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INCLUSIVE LABOUR MARKET: CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS FROM EMPLOYERS' PERSPECTIVE*

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Abstract. This article is devoted to the employment problem of socially vulnerable groups, but the issue is disclosed from employers' point of view. As it is known, the labour market is represented by two sides: demand for the labour force and labour supply. In the inclusive labour market, labour supply is represented by persons from social categories of the population. In Kazakhstan, they include persons with disabilities, orphans, former convicts, alcohol and drug addicts, mothers with many children, and women raising children alone, who, due to various life situations, do not have the opportunity to work full-time and/or without special conditions of employment. These categories of people are vulnerable and need support in finding work and jobs. The other side of an inclusive labour market is employers willing to hire social group representatives. At the same time, there is a considerable gap between these two sides of the labour market. While the first side does not have the opportunity (does not know how) to find a decent job, employers willing to offer employment are understaffed and elementary do not know the peculiarities of working with persons with disabilities. Others are afraid of the difficulties in adapting workplaces to the needs of people with disabilities. In addition, there is stereotypical thinking, due to which many people believe that employees with disabilities or mothers with small children will work worse than other employees. Nevertheless, there is a trend of increasing social awareness in Kazakhstan, with employers seeking to contribute to developing a social society. In this research article, the authors confirm some of the hypotheses based on expert semi-structured interviews, while others are rejected. The research is conducted within the framework of the state order for scientific research in social sciences from the Committee of Science under the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan. In this study, we will see the difference between working with people with mental disabilities and physical disabilities and how the process of adapting workplaces for employees with these or those disabilities differs. In addition, we will show the differences between the employment of persons with disabilities and other social groups and how employers think these or those groups adapt to the work process.

Keywords: social groups; socially vulnerable segments of the population; persons with disabilities; inclusive labour market; inclusive employment; social entrepreneurship

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1. Introduction

In earlier works, we studied the state of the inclusive labour market in Kazakhstan, but the focus was on the situation through the eyes of job seekers. Persons with disabilities and other categories in the interviews assessed the problem with job search issues and further employment. The reasons for the low percentage of employment of persons with disabilities were identified, among which are: 1) lack of accessible environment, 2) lack of education and work experience of job seekers, 3) dependent attitudes because many persons with disabilities have been receiving benefits from the state since birth and are accustomed to special treatment of their status. At the same time, it was noticed that among employed people with disabilities, more people were injured in adulthood, who have an understanding of "normal" life, experience and education, as well as a desire to return to their previous standard of living. Such groups have a sustained desire to find work and realize their potential. Also, many respondents with disabilities cited the desire to provide for their families as one of the reasons for wanting to work. A proactive attitude to life characterizes them: despite the hardships of life with a disability, they open a business, start a new business, and, in addition, help other people in difficult life situations.

At the same time, the low percentage of employed persons with disabilities and other social groups indicates the problem of the availability of jobs and the creation of conditions for employment. In this research paper, we will consider the issues from the employers' side. Earlier in the literature, more attention was paid to social groups; there is a perception that this site is vulnerable. However, there is another side to the inclusive labour market: specific barriers exist to employing people from these social groups. In this study, we will try to identify the difficulties faced by employers who employ people with disabilities, mothers of many children, ex-prisoners and other categories. In addition, interviews with entrepreneurs in Kazakhstan will allow us to identify the peculiarities of working with social categories and the unique experience of each respondent, enabling us to identify patterns of an inclusive labour market.

2. Literature Review

The employment of socially vulnerable groups is a multifaceted issue encompassing various dimensions, including economic, social, and educational factors. Vulnerable populations often face significant barriers to employment, which systemic inequalities and lack of access to resources can exacerbate. This response synthesizes recent literature to explore the challenges and strategies for improving employment outcomes for these groups. One of the primary challenges faced by socially vulnerable groups is the existence of structural barriers that hinder their access to employment opportunities. Research indicates that employment rates vary significantly among different demographic groups, influenced by age, gender, ethnicity, and disability status (Acar & Findikli, 2020).

