

**Exploring the Prospects of Career Development and Progression
of People with Disabilities (PWDs)**



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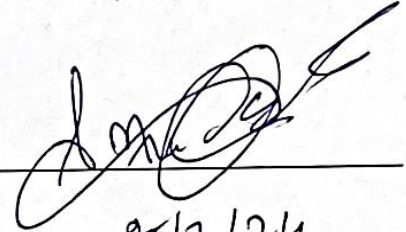


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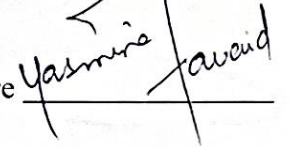
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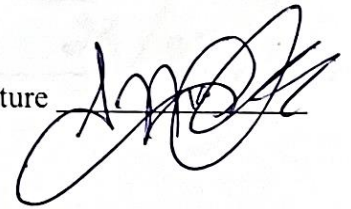
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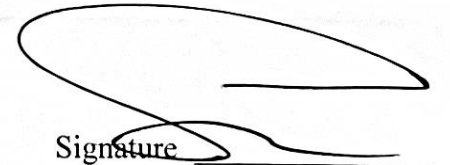
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ACRONYMS

1. People with Disabilities (PWDs)
2. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
3. Activity of Daily Living (ADL)
4. Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO)
5. Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT)
6. Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT)
7. Diversity, Equity and Inclusivity (DEI)
8. National Plan of Action (NPA)

ABSTRACT

Drawing on Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT), this study aimed to explore the prospect of career development and progression of People with Disabilities (PWDs), along with highlighting the challenges and their consequent influence on the career sustainability of the PWDs. Moreover, it explored strategies adopted by organizations to manage the careers of people with disabilities. It also analyzes the perspective of both managers and PWDs related to sustainable career development of people with disabilities. There is limited research on career progression and sustainability of PWDs so, it is important to address the concerns of this underrepresented population. The data was collected from managers and people with disabilities working in the inclusive organizations of various sectors using purposive sampling method. A total of 19 individuals participated which included 7 managers and 12 PWDs. The study adopts a qualitative research design for which data was collected through semi-structured interviews that were analyzed through thematic analysis using Quirkos software version 2.5.3. The results suggest that organizations are at an early stage of Diversity, Equity and Inclusivity (DEI), due to which the organizational practices have a capacity to improve. Moreover, organizations have been working on direct and indirect ways including progression and facilitation strategies to enhance development and progression of PWDs. The analysis reveals that the challenges and support for PWDs in an organization directly influences their experiences and careers. This study focused on a specific segment of PWDs i.e., those with physical abilities only, therefore it is suggested that future studies may include the perspectives and of people with mental and / or other invisible disabilities.

Chapter 01: Introduction

1.0. Background of the study

Diversity, equality, and inclusivity are the trending topics of this era, as the world is constantly challenging the existing knowledge regarding the institutional structures and stereotypes. Diversity and inclusion are as crucial for an organization as attracting and retaining talent. Moreover, diversity and inclusion are not restricted to age, gender, race, or ethnicity but comprise all minorities and underrepresented groups, e.g., people with disabilities (Adamson et al., 2021). “Disability is defined as difficulty doing activities in any domain of life (from hygiene to hobbies, errands to sleep) due to a health or physical problem” (Verbrugge & Jette, 1994, p. 2). Various countries have passed laws for the rights of disabled people and encouraged them to access social life and employment, along with strengthening their belief that they are not a burden but contributors to society (Heymann et al., 2022; Luu, 2019; Nelissen et al., 2016; Nyagadza et al., 2022; Ocran, 2019; Razzaq & Rathore, 2020).

Pakistan’s Disability Rights Act has become a law and has some policies and national plans for disabled people (Sightsavers, 2020). Despite these laws and policies, Pakistan lacks a set national definition for disability. Moreover, it does not have a registry to determine the total number of People with Disabilities (PWDs) (Razzaq & Rathore, 2020). PWDs face several social and vocational challenges. Employment of PWDs is crucial but one of the major barriers as they are still not considered as a part of mainstream society (Z. U. Rehman et al., 2022). To overcome this issue, Pakistan has also set a 3% employment quota for people with disabilities (Chauhdry, 2022; Rehman & Qureshi, 2023). The literature also suggests that disability inclusive environment of an organization improves productivity efficiency, economy, business growth and profitability, and provides a competitive advantage to the

organization (Aichner, 2021; Blanck, 2020; Kendall & Karns, 2018; Lindsay et al., 2018; Miethlich & Oldenburg, 2019).

The unemployment rate among PWDs, particularly in developing nations, is significantly elevated as 8 out of 10 PWDs are unemployed (Soeker et al., 2018). As the trend of disability employment is increasing, it is also important to assure their career development. Career advancement is an issue for each and every individual let alone PWD, due to highly competitive and saturated markets. Career advancement is important for an employee in these modern times to excel and stay relevant in the market. However, our understanding of the difficulties encountered by individuals with disabilities (PWDs) in their professional lives is restricted. This is because the majority of the studies on individuals with disabilities in the workplace focus on topics related to their recruitment and inclusion (Gupta & Priyadarshi, 2020). The extent to which career-related disadvantages are a direct consequence of impairment or are influenced by stigma-related attributional factors remains uncertain (Beatty et al., 2019).

At the same time, career sustainability is a trending topic worldwide. Sustainable careers consist of a series of work experiences throughout one's life that involve several aspects, including employment, social interactions, and family (Van der Heijden et al., 2020). It is underrepresented in the literature as well (Müller et al., 2023). This study aims to fill this void by exploring the potential for professional advancement for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs). This study seeks to thoroughly understand the strategies that impact the career paths of individuals with disabilities (PWDs) by analyzing their experiences, challenges, and opportunities in the workforce and career sustainability.

1.1. Significance

This research will benefit society because minorities' rights are a trending topic around the world. In continuation of the theoretical significance above, there is a strong global emphasis on aligning research with SDGs.¹ The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) recognize disability as an issue that cuts across all SDGs and has further enhanced the importance of right of PWDs. Goals 1, 3, 5, 10, and 11 ensure health and well-being, equal education and employment opportunities, success in transport and buildings, and reduce inequality and discrimination for PWDs. This study will have empirical and practical significance as it will advance the research, knowledge, practice, and policy related to career management (World Health Organization. Regional Office for Europe, 2019). This study will be helpful because it focuses on inclusivity, which will aid in the long-term employment and career development of people with disabilities. It will help to generate Equal Employment Opportunities (EEO) for the PWDs.

Furthermore, it will broaden understanding of diversity with a focus on disability, as diversity is frequently oversimplified and limited to gender, race, and ethnicity (Macpherson, 2017; Verwijs & Russo, 2023). It will also assist PWD in being privileged and empowered while helping organizations improve their practises to increase equity. It will provide a better understanding of the employment of people with disabilities. It will be empirically significant because it will contribute to the literature by bridging the gap and introducing new dimensions to PWD research for future researchers. Furthermore, the participants group has been used in previous literature, which will fill a gap and provide a new contribution. It will provide an overview of growth opportunities to organizations that hire PWDs. It will also address questions about employment, inclusivity, career advancement and career sustainability for

¹ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

people with disabilities. Thus, it will mainly target PWDs who are employed yet underrepresented in organizations. Additionally, it will target the senior managers as they are involved in policy formulation, and middle managers, who have a role in policy implementation within an organization.

1.2. Problem Statement

The prospects of career development of PWDs in Pakistan remains significantly underexplored despite various national and international mandates advocating for disability rights and Equal Employment Opportunity (Jahanzaib et al., 2021). Although the government has enacted laws with the objective of incorporating persons with disabilities (PWDs) into the labour force, there is a significant disparity between the policy and practice (Haider & Agha, 2024). This disparity manifests in limited access to high-quality education, vocational training, and job prospects, which leads to the social and economic marginalization of people with disabilities and a decline in their overall quality of life (Haider & Agha, 2024).

Pakistan has a high population of PWDs and weak law implementation (Hussain et al., 2020; Rafeh & Abbas, 2022; Shaukat et al., 2013). The population of PWDs in Pakistan is 13.4% of the total population, but the employment quota set for disabled people is only 3% (Kizilbash, 2020). Therefore, the employment quota represents few disabled individuals. Though the public and private sectors are becoming diverse, the implementation of policies and practices of the employment cycle are not transparent. Hence, an emphasis is placed on an ‘organization's diversity’ rather than its ‘inclusivity’, which requires utmost importance. Being a minority group, disabled people face multiple challenges throughout their employment cycle, i.e., recruitment, selection, development, retention, and separation (Rehman et al., 2022). Firstly, securing a job is a challenge, then securing a good position, and lastly, career advancement due to the lack of educational and training facilities along with the stigmatization and stereotypes attached to the PWD (Goggin & Ellis, 2020; Lindstrom et al., 2018; Nelissen

et al., 2016). Similarly, two significant problems include insufficient quotas and stagnant growth of disabled employees, which lowers their performance and morale. This research aims to study employment and inclusivity of the PWDs in organizations of Pakistan's metropolitan cities (Islamabad, Rawalpindi, and Lahore) from both private and public sector, but the focus will remain on career progression as it is the most essential aspect of a job for any employee.

