment affect the employment of persons with disabilities? 8. In your opinion, does your work experience and education affect your employability? Do you think that age and disability groups directly impact the likelihood of employment?
Government support	1. What state programmes to support persons with disabilities do you know? 2. How and where do you look for a job? Do you use the services of the Employment Centre? 3. Do you think it is essential to educate (educate) society about the attitude towards people with disabilities?

Source: compiled by the authors

The conducted interview with persons with disabilities showed the following results:

Question: "Have you encountered problems in employment related to your disability?"

Male, 31 years old, acquired (musculoskeletal): "Yes, there have been difficulties in employment. I think that because in the Soviet Union, people did not see people with disabilities, there was no inclusive education. Now that there is already inclusive education, it turns out the new generation will be quite normal to accept such people with special needs, even if they can find their best sides. I think so. Many people, because they do not know how people with disabilities will work, do not want to hire because they do not know what a person with disabilities is since it was a closed topic in the Soviet Union. But now the situation is much better, and this issue will be resolved over time. In modern society, young people see children with disabilities from childhood; they know how to communicate with them as equals, and society is becoming more inclusive. When these children grow up and mature, they will know how to communicate with persons with disabilities, including at work. At present, I believe there are no barriers to employment for people with disabilities".

Some of the respondents answered that they did not. Acquired work skills and education made the process of employment easy. However, this applied only to those people who had acquired disability. Before the injury, these people had work experience and higher education and, therefore, had no problems finding a job. After receiving an injury, one of the respondents was trained in the Bastau Business Programme, received a certificate and applied for a grant, which he successfully won. With the money received from the Foundation, the person opened his rehabilitation centre, which is currently functioning quite successfully.

The conducted interview shows that the active life position of a person who has been injured still will allow him to be competitive in the labour market and find a job. According to respondents Yeldos and Yerzhan, the motivating factor for job search and further employment is the presence of family and financial obligations. "We don't want to be worse than others", states respondent Yeldos.

Based on the results of the interviews, it was concluded that people with congenital disability found it challenging to find a job because congenital disability deprived them of the opportunity to get higher or secondary specialized education, and, as a rule, due to their disability they changed their place of work frequently. The reasons for this are physical condition and health deteriorating occasionally. At the moment, the principal place of work of persons with congenital disabilities is social enterprises, which purposefully employ people from such categories.

The interview also revealed that persons with mental disabilities are also employed in social enterprises, where there is monotonous work that does not require socializing with people and where it is necessary to perform one specific action.

Question: "Has your life changed professionally since receiving your disability? Have you had to change jobs since then? If yes, for what reason?"

Male, 24 years old, acquired disability group 1 (musculoskeletal system). "Yes, life has changed, especially in the professional sphere. Naturally, I can no longer work as a waiter now. I work 50% remotely - marketing, project management, and SMM. Work related to marketing, mostly. In the rehabilitation centre, I work as an administrator and manager.

Question: "Can you please tell me what motivated you to look for a job, who or what motivated you to look for a job (if you are working)?"

Male, 43 years old, acquired disability (mental impairment): "I was at home for a long time, I couldn't work, then after that there was rehabilitation, the doctor told me that there is such a programme and there is such an institution at psychiatry, here they treat and give courses, CPSR. There were dances, self-development, handicrafts, carpentry shops, and locksmith shops". The respondent discusses a social enterprise established at the Centre for Psychiatric Care (Astana).

Question: "In your opinion, are there barriers to finding a job for people with disabilities?"

Male, 31 years old, acquired (locomotor apparatus): "I can say that in the past there were indeed such problems, barriers, but nowadays, persons with disabilities are much better employed. But in my opinion, people should be offered jobs only after a course with a psychologist, when a person is ready for work, considering his/her new peculiarities".

Woman, 29 years old, disabled as a child (mental retardation): "Nowadays, yes, it is difficult. I was refused when they learnt that I had a group" (note: on disability).

Woman, 40 years old, childhood disability (musculoskeletal): "Very strong. No one wants to take people with disabilities; they all want healthy people. They are probably afraid... I can tell you from my experience that I worked from 9 to 6, and we sometimes worked on Saturdays, but my employer told me that I should say that I work fewer hours and that I don't work on Saturdays. Most employers do not want to take me on if they get some benefits from the state... And then they do not take me on, especially with such severe problems as mine, for example.

Question: "Do you think it is necessary to carry out some educational work in society about the attitude towards people with disabilities? What kind of knowledge should it be? What should be told about in the first place?"

Woman, 40 years old, disabled as a child (hearing impaired): "Yes, it is very important. People with disabilities are the same people; they just have a little bit of limitations, some of them mentally and some of them physically. People perceive it inadequately; I know for sure. It's not just children, adults, and young people, from 15 years old, who have an inadequate attitude toward it.