For instance, individuals with disabilities, ex-convicts, and immigrants are frequently categorized as disadvantaged, facing unique obstacles in the labour market (Çetin, 2024). Additionally, the role of active labour market programs (ALMPs) has been scrutinized, with findings suggesting that these programs may inadvertently prioritize the most job-ready candidates, leaving those further from the labour market without adequate support (Ingold & Valizade, 2017). This "creaming" effect can perpetuate existing inequalities, making it imperative for policymakers to design inclusive strategies that genuinely cater to the needs of all vulnerable groups (Ingold & Valizade, 2017).

Moreover, the intersectionality of vulnerabilities complicates the employment landscape. For example, individuals from minority ethnic backgrounds often experience compounded disadvantages due to both racial and socio-economic factors (Masha & Fihla, 2025). This intersectionality highlights the necessity for targeted interventions that address the specific needs of diverse groups within the workforce. The literature suggests that fostering a diverse workforce improves access to employment for underrepresented populations and enhances

service delivery in sectors such as healthcare, where minority health professionals are more likely to serve minority patients (Salsberg et al., 2021).

Thus, increasing diversity within the workforce is not merely a matter of equity; it also has practical implications for improving outcomes in various fields. Educational attainment is another critical factor influencing employment opportunities for disadvantaged groups. Studies have shown that higher education levels correlate with better employment prospects, yet marginalized groups often have lower access to quality education (Sharma, 2016). This disparity necessitates reevaluating educational policies and practices to ensure that they are inclusive and supportive of vulnerable populations. For instance, initiatives aimed at enhancing educational access for women and ethnic minorities can significantly improve their employment outcomes (Sharma, 2016; Çetin, 2024). Furthermore, integrating vocational training and support services can help bridge the gap between education and employment, equipping disadvantaged individuals with the skills necessary to thrive in the labour market (Acar & Findikli, 2020; Çetin, 2024).

In addition to structural and educational barriers, the psychological aspects of employment for vulnerable groups cannot be overlooked. The stigma associated with particular identities or conditions, such as HIV, can significantly impact job effectiveness and overall employment experiences (Ocampo et al., 2023). Addressing these psychological barriers through supportive workplace environments and anti-stigma campaigns is essential for fostering an inclusive workforce. Furthermore, social support systems within organizations can alleviate stress and enhance job performance among vulnerable employees (Powell et al., 2017).

In conclusion, the employment of socially vulnerable groups requires a comprehensive approach that addresses structural barriers, promotes educational equity, and fosters inclusive workplace environments. By implementing targeted policies and practices that consider the unique challenges faced by these populations, stakeholders can contribute to a more equitable labour market that benefits both individuals and society as a whole.

The employment challenges faced by individuals from marginalized social categories are multifaceted and deeply rooted in societal structures. Discrimination based on race, gender, disability, and social class significantly impacts labour market outcomes for these groups. Research indicates systemic biases and social norms contribute to market segmentation, further exacerbating employment opportunity inequalities.

One of the primary issues is racial discrimination in hiring practices. A comprehensive analysis by Quillian et al. (2019) highlights that discrimination varies across countries, with evidence from 97 field experiments demonstrating that minority groups often face significant barriers in securing employment due to biases held by employers. This is echoed by Bertrand and Mullainathan (2018), who found that applicants with traditionally African American names received fewer callbacks compared to those with more common Anglo names, underscoring the persistent nature of racial discrimination in hiring processes. Such biases affect immediate hiring outcomes and perpetuate broader social inequalities.

Gender discrimination also plays a critical role in employment disparities. Research by Benard et al. (2018) reveals that mothers experience a "motherhood penalty," where their parental status negatively impacts their hiring prospects and wage potential compared to equally qualified candidates without children.

Furthermore, Yavorsky's (2019) study indicates that discrimination against female applicants is particularly pronounced in male-dominated industries, suggesting that occupational gender norms further complicate the employment landscape for women. This intersection of gender and occupational segregation illustrates how social norms and institutional practices can disadvantage women in the labour market. Moreover, individuals with disabilities face unique challenges in employment.