1.3. Research Gap

The employment of people with disabilities and their career development is an under-researched but essential topic with major economic, social, and political implications for people with disabilities and the broader community, and the government needs to take initiatives to promote employment of people with disabilities by increasing the quota (Cavanagh et al., 2017). Career advancement is one of the barriers faced by people with disabilities (Bonaccio et al., 2020). The career advancement of disabled personnel requires additional attention because the disabled hiring quota is only for recruiting and does not guarantee career advancement. Further study is required on the topic of career progression of PWDs (Almalky, 2020; Brewster et al., 2017). Future studies can explore the strategies adopted to manage the progression of employees with disabilities (such as deployment, assessment, and rehabilitation) (Suresh & Dyaram, 2020). Moreover, studies have also encouraged to explore career sustainability of PWDs in future studies (Müller et al., 2023; Müller & Scheffer, 2022). It is suggested that future studies undertake fundamental rethinking and incorporate perspective to understand the intricate linkage between an individual's desire for sustainable career development and a firm's strategies for managing an employee's career (Chin et al., 2019). The working conditions, such as type of work, organizational structure, hours, and choice to work (full-time or part-time), etc., needs attention to understand the situation of disability employment (Brucker & Sundar, 2020). Moreover, the research on disability should be conducted in less developed and less-affluent nations (Beatty et al., 2019). In addition, the

sample should include both employers and employees to multisource data, reduce biases, and improves accuracy of the research process (Bonaccio et al., 2020). There are several barriers faced by PWD. Even though the employment of PWD has increased but the working conditions such as job positions, career advancement and career sustainability are taken for granted and leaves a gap in the literature and practice.

1.4. Objectives

- To explore the strategies organizations adopt to manage the career of People with Disabilities (PWDs)
- To understand the challenges People with Disabilities (PWDs) face in developing sustainable careers and their implications for employee motivation and career satisfaction.

1.5. Research Questions

RQ1: Which strategies do organizations adopt for career development and progression of People with Disabilities (PWDs)?

RQ2: How do these strategies enable PWDs to perform and grow in the organization?

RQ3: Which challenges do PWDs face in developing sustainable careers, and how do these challenges influence their motivation and career satisfaction?

1.6. Scope of the Study

This research explores the prospects of career progression and development. It seeks to determine the strategies adopted by the organizations to manage careers and their effect on the performance and growth of PWDs, along with barriers to sustainable careers. It focuses on PWDs as well as the managers working in inclusive organizations to get the perspective of both

groups. These employees belong to metropolitan cities of Punjab, Pakistan. The data is collected through face-to-face semi-structured interviews.

1.7. Structure of Thesis

This thesis is divided into 10 chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the research by explaining the background of the study along with the details like significance, scope, research gap, research question and objectives. Chapter 2 comprises of review of literature that elaborates on disability in various contexts and provides a conceptual and theoretical understanding regarding the topic through past research. Chapter 3 determines the methodology of this research. It starts with research design and methods used, along with process of sampling, data collection and data analysis. Chapter 4 explains the results extracted from semi structured interviews conducted from the participants.

Chapter 5 to 9 analyse the findings of the research through managers' and PWDs' perspective, by elaborating the themes generated from thematic analysis. Chapter 5 discusses the level of Diversity Equity and Inclusivity (DEI) in the organizations. Chapter 6 explores the strategies adopted by organizations to ensure career development and progression of PWDs. Chapter 7 analyse the challenges faced by PWDs in the organisation and their influence on development and career sustainability. Chapter 8 reviews the reasons for job selection, expectations, and the experiences of PWDs in the organisation. Moreover, chapter 9 discusses the prospects of career sustainability and their influence on sustainable career development of PWDs.

Lastly, Chapter 10 is the concluding chapter that elaborates on the findings by analyzing the similarities and differences among the interview of managers and PWDs, followed by its relation with the theory. Moreover, it thoroughly explains the results with the help of literature.

Furthermore, it also highlights the theoretical and practical implications, limitations, suggestions for future research and ethical considerations.

1.8. Chapter Summary

This chapter provides an introduction to the research, including a concise overview of the study's background. Furthermore, it defines the research objectives, research questions, study scope, study significance, and summary of the thesis. This research aims to explore the prospects of career development and progression of PWDs through strategies adopted by the organisations along with challenges and their influence on career sustainability.

Chapter 02: Literature Review

2.0. Chapter Introduction

This research aims to explore the strategies organizations adopt to manage the careers of people with disabilities and the sustainable career development of PWDs through the perspective of both PWDs and employers. In line with the objectives, the literature review focuses on people with disabilities, career progression, and career sustainability of PWDs. This chapter has five sections with multiple sub-sections. It starts by stating past literature on disability, career progression and development, and career sustainability of people with disabilities. The literature review is followed by the theory ‘Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT)’, which is the basis of this research. This chapter reviews literature that explains the conditions of PWDs in organizations worldwide.

2.1 Disability

This section gathers literature on disability and its operationalization in this research, along with its existence in Pakistan and the persistence of laws regarding disability in Pakistan. Moreover, it sheds light on the existence of inclusive organizations and the benefits of hiring PWDs. It is crucial to understand the circumstances of PWDs working in the organization as they are the sample of this research. All the research objectives and research questions are associated with people with disabilities.

Disability has various definitions such as functional, administrative and subjective definitions (Grönvik, 2009). Disability is operationalized in this research as functional disability. The term functional disability refers to the lasting effects of disease and injury on a person's physical, mental, or emotional functioning. These impairments can lead to limitations or difficulties in daily activities. Additionally, when the environment does not provide support, a person may experience restrictions in their ability to participate fully (Altman, 2014). The

presence of an illness, injury, or congenital problem may or may not result in a noticeable impairment at the cellular, organ, or limb levels of an individual during the active period of the condition. After the active disease pathology has been halted or removed, a residual impairment, which refers to anomalies or losses that persist, may exist once the acute phase of the disease, injury, or birth defect has concluded. The residual impairment can alter the functioning of cells, organs, or limbs at a cellular, organ, or limb level, resulting in a change in their capability and causing them to function differently compared to their pre-existing condition (Altman, 2014).

Disability is a concept of the 1960s, given by Nagi (Nagi, 1964). Disability includes the physical or mental impairment that significantly limits one or more major life activities (Z. U. Rehman et al., 2022). Disability is an umbrella term for any type of impairment, limited activity, or restricted participation. Moreover, it is an interaction between an individual and their environment as a whole (Qiao et al., 2022). 15% of the world's population consists of people with disabilities, i.e., approximately 1 billion people (Bonaccio et al., 2020; Bright et al., 2018). Meanwhile, there are 27 million people with some intellectual or physical disability in Pakistan (Razzaq & Rathore, 2020).

There are two types of disabilities: congenital and consequent disabilities. Congenital disabilities are inherent restrictions brought on by morphological defects, physiological anomalies, intellectual/ mental deficits or constitutional irregularities. While the consequent disabilities occur during the course of life, these can be short-term or long-term. It is a result of change, as the functional level of an individual reduces or declines after they have acquired it sometime in their life (Bogart & Dunn, 2019; Nagi, 1964). Moreover, the severity of the disability can differ in each individual (Qiao et al., 2022). Experiencing difficulties in doing a task or requiring assistance with at least one activity of daily living (ADL) is considered as an indication of disability (Neo et al., 2017). Disability is divided into 5 categories such as

physical, sensory, psychiatric, health and sensory disabilities (Miller et al., 2009). Disability is commonly assessed either on the degree of difficulty (none, some, a lot, unable) or the level of support required (minimal assistance, moderate assistance, maximum assistance) for a given task (Neo et al., 2017). Similarly, another research states four degree of severity that are none, mild, moderate, severe (Salinas-Rodríguez et al., 2020). Moreover, some practitioners use percentage to describe degree of disability i.e., 25% (mild), 50% (moderate), 75% (severe), and 100% (profoundly/ total) (Balakrishnan et al., 2019). Balakrishnan et al. (2019) discusses that disability certification is provided by medical practitioner or authority, by using various standardized assessments. Moreover, the disability certificate was given to the individuals with disability level equal or higher than 40%, which was reduced to 25% in 2016 (Balakrishnan et al., 2019). A table of categories and degree of disability adapted from Miller et al. (2009) is given in the Appendix-A.