Question: "In your view, what more needs to be done in Kazakhstan to develop an inclusive labour market?"

Male, 54 years old, acquired (musculoskeletal system): "The state should pay more attention. It is necessary to pay attention to entrepreneurs, cut taxes, or something else to motivate them to take people with disabilities. And as much education as possible should be given to people with disabilities".

As follows from the above quotes from the interviews, people with disabilities believe that in Kazakhstan, employers do not seek to employ people with disabilities because they are afraid of difficulties, do not want to create adaptive workplaces, there are fears of ignorance of how to work with people with disabilities.

The study revealed the significant difficulties faced by people with disabilities in finding employment. Based on interviews with 18 respondents representing a variety of disability groups and impairment types, it found that despite their current employment, many faced significant barriers to employment. These barriers include employer bias, lack of accessible jobs, lack of adaptive accommodations, and limited access to information about job openings.

Particular attention should be paid to the fact that all respondents could find employment despite the difficulties, indicating considerable potential and motivation among people with disabilities. However, to improve the situation, more effective support and adaptation programmes must be developed and implemented, as well as campaigns to raise awareness among employers of the importance of inclusive employment.

These findings highlight the need for a comprehensive approach to addressing the employment of persons with disabilities, including legislative measures and public initiatives to create a more inclusive labour market.

Analysis of semi-structured interviews with 9 employers with experience of employing persons with disabilities revealed several key challenges and barriers faced by Kazakhstani businesses. Firstly, many of them need more information about the specific needs of such employees and how to effectively integrate them into the work process, indicating a lack of awareness. Secondly, there is a tangible lack of state support: there are insufficient financial and organizational resources to assist enterprises willing to employ people with disabilities. The third problem is stereotypes and prejudice towards workers with disabilities, which creates additional barriers to their employment. Finally, employers face legal and administrative difficulties in complying with legislation and procedures governing the employment of persons with disabilities.

To improve the situation, employers suggested the following measures that the state could take:

1. Development and implementation of training and professional development programmes for employers to improve their competence in employing persons with disabilities.
2. Strengthening state support. Introduction of tax incentives, subsidies and grants for businesses employing people with disabilities.
3. Public campaigns and educational programmes: conduct campaigns to raise awareness and change public opinion about the employability of persons with disabilities.
4. streamlining the legislative framework: Simplifying administrative procedures and providing more transparent and more understandable regulation of labour relations involving persons with disabilities.

These findings emphasize the need for a comprehensive and coordinated approach involving the active participation of both government and business in addressing the employment of people with disabilities in Kazakhstan.

Conclusions

The conducted research has shown that despite all the positive changes in the state social policy, the time has not yet come for a significant improvement in the lives of people with disabilities. Public opinion remains biased, there is insufficient support from society, and people with disabilities themselves often lack incentives to achieve a better life. This leads to a gap between state policy goals for integrating this category of people into society and their actual participation in various spheres of life. All this creates severe obstacles for

persons with disabilities to realize their rights to work and well-being, which prevents the full realization of their social citizenship.

This study makes a unique contribution to the study of inclusive employment by identifying and systematizing the main barriers faced by both persons with disabilities and employers. Based on in-depth and expert interviews with various stakeholders of the inclusive labour market in Kazakhstan, the study provides, for the first time, a comprehensive analysis of the interrelationships between different factors that hinder the employment of persons with disabilities. In addition, the study offers a new theoretical framework for understanding the mechanisms of adaptation and inclusion of persons with disabilities in the working environment, contributing to the development of inclusive employment theory.

The practical relevance of this study lies in its ability to offer concrete recommendations for improving inclusive employment in Kazakhstan. The study highlights the need to develop and implement educational programmes for employers, strengthen state support through tax breaks and subsidies, and conduct public campaigns to change stereotypes and raise awareness of the employability of persons with disabilities. These recommendations can be used as a basis for creating more effective government policies and support programmes aimed at the integration of persons with disabilities into the labour market, which will ultimately contribute to the socio-economic development of the country and improve the living standards of this group of the population.

This study was conducted in the Republic of Kazakhstan, and the object of the research is stakeholders in the inclusive labour market. In Kazakhstan, socially vulnerable segments of the population include persons with disabilities, mothers raising children with disabilities, large families, former convicts and other categories. This study is limited to the study of employment of persons with disabilities. At the same time, it is necessary to pay attention to the employment issue of the categories mentioned above in the following studies.

Sociological research on disability and inclusive employment has contributed to the growth of public recognition of the rights of people with disabilities and a change in social work discourse. However, the situation with the employment of persons with disabilities remains unchanged.

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