Hemphill and Kulik (2015) emphasize the importance of mainstream employment for the social and economic inclusion of disabled individuals. Yet, they identify significant barriers, including employer stigma and uncertainties regarding the abilities of disabled applicants. Similarly, Dillahunt et al. (2021) discuss the inadequacies of existing employment support tools for marginalized job seekers, highlighting the need for more effective strategies to assist these individuals in navigating the job market.

Employers often desire to hire individuals with disabilities but are hindered by systemic issues within the hiring process and a lack of support from public employment services (Henry et al., 2014). Social class also significantly influences employment opportunities. Rivera and Tilcsik's (2017) research indicates that social class signals can affect hiring decisions in elite labour markets, where applicants from lower social classes may face discrimination despite having similar qualifications to their higher-class counterparts. This aligns with Ridgeway's (2013) assertion that status beliefs about group superiority contribute to material advantages for higher-status groups, further entrenching social inequalities in employment.

The employment problems faced by individuals from marginalized social categories are deeply intertwined with systemic discrimination, social norms, and institutional practices (Malatji, 2024). Addressing these challenges requires comprehensive policy interventions and a commitment to fostering inclusive hiring practices that recognize and mitigate biases against these groups.

Employment issues for individuals with disabilities are multifaceted, encompassing a range of barriers that hinder their access to meaningful job opportunities. These barriers can be broadly categorized into attitudinal, structural, and policy-related challenges. Attitudinal barriers are significant impediments to employment for people with disabilities. Stigma and negative perceptions about the capabilities of individuals with disabilities often lead to discrimination in hiring practices.

Research indicates that employers frequently harbour misconceptions about the productivity and reliability of disabled workers, which can result in a reluctance to hire them (Tarawneh, 2016; Khayatzadeh-Mahani et al., 2019; Goodman, 2024). For instance, studies have shown that employers may prefer candidates without visible disabilities due to fears of reduced productivity or the costs associated with workplace accommodations (Paušić et al., 2021).

Furthermore, the lack of exposure to individuals with disabilities can foster discomfort among employers, perpetuating stereotypes that further marginalize this group in the labour market (Kaye et al., 2011; Gupta et al., 2021). Structural barriers also play a critical role in limiting employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

Physical accessibility remains a significant concern, as many workplaces are not equipped to accommodate the needs of disabled employees (Chikwe, 2024; Tessier, 2024). This lack of accessibility can deter individuals from pursuing job opportunities or lead to high turnover rates among those who secure employment. Additionally, inadequate transportation options can further isolate individuals with disabilities, making it challenging for them to attend interviews or maintain consistent employment (Bezyak et al., 2017).

The interplay of these structural barriers often exacerbates the difficulties faced by disabled individuals in securing and retaining jobs. Policy-related challenges are equally important in understanding employment issues for people with disabilities. Although various laws and initiatives aim to promote the employment of disabled individuals, such as the Employment First initiative, the effectiveness of these policies is often undermined by insufficient enforcement and a lack of awareness among employers (Edeiken-Cooperman, 2017). Moreover, the absence of comprehensive human resource policies that cater specifically to the needs of disabled workers can lead to environments that are not conducive to their success (Anuaruddin et al., 2018). Employers may also lack

knowledge regarding the legal obligations to provide reasonable accommodations, further complicating the employment landscape for individuals with disabilities (Goodman, 2024).

In conclusion, addressing the employment issues faced by individuals with disabilities requires a multifaceted approach that tackles attitudinal, structural, and policy-related barriers. Educating employers, enhancing workplace accessibility, and enforcing existing laws are crucial steps toward creating a more inclusive workforce that values the contributions of all individuals, regardless of their abilities.

Inclusive employment is an essential socio-economic topic that requires a comprehensive analysis of the factors affecting the employment of people with disabilities and the study of barriers that may limit their opportunities. The scientific literature presents many approaches to the study of this issue.

One aspect is investigating the protective factors that enable qualified young people with visual impairments to participate in the labour market. According to Chhabra (2021), such factors play a key role in overcoming barriers and adapting to employment.

Disability inclusion practices, programs, and social and professional networking opportunities vary significantly across countries. As Ghosh, Liu and Mishra (2022) point out, successful disability inclusion initiatives must consider national employee career paths and cultural differences.