The experiences of people with visible and invisible disabilities differ. People with visible disabilities have no choice because their disability is visible to others, and they are treated accordingly. People with invisible disabilities, on the other hand, have the option to disclose, but due to stigma and fear of being exposed, the vast majority do not disclose (Kiesel et al., 2018).

The global trend is towards an aging elderly population, resulting in a surge in the number of individuals with disabilities (Pulsiri et al., 2019). Moreover, disability is a trending topic all around the world due to the 15 years agenda of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) given by United Nations. Research post-2015 SDGs implementation indicates that while there has been an overall improvement in societal acceptance and reception, certain individuals within the persons with disabilities group have encountered unjust treatment during job searching, job interviews, or while working (Krishnamoorthi et al., 2024). The SDGs set goals for health and equality for PWDs (Hashemi et al., 2017). In addition, affluent countries

have been working on medical rehabilitation and digital health initiatives in recent years to ensure that people with disabilities are not excluded (Jones et al., 2020).

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) project, initiated by the United Nations, serves as a comprehensive framework aimed at supporting nations in mitigating poverty among persons with disabilities (PWDs) (Md Tah & Mokhtar, 2018; Opoku et al., 2019). However, studies indicate that individuals residing in homes with disabled members experience elevated levels of multidimensional poverty in comparison to individuals without impairments because multidimensional poverty is associated with functional limitation (Banks et al., 2021; Pinilla-Roncancio & Alkire, 2021). Furthermore, it also indicates that disparities in poverty rates were more pronounced in middle-income nations compared to low-income nations (Pinilla-Roncancio & Alkire, 2021).

Literature has also made a comparison between condition of PWDs in developed and developing countries. According to the research, developed countries were more quick in implementing measures to enhance the quality of life for persons with disabilities (PWDs); meanwhile, developing nations face constraints in terms of accessing socioeconomic status and situations pertaining to persons with disabilities (PWDs) (Lamichhane, 2015). Furthermore, another study reveals that the unemployment rate among persons with disabilities (PWDs) in developing nations stands at 90%, whereas in developed countries, it is 70% (Osman & Diah, 2017). The developed world possesses resources such as advanced infrastructure and financial capacity, which empower them to undertake programs to improve the well-being of those with disabilities (Tigere & Moyo, 2019). Another study supports this claim by elucidating that the inclusive policy of developed countries mandates that the government will guarantee that individuals with disabilities can travel securely and easily without spending additional charges (Aguilar, 2017). However, in developing countries, disabled commuters face additional problems due to insufficient transport infrastructure, funding for transport facilities, poorly

built environments, and a lack of affordability or subsidies for individual journeys (Mogaji & Nguyen, 2021). Furthermore, the trend pattern of research in developing countries is still focused on functional, physical or sensory disabilities (Hussain et al., 2022; Suich & Schneider, 2022), however, developed countries are emphasize on people with intellectual or mental disabilities to be part of workforce (Humphreys et al., 2022; Moore et al., 2019).

2.1.1. Disability in Pakistan

Pakistan is a developing nation with a comparatively high rate of handicap; nevertheless, it lacks robust statistics. The estimated number of disabled people in Pakistan is approximately 30 million, i.e., 13.4% of the total population (Kizilbash, 2020). The given number can be higher due to inadequate statistics and people's reluctance to identify as disabled due to the fear of stereotyping and stigmatization. Many communities consider PWDs as outcasts and give them derogatory labels. Hence, they are excluded from community activities. Moreover, they become vulnerable to discrimination, which violates their fundamental rights.

2.1.2. Disability Laws in Pakistan

The first declaration for the rights of PWDs was developed in 1973 and adopted in 1975. It emphasized the respect of disabled people and discouraged discrimination against them on any platform. It empowers PWDs and includes a welfare-oriented approach to help them function in society and cope with their weaknesses. The Disabled Persons Employment and Rehabilitation Ordinance was passed in 1981, similar to the 1975 declaration. Then, a National Policy for Persons with Disabilities was formed in 2002. It encourages an inclusive, barrier-free, and right-based society for PWDs. It was approved and followed by The Nation Plan of Action (NPA) 2006. The NPA provides strategies and actions essential for the next five years and recommendations up to 2025 (Gul, 2020; Razzaq & Rathore, 2020).

Pakistan has also tried to accommodate PWDs through the Accessibility Code of Pakistan 2006, the Special Citizen Act 2008, and the Special Citizen (right to Concession in Movement) Act 2009 (Razzaq & Rathore, 2020). The Accessibility Code of Pakistan states that removing any physical barrier from the buildings or environment is integral for PWDs who tend to live independently or with any means of assistance to provide them with the same rights and access to use the environment as any other individuals in the country. Similarly, the Special Citizen Act (2008) aims to make public spaces accessible to PWDs by allocating seats in public transportation, parking areas, and providing wheelchair and blind-accessible footpaths (Razzaq & Rathore, 2020). The Special Citizen Act (2009) ensured concession on all types of public and private transport (Ahmed et al., 2011).

Lately, the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Rights of People with Disability Bill 2018 was introduced in the parliament. Under the bill's terms, opportunities in the public and private sectors are made available to people with disabilities. The proposed law sets aside quotas for people with disabilities in government agencies, institutions, and corporations owned or managed by the government, and those quotas are reviewed periodically by the federal government. Moreover, businesses that don't hire people with disabilities have to pay twice a month an amount equal to what they would have paid the PWDs in salaries and wages. PWDs should be guaranteed legal protection for participation in all aspects of society, including the workspace. Later, this bill was passed as the ICT Right of People with Disability Act in 2020.

2.1.3. Benefits of Hiring PWDs

Diversity and inclusion are two interconnected terminologies; diversity is to make up a workforce that includes people from various races, ethnicities, genders, ages, etc., while inclusion is keeping the workforce integrated give them equal rights, opportunities, and respect (Deshmukh & Yadav, 2021). The inclusion level of the PWDs depends on the severity of the

symptoms. Inclusion and severity of the symptoms have an indirect relationship as the inclusion decreases with increasing severity (Suich & Schneider, 2022).

The benefits of hiring PWDs can be divided into three categories: organization, country, and PWDs. The literature shows that hiring PWDs benefits the organization and the country. Firstly, PWDs bring new ideas and talent to the organization, which can lead to innovation and growth. They bring a unique perspective to the workplace, and as a result, their experience and feedback can help organizations become more inclusive for employees and customers (Nkansah-Dwamena, 2022). Similarly, a study reveals that PWDs improve profitability and cost-effectiveness because they are hardworking and loyal, thereby reducing turnover. The cost of new hiring and recruitment is also reduced (Vashishth & Jhamb, 2021). Some studies also state that hiring PWDs improves the positive brand image and corporate social responsibility due to inclusivity (Kendall & Karns, 2018). PWDs also constitute a competitive advantage as this pool of employees exceeds the expectations of the employers as they have a high retention rate, attendance, and employee engagement (Lindsay et al., 2018).

The benefits for the country include economic benefits. The employment of PWDs helps reduce the burden and increase tax credits. It also increases the productive labour supply (Lindsay et al., 2018; Mussida & Sciulli, 2016). In addition, it improves social inclusion and acceptability among the community, which helps with adherence to laws and policies regarding the rights of PWD. It enhances the economy due to the high employment rate (Lindsay et al., 2018). For PWDs, employment leads to financial stability and independence. It helps them form new connections and social circles to escape their monotonous lifestyles. It also allows them to gain experience and polish their skills. It makes them confident, self-sufficient, and more productive as well (Martin & Honig, 2020; Requero et al., 2020)

2.2. Career Progression and Development

This section discusses the literature pertaining to an objective and multiple research questions about the career progression and development of PWDs. It includes two types of development, namely horizontal and vertical development of PWDs. Moreover, the sub-section elaborates on the strategies for career development of PWD, inhibitors of career progression, and facilitators of career progression.

Career progression and development are distinct concepts, but they are used interchangeably. Career progression is a long-term process that enables an individual to acquire new roles and responsibilities, which results in higher employment positions, greater job satisfaction, and improved career prospects (Litano & Major, 2016; Nkechi & Dialoke, 2017). Weng et al., (2010) conceptualize career progression on the basis of four factors: "career goal progress, professional ability development, promotion speed and the remuneration growth" (p. 392). Moreover, a comprehensive literature review compiles various constructs linked with career progression, such as career success, career mobility, career satisfaction, career advancement, and employability (Modem et al., 2021). In contrast, career development is a short-term process that can alter as an individual acquires growth-related skills and abilities. Niati et al. (2021) define career development as enhancing an individual's employability to attain the desired career. Career development is intended not only to provide employees with an opportunity to advance their careers but also to impart greater responsibility and appreciation for their efforts (Niati et al., 2021).