Janssens and Zanoni (2021) emphasize the need to go beyond empirical and ideological constraints within companies to achieve equality and social justice. This approach promotes a more inclusive corporate culture.

Knowledge of the type of disability becomes essential, as does matching job characteristics and adaptations to specific needs. A study by Suresh and Dyaram (2022) shows that the accessibility of physical infrastructure, external pressures and the representation of people with different types of disabilities in the workplace can facilitate and hinder their employment.

Understanding the economic benefits of an accessible and inclusive society, according to Tompa et al. (2021), is beneficial not only for governments but also for disability advocates and industry leaders. This aspect allows for the formation of informed and long-term inclusion strategies.

However, there are significant barriers to inclusive employment. Bialik and Mhiri (2022) identify denial of access to education, security concerns, forced self-employment and discrimination among them. These challenges require a comprehensive approach to addressing them. Positive factors also contribute to the employment of people with disabilities. Taubner, Magnus and Carin (2022) identify five factors: the opportunity to try different types of work, the desire to work, the balance between expectations and adaptation, mutual participation and flexibility, and wage subsidies. These elements provide the basis for successfully integrating people with disabilities into the labour market.

Thus, inclusive employment requires a multidisciplinary approach integrating social policy, economics, and management research. Further research on this topic will help to develop effective mechanisms to overcome existing barriers and create a more equitable society.

3. Research Methodology

The research is based on qualitative methods aimed at in-depth study of employers' perception of employment problems of socially vulnerable groups. The primary data collection method was semi-structured, in-depth interviews conducted with key business representatives actively working with social categories of the population.

The choice of the interviewing method is conditioned by the need to obtain detailed and multifaceted data, allowing us to study both objective and subjective aspects of the perception of this problem. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the received data, which helped to systematize and identify key themes and patterns in the respondents' answers. Respondents were selected using a purposive sampling method, which allowed us to focus on those employers who have experience interacting with social groups experiencing difficulties in employment. This approach provided a comprehensive understanding of actual practices and existing stereotypes in the labour market and allowed us to test the hypotheses put forward earlier.

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 consent of the participants and then transcribed for subsequent analysis. The data were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach that identified key themes and patterns related to barriers and ways to overcome them in the inclusive employment process. This approach allowed 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. Results and Discussion

During the research commissioned by the Committee of Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan, interviews were conducted with employers hiring representatives of socially vulnerable groups to identify their motivations, barriers and practical aspects of interaction with such employees. This allowed a deeper analysis of the difficulties and prospects of an inclusive labour market and an assessment of the adaptation of jobs and working conditions depending on the specific socio-demographic characteristics of employees.

48 employers from different cities of Kazakhstan were selected for the study. They were men and women between 32 and 47 years old, the average age being 43 years. The surveyed entrepreneurs own existing businesses in which they started to integrate social categories of employees, and they were also social entrepreneurs who started their activities with the primary goal of employing people from social groups. Some of the interviewed entrepreneurs (59%) are formal social entrepreneurs, but other respondents have no formal status.

To conduct interviews, the research team prepared questions on the difficulties and peculiarities of working with social categories of people. The questions contained the following information (Table 1).

Table 1. Structure of questions for employers

Theme	Questions
Introductory	Your full name, age, gender, place of residence
Professional	1. Scope of activities 2. Experience in the field
Employment experience of persons with disabilities	3. Which socially vulnerable categories are most represented in your organization? 4. What are the main challenges you can point out when working with social groups?

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.

These businesses' diverse activities include carpentry and sewing workshops, a massage parlour and social café at the university, furniture production, educational centres, centres to support children with autism and others. It is worth noting that today, some respondents have stopped hiring people with disabilities, and some have already closed their enterprises due to moving to another city for permanent residence. At the same time, other employers, on the contrary, open social café branches in different cities and regions. Entrepreneurs are expanding their cooperation with colonies to provide work for convicts. These examples offer a unique opportunity to explore the practical implementation of inclusiveness in the labour market.