People can move up the corporate ladder by being promoted to higher-level positions, or they can move toward the company by taking on new roles that require skill sets but are still in the same department (known as rotation). Both motions are beneficial to human growth. Horizontal mobility refers to the assimilation of new experiences and job enrichment, while vertical movement occurs when new opportunities develop in response to the assignment of

higher or new duties. The specific supplementary abilities developed through job rotation within an organization also contribute to promotion, so workers can appreciate rotation as a means to get the experience they need for career progression or promotion (Villanueva-Flores et al., 2014a).

2.2.1 Strategies for Career Progression

Different career management strategies can be adopted by PWDs, where a positive mindset, disability advocacy, overcoming stereotypes through sensitization, and taking feedback helped PWDs to achieve their career goals. They also found that PWDs set their own career objectives and focus on achieving subjective, personalized career outcomes. Factors such as severity of disability, gender, and condition of impairment have a substantial impact on the employment rate of those with disabilities. Additionally, assistive technology, locus of control, and academic background are crucial in determining the job prospects of persons with disabilities. Moreover, various tactics are used by people with disabilities (PWDs) to receive better assessments from managers, especially non-disabled (Bhaskar et al., 2023). Employees experience fluctuations in their skills and capabilities throughout their professional journey, necessitating both employees and employers to adjust accordingly. This underscores the need for career flexibility (Baldrige & Kulkarni, 2017). A study discuss the quota system and reservation of seats for EEO (Gupta & Priyadarshi, 2020). Moreover, advancements in job specialization, flexibility, and rapid accommodation technology enable individuals with disabilities to continue utilizing their skills and abilities.

Furthermore, acquiring education and professional qualifications is vital for advancing one career and ensuring career sustainability (Gupta & Priyadarshi, 2020). Gupta & Priyadarshi (2020) have also mentioned networking, career paths, and organizational sponsorship as strategies used for the career progression of PWDs. A study identified

sensitization programs, feedback mechanisms, publication of success stories of persons with disabilities (PWDs), and coaching sessions for PWDs as practical techniques for progress.

Additionally, there was a strong emphasis on enhancing skills, mentoring, and peer support, making necessary accommodations, and conducting relevant assessments for all individuals. Furthermore, the study also examined performance evaluation, formal and informal training programs, and the significance of feedback in advancing individuals with disabilities (Schloemer-Jarvis et al., 2022). Similarly, another study has explained some strategies for the progression of PWDs, such as job mapping, targeted recruitment, accessibility, and employee interaction with PWDs (Suresh & Dyaram, 2020).

2.2.2. Inhibitors in Career Progression

PWDs experience barriers in various stages of their lives, whether it is their daily life, education, or employment. According to research, the problems that contribute to these barriers begin at home, including negative parental attitudes such as overprotection and false hopes of reversing their disability (Lee et al., 2011). It limits the interventions necessary for the child to grow and become independent, shatters their confidence, and makes them dependent on their family, resulting in future unemployment.

On an individual level, skills and traits play an important role in facilitating or inhibiting career progression. According to the study conducted by Lee et al. (2011), educational skills (such as reading, writing, language, and computer skills) and job-related skills (such as vocational, problem-solving, and community-living skills) are crucial for every individual, but more critical for PWDs. The lack of these abilities, skills, or educational opportunities for PWDs limits their chances for career progression. Furthermore, discrimination, preconceptions, and stereotypes are obstacles to promotions and create a non-conducive environment for the PWDs (Villanueva-Flores et al., 2014a). Ramachandra et al. (2017) states

that PWDs need assistance for their daily activities and work, i.e., they are dependent on others, which restricts them from progressing to managerial positions. The nature, severity, visibility, and disclosure of disability play an essential role in the inhibition of career progression as well (Ikutegbe et al., 2023). Potgieter et al. (2017) support these findings by detailing that visibility and disclosure of disability have led to the demotion of some individuals and delayed promotions for others, restricting their access to promotion opportunities due to the stigma and prejudice attached to PWDs.

On an organizational level, the most prominent inhibitor in career progression is employment position, as most of the PWDs are hired in semi-skilled positions. In contrast, PWDs with visible disability are offered entry-level and semi-skilled positions (Coetzee et al., 2014). Christianson (2012) also argues that a company's willingness to hire a disabled person is contingent on the company's ability to make reasonable accommodations regarding the candidate's disability, despite the candidate's education and abilities. Moreover, PWDs experience career plateaus that restrict their career progression due to slow or no promotions (V. Coetzee et al., 2014; Houtenville & Kalargyrou, 2015; Hui et al., 2021; Kalargyrou, 2014; Martel et al., 2021). The employer's lack of knowledge regarding disabilities and legislation also plays a crucial role in inhibiting the career progression of PWDs. Additionally, lack of job security, job opportunities, bonuses, promotions, or raise in pay, as well as other negative work experiences, all play a role in impeding professional development (Cho & Sultana, 2017).

2.2.3. Facilitators in Career Progression

Individual characteristics of PWDs are essential for growth and development. A study explains that resilience is the main component that can lead to career progression. It is linked to other vital attributes such as self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and self-esteem (Potgieter et al., 2017b). At the same time, it is supported by another study that details self-efficacy and self-esteem as facilitating factors of career progression (Morwane et al., 2021). However, Dispenza

(2021) argues that self-determination generates empowerment, which facilitates career development, and it can be achieved through counselling. In addition, disability rights legislation has spurred a shift in corporate policy toward disability inclusion in organizations (Morwane et al., 2021). The legislation has led to the addition of disability-related policies in organizations. These policies incorporate workplace accommodation (Blanck, 2020; Nevala et al., 2015), anti-discriminatory environment (Heymann et al., 2022), equity, access (Mithout, 2021), opportunity and equality (Lindstrom et al., 2018), etc. The aforementioned policies help PWDs in adapting and adjusting into the work environment and facilitate their career development through motivation. A study focusing on the employer's perspective states that PWDs have high commitment and perseverance, an essential factor that leads to their career progression and development (Ramachandra et al., 2017). While Potgieter et al. (2017) further adds to the findings that PWDs are committed, reliable, loyal, and hardworking as well. Moreover, Ikutegbe et al. (2023) summarize the "nature of the disability, disability disclosure, personal motivation, employers attitudes, job characteristics, corporate culture and climate, government support, and societal attitudes" (p. 17) as the most important factors in achieving career development and success.

However, it is observed that the literature is more focused on the barriers and inhibitors of the career progression of PWDs, and there is less information regarding the facilitators.

2.3. Career Sustainability

This section caters to the literature regarding the career sustainability of PWDs. This literature provides information regarding one of the research questions (RQ 3), which aims to explore the challenges of career sustainability faced by PWDs and their influence on the prospects of career sustainability (motivation and satisfaction). The sub-section discusses the challenges of career sustainability persisting in organizations.

The term Career sustainability was given by Vos and Heijden in 2015. The term "career sustainability" refers to an individual's ability to maintain a meaningful line of work over time and across different social contexts through the exercise of their own free will and initiative (Vos & Heijden, 2015). Career sustainability is a dynamic process that is directly related to evolving employability and workability. It is the capacity to achieve and sustain career success through productiveness, health, and happiness (Bhaskar et al., 2022). Sustainability means formulation, experience, and preservation of adaptive capability, as well as creating opportunities. Career sustainability involves various stakeholders to work on career trajectories (Müller & Scheffer, 2022). Career sustainability is having a career that is ideal fit for an individual as it lasts for a over a long period of time and provides health, happiness, and a feeling of accomplishment (Gupta & Priyadarshi, 2020). Moreover, employee motivation, productivity, and job satisfaction the drivers of career sustainability (Heimerl et al., 2020; Hitka et al., 2021; Latan et al., 2022; Simon, 2022).

2.3.1. Career sustainability of PWDs

In addition, motivation, knowledge, and networking are important in the career sustainability of PWDs (Rofe, 2022). Advancements in job specialization, flexibility, and rapid accommodation technology enable individuals with disabilities to continue utilizing their skills and abilities (Baldrige & Kulkarni, 2017). Although there are various components of career sustainability, they cannot be explained in one element. Therefore, health, happiness, and productivity form a framework to characterize career sustainability, and they are interconnected components (De Vos et al., 2020). According to this framework, health incorporates both physical and mental health, happiness is related to work and a broader life perspective, and productivity means strong performance in the current job and high career potential (De Vos et al., 2020). Similarly, literature discuss that sustainability promotes wellbeing (Urbanaviciute et al., 2019). Urbanaviciute et al. (2019) states that excellent

working conditions and a stable work transition is essential for a lasting career. Conversely, sustainable career development can result in more positive work experiences at a personal level. A sustainable career entails individuals experiencing favourable and secure conditions for an extended period of time, deriving well-being from their employment, and achieving a greater overall life satisfaction (Urbanaviciute et al., 2019).