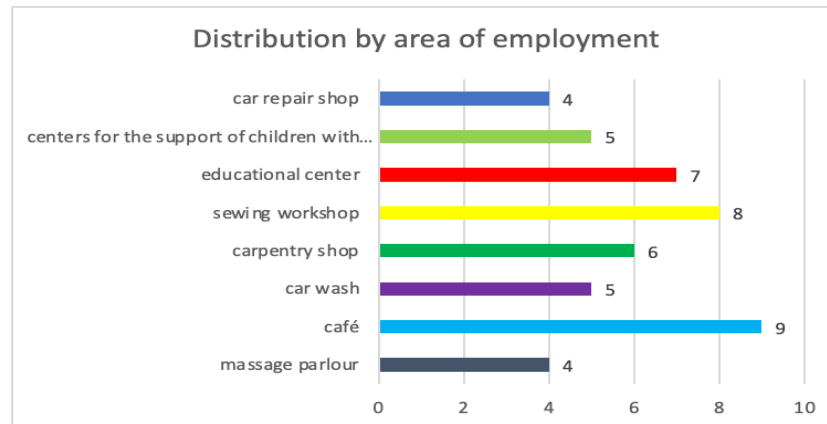


Figure 1. Distribution of employers by field of activity

Figure 1 shows a significant diversification of entrepreneurial activity with the predominance of services related to cafés and sewing. Persons with disabilities are often employed in catering, car washes, sewing and carpentry shops due to the possibility of adapting work processes. These industries allow for physically demanding jobs with minimal education and experience requirements, making them more accessible to people with special needs.

The average age of respondents was 43 years, indicating that entrepreneurial activity is highest among middle-aged people (see Figure 2).

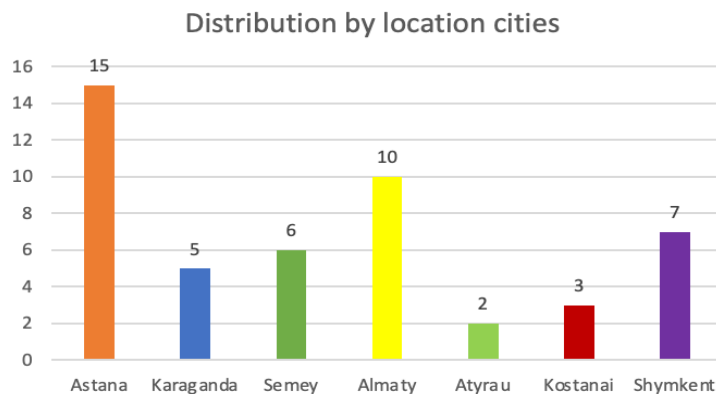


Figure 2. Distribution of social entrepreneurs by rayons of Kazakhstan

As for the geographical distribution of enterprises, the majority are concentrated in the capital of the country - Astana (15), in large cities of Kazakhstan - Almaty (10), Shymkent (7) and other cities of the country. Thus, there

is some concentration of entrepreneurial activity in major economic centres of Kazakhstan, such as Astana, Almaty, Shymkent, and Semey, which corresponds to expectations, as these cities are significant business and financial hubs of the country.

As mentioned above, previous studies have highlighted the problem of employment of social categories of people from the perspective of these people, where it was noted that employers are not interested in hiring people with disabilities. Several reasons were given, including reluctance to employ due to fear and lack of knowledge of how to work with people with disabilities. In addition, the business requires full-time employment with a continuous production process, which does not allow for employment of, for example, women raising children alone, who prefer part-time employment. Also, job seekers noted prejudice against them due to their disability.

The problem of employment of persons with disabilities from the perspective of employers is a relevant and significant area of research. In this regard, the research team developed and proposed special questions that allow for a deeper analysis of situations when hiring persons with disabilities and representatives of other social categories (Table 2).

Table 2. Special questions for employers to identify the specifics of working with people from social categories

Directing questions	Question box
Psychological issues	1. How do employees and the team react to new colleagues from socially vulnerable categories? 2. Are there training or support programs for people from social categories? 3. What challenges have you experienced when working with social categories?
Adaptation issues	1. How does your company adapt workplaces and working conditions for employees with disabilities? 2. What are the main challenges in hiring people with disabilities and/or from other categories?
Assistance and support from the state	1. Have you used any government programs or received subsidies to employ people with disabilities?

The first block of questions was more psychological and was created to understand better entrepreneurs' motivation to hire people from social categories. To the question "How do employees and the team react to new colleagues from socially vulnerable categories?" all respondents answered in the same way - in absolutely every company, neurotypical people accepted people with disabilities well. This indicates that the understanding of inclusion in Kazakhstan is increasing; people are ready to work and help people with disabilities. Thus, we observe that the hypothesis about the biased attitude of employers or the collective is not confirmed. According to all surveyed employers, the team and the entrepreneurs were very loyal to people with disabilities.

For the survey, it was essential to understand whether there are training or support programs for people from social categories in employment. For example, Yerkezhan, 41 years old, an entrepreneur from Semey city, answered that she paid for massage training for visually impaired people. Thus, before starting work, they were trained in this business, received a certificate and only then began working with clients. It should be noted that the quality of their work was not inferior to that of normotypic people.

Another entrepreneur from Karaganda, Indira, 37, when employing people with mental disabilities, first gave tasks to each person in specific work areas. Then, observing them, she identified which jobs he was best at. And she trained them in at least three types of jobs. For example, several girls with mental disabilities were not good at washing dishes. But when a boy with mental disabilities came in, he did very well at this particular activity. Thus, an individualized approach is needed for people with cognitive disabilities.

Social entrepreneur Emin, 41, from Astana, notes that before hiring a person with a disability, he must undergo an internship. This is done to understand whether the employee is suitable, whether you are suitable for him, and how he behaves in the team.

Entrepreneurs from Almaty, Astana and Shymkent (Akhmet, 38 years old; Irina, years old 40; Sharif, years old 35) believe that mentoring, whereby an experienced employee with a similar status is assigned to a new employee with a disability, is an effective practice. This approach helps to strengthen motivation: the new employee strives to justify the mentor's trust, and the mentor, feeling his importance to the company, learns to take responsibility for the support and professional development of the mentee. This helps increase the commitment level and the quality of work performed. Organizing team-building and other joint activities is recommended to strengthen collective cohesion and integration of employees with disabilities into the working environment. All surveyed employers practise this.

This block of questions allowed us to conclude that when working with people with mental disabilities, it is necessary to be patient and to explain the assigned tasks several times until the person memorizes and brings them to automaticity. According to employers' opinion, neurotypical people from social categories, as well as people with physical disabilities, should be kept strict and disciplined and treated equally.

In addition to psychological aspects, the research team was interested in practical issues and difficulties in working with persons with disabilities. For this purpose, questions of an adaptation nature were voiced: "How does your company adapt workplaces and working conditions for employees with disabilities?" and "What are the main difficulties encountered when hiring people with disabilities and/or from other categories?". The answers are presented below.

Indira, 37 years old, Karaganda: "Not all people with disabilities require workplace adaptation. For example, deaf people do not need special conditions. It is only necessary to learn a few gestures and write everything down on paper so they can read it. As a recommendation from one of the employers, deaf people should be hired in pairs to communicate and fit in more easily.

Aliya, 40 years old, Atyrau, believes that "for people with Group 3 disabilities who have diseases such as oncology or others that do not require significant physical limitations, often no major adaptation of the workplace is needed. It is essential to create comfortable working conditions, such as a flexible schedule, the possibility of working from home or the availability of breaks for recuperation. Employers note that such employees tend to demonstrate high responsibility and motivation, contributing to their successful integration into the team. The focus should be on supporting their morale and providing opportunities for equal participation in the workplace.

Victor, 43 years old, Astana: "We simply removed all sharp and breakable objects for an employee with visual impairment for dishwashing work and put utensils in a way that was convenient for him. In other words, the visually impaired employee knew where he had what he needed for his work and coped with his job perfectly.

Yerkezhan, 41 years old, Semey city: "We put couches and sinks for hand washing for blind people to work in the massage parlour so that they could find them quickly, put everything next to each other for the convenience of work of blind people, which allowed them to get used to the workplace and do their work well".