Some individuals with disabilities (PWDs) have successfully overcome barriers and achieved higher job positions via their hard work and advanced qualifications. The findings of our study indicate that several elements, including individual, organizational, societal, and familial factors, have played a significant role in the achievement of the persons with disabilities (PWDs) who were interviewed as part of this research. Furthermore, acquiring education and professional qualifications is vital for advancing in career and ensuring career sustainability (Gupta & Priyadarshi, 2020).

2.3.2. Challenges of Career Sustainability

To expand the existing body of knowledge in this field, current literature is specifically examining the obstacles, biases, prejudice, and perspectives towards those with disabilities, as well as exploring ways in which organizations may facilitate the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in the labor force. However, it fails to address the equally significant but often neglected matter of the careers of persons with disabilities (PWDs), the obstacles they encounter in their professional pursuits, and their strategies for overcoming these hurdles (Bhaskar et al., 2023). This subject is intriguing and significant because, despite acquired disabilities being a natural part of one's life journey, many employees and employers face difficulties adjusting to these alterations (Baldrige & Kulkarni, 2017). Due to the pervasive societal stigma around disability, there is a limited number of employment opportunities specifically designated for individuals with disabilities (Kulkarni & Gopakumar, 2014). Similarly in another research it was stated that, PWDs face discrimination and negative

stereotyping due to the stigmatization attached to them (Barbareschi et al., 2021). PWDs grapple with finding and sustaining employment because of their lack of educational opportunities, experience, and a competitive market (De & Sampana, 2021). PWDs struggle because of stigmatization as well as their own inferiority complex. Moreover, Research indicates that there exists a hierarchical structure of stigma related to various disabilities. Individuals with physical disabilities encounter the least amount of social stigma, followed by those with cognitive and intellectual disabilities. Finally, individuals with psychiatric disabilities have the highest level of stigma (Miller et al., 2009).

Where society is unwelcoming, they also form a poor perception of self-worth. Moreover, organizations are not inclusive, so it becomes difficult for PWDs to compete with non-disabled participants in finding and securing a job (Agyei-Okyere et al., 2019). In addition, studies also show that lack of education, transportation, workplace accommodation, quality healthcare, and support contributes to employment issues (Agyei-Okyere et al., 2019; Wickenden et al., 2020). PWDs also experience unfavorable societal attitudes, which increases their struggle to adapt to their work environment (Nevala et al., 2015; Oud, 2019; Soeker, 2020).

In conclusion, the body of literature on people with disabilities highlights a multifaceted landscape marked by both significant challenges and promising opportunities for career progression and sustainability. Historically, individuals with disabilities have faced numerous barriers, including societal stigma, limited access to education and training, and workplace discrimination, which have impeded their career advancement. Despite these obstacles, recent studies underscore the positive impact of supportive policies, inclusive workplace cultures, and targeted interventions in facilitating career growth for this population. Moreover, Career sustainability for individuals with disabilities is closely linked to the presence of ongoing support mechanisms, including continuous professional development, flexible work

arrangements, and proactive health and wellness programs. However, challenges such as job insecurity, inadequate employer awareness, and the need for continual advocacy remain critical issues that need addressing. Overall, the literature emphasizes the importance of a holistic approach that combines policy reform, organizational commitment, and societal change to create an environment where individuals with disabilities can achieve and sustain fulfilling careers.

2.4. Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT)

This section discusses the literature on the theory implied in this research. It helps to explore the research questions and compilation of results. Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) explains the influence of social, environmental, and personal factors on the career development of PWDs. The sub-sections discuss the different models of SCCT theory.

SCCT was developed by Robert D. Lent, Steven D. Brown, and Gail Hackett in 1994. The SCCT is a theoretical framework that illustrates how several factors, including individual characteristics, environmental influences, and personal experiences, influence an individual's interests, goals, and behaviour aimed at achieving those goals (Lent et al., 1994; Lent & Brown, 2019). It originated from the social learning theory proposed by Bandura in 1999 (Wang et al., 2022). This theory focuses on the interplay between individuals' abilities and predispositions, their environment (including relationships and systems), and their capacity to make choices and give significance to their experiences. Constructs of these three categories interact to steer the process of career development. SCCT highlights the significance of self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations, and goals in influencing career choices (Yuen et al., 2022). The SCCT presents a cyclical model of career development in which individuals' career decisions and behaviours are influenced by their self-efficacy beliefs. These beliefs are altered by their performance achievements, vicarious learning, verbal persuasion, and physiological and affective states (Ramos-Díaz et al., 2018).

In the initial part of the model, an individual becomes aware of the inherent abilities and tendencies referred to as 'person inputs' and assimilates external effects from the surroundings, known as background contextual affordances (Yuen et al., 2022). These observations result in social learning experiences, where the individual interprets the information about their position and develops beliefs and expectations about the practicality of specific tasks. As per the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) proposed by Lent et al. in 1994, interests are not formed solely through a learning experience but instead through the chance to incorporate that experience into one's self-belief (Gonzalez, 2015). An individual's self-efficacy is influenced by their learning experiences. Positive outcomes from direct social learning experiences lead to the internalization of a stronger belief in one's ability to perform those tasks and higher expectations for achieving similar outcomes in the future (Gonzalez, 2015). Additionally, it has an impact on the process of achieving goals. The individual's interests, goal choices, and actions to attain those goals are influenced by their self-efficacy, expectations of the outcomes, and contextual circumstances. The significance of ongoing learning and adaptability in response to evolving career possibilities and challenges is emphasized by SCCT. It is important for individuals to consistently update their self-efficacy beliefs, goals, and outcome expectations in response to their experiences and feedback from the environment (Shi, 2023).

2.4.1. Models of SCCT

The SCCT framework comprises five distinct models: development of interests, making of choice, performance in the job, job satisfaction or well-being, and career self-management (Lent & Brown; Wang et al., 2022). Within each model, the fundamental cognitive-person elements, namely self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and goals, are considered to work together with other significant aspects of individuals (such as gender and

race/ethnicity), their surroundings, and their learning experiences to influence the patterns of career development (Lent & Brown, 2019).

Interest model: SCCT's interest model states that self-efficacy and outcome expectations play a role in shaping one's career interests.

Choice Model: The choice-making model in SCCT delineates the process by which individuals make professional choices. It indicates that individuals' self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectancies, ambitions, and interests have an impact on their profession choices.

Performance model: The performance model developed by SCCT emphasizes the level of achievement individuals reach in work tasks and their persistence in pursuing specific tasks or career routes, particularly when faced with hurdles. It is essential to mention that SCCT's choice and performance models have a common emphasis on persistence. Persistence can also be seen as the stability of one's choices, namely the decision to continue with a particular course of action or the sufficiency of one's performance.

Job satisfaction model: The SCCT framework also examines the various aspects that impact individuals' satisfaction and well-being in professional environments. It illustrates that a satisfactory work environment is anticipated to be influenced by factors (personality and environment) similar to those in the preceding SCCT models. Individuals perceive themselves as advancing towards personally meaningful goals, exhibit high confidence in their ability to perform necessary tasks and achieve personal objectives, and have access to external resources that support their confidence and assist in their pursuit of goals.

Career Self-Management Model: The CSM model is based on social cognitive characteristics similar to other SCCT models. The main distinction is in its emphasis on the procedural components rather than the substantive elements of career advancement. The CSM model was created to forecast individuals' decision-making and handling of anticipated and

unforeseen circumstances and difficulties in their academic and professional endeavours, such as job searching and job loss, irrespective of their chosen jobs. The primary focus of this model is on the behavioural, cognitive, and affective aspects of the work adjustment or adaptation process. Its purpose is to complement the other models within the SCCT framework. These multiple models of SCCT were formed by Lent and his colleagues over a period of 19 years. The initial 3 models were proposed in 1994, the job satisfaction model in 2008 while career self-management model in 2013 (Lent & Brown, 2019).

The Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) posits that environmental influences significantly impact an individual's professional development and directly shape their learning experiences. It includes distinct populations and provides opportunities and strategies for career guidance for these particular groups, such as PWDs (Wang et al., 2022). Similarly, Yuen et al. (2022) have also researched career interventions of special groups. It can be seen from the literature that SCCT has been widely used in quantitative research, whereas its implementation in qualitative research is scarce (Ramos-Díaz et al., 2018). Therefore, this research aims to explore the career progression strategies of PWDs and their influence on performance and growth, along with prospects of career sustainability.

This research modifies the components of Social Cognitive Career Theory. It relates personal inputs of the model with disability, as the research focuses on the progression, development, and career sustainability of PWDs. Therefore, the contextual affordances are challenges (barriers). The disability of individuals leads to societal barriers that form the learning experiences of PWDs to reach the goal of sustainable development (Parry & Metzger, 2023). It influences self-efficacy and outcome expectations, which form interest and choices they make to achieve the development and progression of the PWDs, leading to career sustainability. Moreover, strategies of progression and facilitation also impact choice goals and development of the PWDs along with self-efficacy and expectation outcome. It is a cyclic

process; achieving the goal, i.e., progression and career sustainability, produces learning experiences. At the same time, these components work collectively leading to the attainment of dynamic goals.

In this research the self efficacy was analysed through the performance achievement, vicarious learning, support and encouragement, as well as their perception of competency. Of the participants. The questions asked regarding to understand self-efficacy and expectations included Have these strategies made any difference in your career development and progression? How would you explain your experience at work? Has this job affected your personality/ life or learning? What are your expectations for the future? PWDs were asked about their experience as the expectations of the PWDs were dependant on the experience. This research analysed that PWDs with positive experience in the organisation have high self efficacy and were interested in achieving further goals and had positive expectations. However, individuals with negative experience had low self-efficacy did not plan to progress in the organisation but to rather quit and find another job. This research also explained that proper implementation of strategies helped PWDs to progress. Achieving career advancement and sustainability is a comprehensive process that encompasses personal, environmental, and social elements. Therefore, it necessitates efforts from both the employee and the employer. This research focused on the development of strategies by organizations to empower individuals with disabilities (PWDs) and create opportunities for them to succeed. Simultaneously, PWDs demonstrated dedication and effort in enhancing their education and skills to achieve excellence.

2.5. Chapter Summary

This chapter above provides a review of literature on disability, PWDs, disability in Pakistani context. Followed by advantages and disadvantages of PWDs working in a n organisation. It explains career progression and development of PWDs thoroughly. Moreover, it also highlights the career sustainability and its components such as job satisfaction and motivation. Lastly, it explains the theory that is related to this research.

Chapter 03: Methodology

3.0. Chapter Introduction

This chapter provides a detailed explanation of the methodology employed, including population and sampling techniques, data collection method, data collection process and analysis. This chapter elucidates the methods used in this research, which are predominantly characterized by qualitative approaches. It also discusses the procedure of participant selection via purposive sampling. Furthermore, this section emphasizes using semi-structured interviews to gather data from managers and individuals with disabilities (PWDs) in inclusive organizations. Moreover, it encompasses the analysis and coding process. Then it explains the technique adopted to analyze interviews, i.e., thematic analysis. Lastly, it ends with the ethical considerations which most important part of the research.

3.1. Research Design

Research design helps to provide a framework and direction for research. It reflects a researcher's idea of the dimensions to be focused on during the research process (Asenahabi, 2019; Flick, 2022). It outlines the steps taken to gather data, analyze the data, and form results (Dissanayake, 2023). It consists of research philosophy, methods, and strategies of inquiry.

3.1.1. Research Philosophy

Research philosophy refers to a system of beliefs and assumptions about the development of knowledge" (Saunders et al., 2019, p. 130). It is also called worldview or paradigm as it is "basic set of beliefs that guide actions" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 5). There are various research philosophies, such as positivism, critical realism, interpretivism, post-modernism, and pragmatism. Research philosophies are associated with the research goals and underpin the methodology being used. To conduct research, its philosophy must be examined as each research study has its own set of beliefs and values. It is a guideline for

everything a researcher does. There are three types of philosophical assumptions. These research assumptions are called ontology, epistemology, and axiology.

Ontology refers to 'the nature of reality' and its characteristics. It allows a researcher to understand existence. It is concerned with what we can know about the world. The ontology explains whether there is 'one reality (realism)' that is context-free or 'multiple constructions of realities (relativism)' that are bounded by the context (Dissanayake, 2023). Epistemology refers to 'the basic belief of reality or knowledge'. It is concerned with how knowledge about reality is acquired, understood, and utilised. It forms a relationship between the researcher and the knowledge. Epistemology is objective or subjective (Killam, 2013; M. Saunders et al., 2019). At the same time, axiology refers to 'the values and ethics incorporated' in the research process. It is concerned with the credibility of the research as it deals with ethical considerations (M. Saunders & Bristow, 2023). This study's ontology is aligned with relativist ontology, which shows that there are several realities as opposed to one. Yet, its epistemology is subjectivist, which explains that the perception of an individual determines the phenomena (Saunders et al., 2019). Subjectivist epistemology provides an in-depth insight into how people with disabilities and managers perceive and navigate the career paths of PWDs, capturing their subjective professional experiences. This perspective allows for a detailed understanding of the factors that shape career development, highlighting the diverse and complex strategies adopted by organizations to cater career opportunities and challenges, and how they influence experience of PWDs. The axiology claims that it is crucial to consider the subjective perspective when responding to values as rational, self-conscious and autonomous human beings can be subject of values (Pezdek, 2011). Moreover, only human beings possess ability to complete accountability of their actions and the resulting outcomes (Pezdek, 2011). Hence, they are accountable for adjusting their own set of principles either for themselves or for the benefit of society.

The philosophy of this research is interpretivism. It is a method to comprehend the world in which individuals construct interpretations based on their own experiences. These interpretations are not inherent or natural to every individual. Instead, meanings emerge from interactions between individuals. The fundamental purpose of the study requires the examination of numerous perspectives and experiences of the participants without interruption or bias from the researcher's experience. Due to differences in background, culture, ethnicity, experience, and interaction, many individuals have diverse perspectives on a phenomenon.

Regarding the organizations, their culture, structure, policies, and governance are distinct, creating differentiation in an individual's perspective and experience. In addition, the information is limited by time, place, culture, and values. According to the research questions, it is essential to determine the strategies, career sustainability, and career advancement of disabled employees, for which interpretivism enables researchers to comprehend the topic's depth and the meaning behind the words.

Interpretivism is particularly well-suited for studying the professional development and progression of people with disabilities (PWDs) due to its emphasis on richer understanding and interpretation of social contexts along with perspectives and experiences of individuals (Saunders et al., 2019). Interpretivism perceives social truth as deeply connected to their social environment, making it impossible to detach or generalize from it. They highlight reality by means of comprehending and integrating the subjective experiences, ideas, and beliefs of the participants within their specific social and cultural framework, rather than employing a hypothesis testing approach (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022). It explains that each individual creates and experiences different social realities, so PWDs and Managers have a different perspective on the progression of PWDs. This perspective helps to explore how societal beliefs, workplace cultures, and organizational policies influence the career trajectories of PWDs. It provides an insight into how career opportunities and barriers are socially constructed, and researchers

can identify the specific challenges and supports that impact the professional growth of PWDs. Interpretivism enables an evaluation of how individuals with disabilities (PWDs) navigate and negotiate their career trajectories across various social and organizational contexts, providing insights into the effectiveness of existing career development programs and identifying areas for improvement. Adopting this approach is crucial for formulating comprehensive career development strategies that acknowledge and address the distinctive experiences and needs of individuals with disabilities. Interpretivism helps gain a deeper understanding of how businesses perceive and execute strategies for managing the careers of individuals with disabilities (PWDs), while also examining the underlying intents, beliefs, and cultural contexts that influence these tactics. Explore the individual experiences and difficulties that people with disabilities face in their professional growth, highlighting the subtle and intricate aspects of their paths. This can involve examining their underlying motives, objectives, and the particular obstacles individuals encounter in the professional environment. Interpretivism enables the comprehension of how individuals with disabilities perceive and interpret their professional advancement, what motivates them, and how they define career satisfaction. This methodology can uncover the subjective interpretations that individuals with disabilities assign to their work experiences, which is essential for formulating more efficient and compassionate organizational policies and procedures.

3.1.2. Methodological Choice

The most common types of research are qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. "Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods are the dominant methodologies in the social research milieu. Choosing an appropriate methodology is determined by the research paradigms" (Tharsika, 2022, p.298). Qualitative research is defined in several ways. One of the definitions explain qualitative research as an "iterative process in which improved

understanding to the scientific community is achieved by making new significant distinctions resulting from getting closer to the phenomenon studied." (Aspers & Corte, 2021, p.599). Qualitative research is a naturalistic inquiry that allows in-depth understanding, exploration, and interpretation of a phenomenon in an uncontrolled and context-specific setting (Barsoum, 2022; Masood et al., 2010). It focuses on the 'why' rather than the 'what' of any element.