It is worth noting that absolutely all employers pointed out that the quality of work of people with physical disabilities does not differ from the quality of work of neurotypical people. For example, the cases of businesswomen from Semey and Astana cities, Yerkezhan and Aigerim, about the work of visually impaired people in a massage parlour prove that they do their job well. Also, there are the cases of Victor and Yergali (Astana) about the work of people with hearing impairment at a car wash, when they even received tips for a well-

done job from customers. Wages of people with disabilities do not differ from normotypical people; even if entrepreneurs do not receive state support, they pay from "their own pockets".

Thus, this study refutes the hypothesis that people with disabilities cannot find employment due to the lack of an accessible environment and that it is challenging to create such an environment. The answers of the respondents proved the opposite. If desired, every employer can create an accessible environment, at least in those types of jobs that do not require special equipment, such as car wash (employees of deaf people and deaf-mute), massage parlour (employees of blind people), dishwasher (blind), etc. The survey also shows that it is possible to create an accessible environment for people with disabilities.

The peculiarity of working with social categories is that many of them, for personal reasons, may not go to work. Due to such peculiarities, which were proved in the conducted interviews, it is more effective in working with people with disabilities, as well as with other social categories, that all of them are interchangeable. This is to prevent downtime in production when, for example, people with mental disabilities have crises and miss work. In general, people with cognitive disabilities are complicated to understand, meaning that you have to be prepared for their peculiarities. For example, one of the employers (Victor, 43 years old, Astana) cited a case when an employee with a mental disability did not come to work only because in a situation when the car wash was very noisy, the managing director raised his voice at another employee. This made a big impression on the employee with a mental disability, and he stopped going to work for a few days. So, these situations need to be prepared so that if one employee is absent from work, another employee can replace him. Since this is primarily a business, social entrepreneurs, just like traditional businesses, must fulfil orders to stay afloat. While working with people from social categories, there is a risk of not fulfilling orders on time. It can also be noted that mothers raising small children may not be able to work because the child is sick.

Almost all respondents noted no notable difficulties in employing social categories but neurotypical people. The only inconvenience is when, for example, mothers bringing up small children in case of a child's illness do not go to work. Also, many do not hire former convicts in organizations where teenagers and women work. At the same time, one businesswoman from Karaganda organizes courses for convicts to start their businesses directly in the colonies themselves and also provides them with jobs in the colonies themselves.

A separate social category can be distinguished for people from orphanages, cooperation with whom differs from other categories. According to one employer (Emin, Aliya, Aigerim, Astana), people from orphanages are not so attached to their workplace because they are looking for an easier job, as they are used to receiving a lot of things for free from the state and charity funds. Being in orphanages until the age of 18, they get used to getting many things without effort. This is because Kazakhstan has developed a charity for orphanages. Growing up and leaving orphanages, it is difficult for young people to keep a job where wages are low, and they must work hard. Therefore, there are also difficulties in hiring people from this category.

Another category of people who find it challenging to find a job is those who are addicted to alcohol and drugs. Many employers believe that there is no such thing as an ex-alcoholic or drug addict. The case of one employer shows that such people are prone to breakdowns and go on a bender for weeks, and the production process cannot wait. Therefore, it is challenging to work with such people, and the percentage of such categories is very low.

Another social category that deserves our attention is young mothers raising children alone. But this problem could be solved by an entrepreneur from Karaganda, Indira, who is 37 years old and remotely provides jobs for young mothers raising small children. The women come to the office once a week, receive an order and the materials needed to produce the product, and do the work from home at a time that suits them. That is, the employer has adapted the working hours for the applicant as comfortably as possible. At the same time, such

employees receive wages on a par with those employees who are directly at the place of work. In this way, the employment problem of one of the social categories - young mothers raising children alone - is also solved.