Moreover, qualitative research is dependent on human experiences and their interpretation of any phenomenon in their lives. It provides a "flexible non-mathematical analysis of experiences, behaviors, and interactions" (Barsoum, 2022, p.5). The methodology of this research is qualitative approach. This study intends to gain a deeper understanding of career progression and development among people with disabilities, focusing on the strategies adopted by organizations and career sustainability. A qualitative methodology is utilized to develop new meaning and gain in-depth knowledge to learn the perspectives of diverse individuals who have better knowledge and information regarding the issue (M. Saunders et al., 2019). The selection of qualitative research is appropriate for exploring the professional development and sustainability of people with disabilities since it has the capacity to offer profound, contextual, and comprehensive understandings. Qualitative methods provide a thorough comprehension of the factors that influence or inhibit career success by acquiring lived experiences and narratives of individuals. This information can then be used to develop policies, practices and strategies that create an inclusive and supportive work environment for people with disabilities.

This study will employ the inductive method, which proceeds from the specific to the general. It implies that the research conclusion will be confirmed by the information acquired during the research procedure (Saunders et al., 2019). Moreover, the inductive method demonstrates the researchers moving between the data and patterns until they have developed an extensive list of themes. It may also require interactive collaboration with participants to

allow them to influence the themes that arise from the process. The research questions of this study aim to explore the strategies, challenges, and experiences of people with disabilities and managers. Collecting data and subsequently analyzing it is crucial for identifying patterns and themes in order to generate unbiased results.

3.2. Population and Sampling

3.2.1. Target Population

Population is an inclusive group that is the subject of an investigation or evaluation (Barnsbee et al., 2018). However, a specific subset or segment of the broader population that is the main subject of a study is referred to as the 'target population'. It is a more limited set of people who fit certain requirements or have particular traits. The research topic or the goals of a certain program serve as the basis for identifying the target group (Willie, 2023). The target population is the entire community or group that a researcher is interested in studying and assessing. A sampling frame is subsequently selected from this target population.

The target population of this study is people with disabilities. As service personnel aims to prioritize the needs and goals of people with disabilities, it has become increasingly crucial to directly get information from these individuals regarding their own perspectives on their lives (Ahmad et al., 2022; Becker et al., 2004). There is limited research on the career and progression of PWDs (Gupta & Priyadarshi, 2020). Therefore, it is important to explore the world of PWDs and their career. People with disabilities are not only underrepresented in organizations but also experience less success in their professions. As a result, they approach their career management in a distinct manner compared to individuals without disabilities (Gupta & Priyadarshi, 2020). Hence, this study aims to research this underrepresented group of people, which constitutes a significant percentage of the world's population.

3.2.2. Unit of Analysis

The initial stage in data analysis involves establishing the unit of analysis. The unit of analysis in business research is the individual or group from which data is gathered. It provides information on the subject and participants in business research (Kumar, 2018). The unit of analysis can be an individual, group of individuals, objects, geographic entities, and social artifacts (Khan, 2021). This research targets individuals to gather data regarding strategies, challenges, and career progression. The unit of analysis of this research is people with disabilities to understand the professional journeys of PWDs, including the obstacles they face and the factors contributing to their career progression and sustainability. This research focuses on PWDs working in organizations and their career experiences, challenges, and progression while working in inclusive organizations.

3.2.3. Sampling Technique

Non-probability sampling methods involve selecting a sample based on the researcher's subjective judgement rather than random sampling. In other cases, non-probability sampling is determined by a particular research objective, the presence of suitable participants, or a range of other non-statistical factors (Berndt, 2020). Applied social and behavioural researchers frequently encounter difficulties and ethical concerns when accessing the participants as they are not readily accessible. Non-probability sampling approaches are suitable for exploratory and qualitative research (Mweshi & Sakyi, 2020). There are five common types of non-probability sampling approaches, that are convenience sampling, purposive sampling, Self-selection, Quota sampling, and snowball sampling (Berndt, 2020).

Purposive sampling is a method used to deliberately select respondents who are most likely to provide relevant and valuable information. It is a manner of discovering and choosing cases that will make efficient use of limited research resources. Purposive samples are determined based on a preset criterion relevant to the investigation.

This research uses purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique. It is a fast and convenient way of approaching samples and obtaining data. The study will utilize a purposive sampling method to target employees of disability-inclusive organizations (Ames et al., 2019; Campbell et al., 2020). Disability inclusive organisations were identified through research, reports of company's policies and practices, networking and outreach. After shortlisting the organizations, these organisations were contacted through phone or email to confirm employment of PWDs in their workforce. Managers and PWDs from the shortlisted organizations were contacted for willingness to participate along with some details of their disability such as type and severity. PWDs were selected through phone calls and disability certificate provision. Managers that were directly leading and managing PWDs were selected for interview. PWDs are vulnerable populations that are hard to reach, so purposive sampling is the best-suited method to select the sample for this research. Therefore, the study employed purposive sampling methodology, an approach used to select a highly specialized sample relevant to the research aims.

3.2.4. Sample Size

The sample included PWDs and managers of inclusive organizations. Inclusive organizations create an atmosphere that allows people with diverse origins, characteristics, and thinking to collaborate effectively, reach their full potential, and utilize their uniqueness to benefit the organization (Thompson, 2017), such as the hospitality sector, IT companies, banks, etc. (NOWPDP, 2020). Data was gathered from the public and private sectors to reach the most substantial number of participants. This was done because the demographic being studied is sensitive and the number of participants is limited. The research did not specifically examine the contrast between these sectors. Moreover, this study applies to more than just a particular organization; its objective is to collect sufficient information and data from a challenging sample of a vulnerable and deficient population. Hence, data was collected using semi-

structured interviews until no additional information was obtained from the participants (saturation) (B. Saunders et al., 2018).

The sample consisted of 7 people from management and 12 PWDs, as PWDs are more focused in this research, and the number was determined through saturation. The terms ‘Managers’ and ‘Employers’ are used interchangeably in this research. The participants had diverse origins and characteristics. These participants had variations. The demographics of managers and PWDs are shown in table 1 and table 2. Table 2 is a short version of demographics of PWDs, for complete version see Appendix-B.

Table 1

Demographics of Employers

Res.	Age (yrs)	Gender	Education	Location	Industry	Position	Experience	Sector	PWDs subord.
E1.	34	Male	Masters	Islamabad	Housing	Manager HRD	7 years	Public	2
E2.	40	Male	Bachelors	Rawalpindi	Food and Beverage	CEO	10 years	Private	1
E3.	25	Male	Masters	Lahore	IT	HR Manager	3 years	Private	4
E4.	28	Male	Bachelors	Rawalpindi	Software	CEO	5 years	Private	1
E5.	42	Male	Masters	Lahore	Banking	Branch Manager	15 years	Private	1
E6.	27	Female	Bachelor	Islamabad	Hospitality	Branch Manager	5 years	Private	2
E7.	27	Male	Bachelors	Rawalpindi	Defence	OC	4 years	Public	3

Moreover, the saturation concept was used to establish the size of the sample (Vasileiou et al., 2018). The interviews were conducted until they reached saturation point, meaning that

no further interviews were necessary as the responses received were repetitive and redundant (Saunders et al., 2019). There is no fixed number of interviews to determine saturation, it varies from 5 – 60 interviews based on the types of research (Constantinou et al., 2017; Guest et al., 2006, 2020; Hagaman & Wutich, 2017). Most recently, it was explained that 9 -17 interviews lead to saturation point (Hennink & Kaiser, 2021). The quantity of participants in this study is justified due to the qualitative character of the investigation (Sim et al., 2018). Hence, the size of our sample was determined through termination of interviews when saturation was reached, i.e., no unique information was revealed by the participants.

Table 2

Demographics of People with Disabilities (PWDs)

No.	Age (yrs)	Gender	Education	Location	Industry	Position	Experience	Sector
P1	30	Male	Masters	Islamabad	Housing	Assistant Manager	7 years	Public
P2	38	Male	FA	Rawalpindi	Distribution	Warehouse supervisor	2 years	Private
P3	22	Male	I-com	Islamabad	Hospitality	Customer Service	1 year	Private
P4	32	Male	ACCA	Lahore	IT	Accounts Officer	6 years	Private
P5	31	Male	BBA	Islamabad	Education	Admin assistant	3 years	Private
P6	39	Male	BA	Lahore	Accounts	Accounts Officer	17 years	Public
P7	25	Female	BS	Lahore	Education	Teacher	3 years	Private
P8	25	Female	BS	Islamabad	Advertising	Content writer	2 years	Private
P9	25	Male	BS	Rawalpindi	Defence	2 nd Incharge	5 years	Public
P10	35	Male	Matric	Rawalpindi	Defence	Office runner	5 years	Public
P11	29	Male	BS	Islamabad	Software	Sn. Software Engineer	10 years	Private
P12	30	Male	BBA (Enrolled)	Rawalpindi	Defence	Store Manager	7 years	Public

3.2.5. Participants

The study's participants were managers and people with disabilities from the organizations. Participants include senior and middle-level management from an organization, as they are cognizant and involved in organization-level decision and policy making. Secondly, people with disabilities included in this research were from 2 categories physical disability and sensory disability, who had various types of disabilities which ranges from mild to severe degree of severity. These disabilities were noted according to the disability certificates provided by the health practitioners to the participants. Organizations required Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) to submit disability certificates indicating the level of severity in order to be eligible for employment under disability quotas or reserved seats. This study utilizes the severity level indicated on the disability certificates, which were evaluated by medical professionals.