Dismissal of employees with disabilities occurs for various reasons; most often, they leave after gaining experience and skills, looking for a better-paid job or with a more convenient schedule for them (Victor, Astana). However, there are cases where they are dismissed because of parental interference (Indira, Karaganda). Also, dismissal occurs not because a person has a disability but because of some human behaviour (e.g., stealing, unfriendliness in the team, etc.) (Erkezhan, Semey City, Indira, Karaganda City). There was a case in which an employee with a hearing disability won a grant and went to work in Russia (Victor, Astana). At the same time, in some teams (Emin, Sergey), employees do not quit for years; on the contrary, they even create families among themselves.

The need for state support for entrepreneurs who are taking the difficult path of employing people with disabilities and people from social categories is undoubtedly essential. However, in our study, not all respondents are social entrepreneurs; accordingly, not all can use state support assistance, i.e., they cannot participate in state grants for social entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs registered as social entrepreneurs enjoy active state support. For example, state programs, unique jobs, and youth practice exist. Under the "Special Workplaces" program, the state allocates funds to compensate the wages of employers who hire social categories (Erkezhan, Emin, Maulen).

Thus, the study allowed us to look at the problem of employment of socially vulnerable groups from the point of view of employers rather than from the side of vulnerable groups. As we see, this problem can be considered from two sides, and it is necessary to consider both sides' interests: both from the side of labour demand and supply.

Conclusions

The research conducted has led to the following conclusions. Some of the interviewed respondents have experience in employing both social categories and people with disabilities, while other entrepreneurs employ only people with disabilities. As the research has shown, there are differences in the approach to the employment of people from social categories, such as mothers with many children, mothers raising small children, former and current convicts, etc., and persons with disabilities. There are also differences in the employment of people with disabilities based on the nature of their impairments, specifically between people with physical disabilities and those with mental disabilities. Furthermore, within the group of people with physical disabilities, there are differences between individuals with acquired disabilities and those with congenital disabilities. Generally, people with congenital disabilities differ from those with acquired disabilities in that they are less adapted to life circumstances, and they often lack basic work-related knowledge and skills. As a result, their employment is more challenging. Many employers note a low level of interest in work among people with congenital disabilities, particularly those with hearing and visual impairments.

Additionally, there is often a dependency attitude, with individuals believing that those around them should treat them specially, offering preferential treatment in their work while expecting higher wages. From a business perspective, this is seen as a deterrent for employers, as entrepreneurs rely on a high production volume, which requires qualities such as responsibility and efficiency—traits that people with congenital disabilities may lack. Consequently, this leads to a pattern of low employment rates for individuals with congenital disabilities. A significant issue in the employment of people with congenital disabilities is the way they are raised. Their parents often instil a dependent mindset from childhood, treating them with pity and fostering a belief that society, employers, and others owe them something. Growing up, these individuals tend to believe they deserve special treatment, forgetting that they cannot perform work at the same level as neurotypical people. Parents can sometimes exacerbate this problem by psychologically pressuring both the employer and the child (Emin, Indira, Victor).

In contrast, the situation is different for people with acquired disabilities. Many employers note that such individuals remember their lives before the injury and strive to return to the same standard of living they had before the disability. They also tend to have education and work experience, which allows them to adapt more quickly to new work environments. These individuals strongly desire to find a job and earn a good salary to provide for their families. They do not feel sorry for themselves and seek to be treated as equals to neurotypical individuals, avoiding any condescending attitudes. Expert interviews with employers in Kazakhstan who have unique experience in hiring people with disabilities and other social categories reveal that specific difficulties exist, especially when working with people with mental disabilities. These individuals require a unique approach, and patience is needed.

However, the research has also shown that stereotypical attitudes about the barriers to employment for people with disabilities and the reasons for their low employment due to the lack of accessible work environments are being dismantled. The experience of entrepreneurs in Kazakhstan from cities such as Semey, Karaganda, Almaty, and Astana indicates that, when desired, employers can create adaptive conditions to accommodate blind and deaf-blind individuals in the workplace. Therefore, the hypothesis that the low employment rate of people with disabilities is due to the lack of accessible environments has been disproven. Of course, this conclusion does not apply to individuals with disabilities who use wheelchairs, as none of the respondents employed individuals with locomotor disabilities. Creating special adaptive conditions for this group is necessary but remains a separate challenge.

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