In addition, people with disabilities, preferably from the same organizations, were included in the sample to gain information from their first-hand experience regarding career progress. Also, to learn about the organization's mechanism for PWD involvement and career progression, as well as the validation of information regarding the existence of policies and their implementation in the organization. Furthermore, it aims to reduce the possibility of bias in the information gathered while increasing accuracy. The PWDs only included people with physical disabilities since those are the ones who are frequently recruited.

Meanwhile, one participant with mental disability withdrew from taking part in the research. However, the employer who hired this individual with a mental disability was included in the research. A mentally disabled person can qualify to be part of the workforce if they have the necessary skills and abilities to perform the essential functions of the job, with or without reasonable accommodations (Bengisu & Balta, 2024). Under laws like the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), employers are required to provide reasonable

accommodations to enable qualified individuals with disabilities to work effectively (Blanck, 2020). Fit candidates are those who, despite their disabilities, can meet job requirements and perform tasks with reasonable adjustments. Conversely, individuals who cannot fulfil job responsibilities even with accommodations, or whose conditions pose a direct threat to the safety of themselves or others, may be considered unfit to work in an organization. Individuals on the autism spectrum may excel in roles requiring high attention to detail, pattern recognition, and routine tasks. Jobs in data analysis, software testing, and quality control can be ideal, particularly in environments that offer structure and clear communication (Black et al., 2020; Johnson et al., 2020).

The data was acquired from 10 organizations in Pakistan's metropolitan cities (Islamabad, Rawalpindi, and Lahore) due to easy access. The majority of the diversity-inclusive organizations are located in these cities as they are counted as Pakistan's most developed cities (Zafar & Bakar, 2011).

3.2.6. Time Horizon

The study has been conducted using a cross-sectional design. A cross-sectional study is a research method where data is collected only once to address specific research questions. In this form of study, all the components of the research are measured collectively rather than collecting data separately on each of them. Researchers have indicated that a cross-sectional study design is commonly used in research that is exploratory and descriptive in character (Vasileiou et al., 2018).

3.3. Data Collection Method

The semi-structured interview is universally regarded as the most widely employed method of inquiry in research. It is also defined as an exploratory interview (Alhabsyi et al., 2022). During a semi-structured interview, the interviewer typically follows a predetermined

questions to be asked in the interview. It offers flexibility by allowing new questions throughout the interview based on the responses provided by the interviewees. This level of autonomy enables interviewers to customize their questions based on the specific interview context, situation, and individuals being interviewed (Alhabsyi et al., 2022). Past research recommends creating an interview protocol with 8-10 questions and accompanying probes that may be completed within one hour (Hill et al., 2005; Jalma, 2008). In addition, it also suggests doing a minimum of two pilot interviews to evaluate the effectiveness of the questions (Jalma, 2008).

Two separate semi-structured interview protocols were formed for the two sets of participants, PWDs and Managers, based on the three research questions of this research. The interview guides are added to appendices (see Appendix-C and Appendix-D). These protocols were first formed in May 2023 and were revised twice and finalized in August 2023. Then, two pilot interviews were conducted, transcribed, and analyzed. After pilot testing, no further changes were required. Therefore, other interviews proceeded.

The interview protocol of the employers consisted of 12 questions, whereas the interview protocol of PWDs comprised 10 questions. Both of these interview protocols had some probing questions as well. To foster rapport between the participant and researcher, the interviews commenced with questions about the subject's background. This approach aimed to create a sense of ease and also facilitate the collection of demographic data. Following the discussion on consent and confidentiality, a demographic checklist was introduced. After completing the questions regarding the demographic checklist, a discussion was held regarding the participants' work, work-life, and career progression. The checklist of demographics for managers had 9 elements, while the checklist of PWDs had 12 elements.

Although the interview procedure is effective for gathering detailed and comprehensive data, it can be costly and time-consuming. The interaction between the interviewer and the participant can vary because each interview is distinct, and the quality of the responses gained from multiple interviews can fluctuate greatly.

3.3.1. Data Collection

Initially, several inclusive organizations that hire PWDs were identified through thorough research, organization's reports and references. Telephone conversations were conducted to obtain their explicit consent to participate. Phone calls were made to a total of 19 organizations, and out of those, 10 were successfully finalized. The participants received instructions and debriefing on the research through communication channels such as organization's HR, emails, or phone calls to ensure their willingness to participate. Individuals who demonstrated interest in the study were subsequently contacted via telephone, and interviews were scheduled based on the participant's convenience.

Face-to-face interviews were selected instead of phone interviews because they provide a more authentic environment for studying a social phenomenon through direct interaction. Nevertheless, two of these interviews were conducted over video conferencing according to the participant's preference. The in-person semi-structured interviews were conducted over three months, specifically from August 2023 to November 2023. A total of seventeen interviews were done at several locations, including cafeterias of organizations, meeting rooms, and participants' offices, while two interviews were conducted remotely via video conferencing. All the interviews were recorded. Prior to the interview, the aspects of confidentiality were discussed before opting to meet at a public café. We further addressed these concerns at our face-to-face meeting before commencing the interview and audio recording, the participants were provided with all the necessary details and expressed their voluntary consent to participate.

The interviews conducted with people with disabilities and the management yielded plenty of valuable information that proved beneficial for the research analysis. Furthermore, the duration of the interviews varied between 40 and 60 minutes. Nevertheless, one participant's session lasted about 90 minutes due to the need for comprehensive responses to specific questions, necessitating an interpreter's assistance for clarification. In addition, he also responded to a few inquiries by writing on a piece of paper. In order to adhere to ethical considerations and confidentiality regulations, every interview was taped after obtaining the interviewee's explicit agreement.

3.3.2. Data Analysis

The selected participants were given the choice to respond to the inquiries in Urdu or English. The interviews were conducted in either English, Urdu or a combination of both languages. The semi-structured interviews conducted with each participant were transcribed and translated. During the translation process, any interview information provided in English, whether a word or a sentence, was retained precisely as it was spoken, without any changes or alterations. Furthermore, the translation was conducted to maintain the integrity of the participant's information. The transcription and translation process were done during the data collection process and were completed by the end of November 2023. Finally, data was ready to be analyzed.

Data analysis is often seen as the most intricate and intriguing stage of qualitative research, and it is the one that is given the least amount of careful consideration in the literature (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). The data was analyzed with Quirkos software, specifically version 2.5.3.



Figure 1. *Quirkos 5.2.3. Interface*

Managing and analyzing qualitative data can be challenging due to its substantial volume. Quirkos is a highly effective software tool for organizing data and coding it for further analysis and theme development (Turner et al., 2021). The research data was analyzed by pairing Quirkos and Thematic analysis.

Thematic analysis is a practical way of analyzing data that qualitative researchers commonly use. Understanding how to apply it correctly and efficiently assists researchers in appreciating its usefulness, adaptability, & effectiveness. Thematic analysis is a method for 'identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data' (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of 'patterned response or meaning within the data set' (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Kiger & Varpio, 2020). Thematic analysis is conducted in a sequence of six steps starting from familiarization of data to drafting the report. These steps are data familiarization, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and writing the report (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Kiger & Varpio, 2020). In this research, the process of thematic analysis included data familiarization in which the researcher initiates the process by fully engaging with the data. It required thorough examination and review of the data, such as interview transcripts in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of its content. Then initial codes were created by identifying and categorizing particular segments of data with codes that symbolized noteworthy characteristics, patterns, or themes. The data collected from managers produced 292 codes that were placed in 66 labels. However, the data

from PWDs produced 282 themes that were placed in 52 different labels. The interface of codes is present in Appendix-E. These codes were subsequently analyzed to identify overarching patterns or themes. These codes were categorized into possible themes according to their significance. These searched themes are referred to as sub-themes in this research. There are a total of 11 subthemes generated from interviews with managers and 10 sub-themes from interviews of PWDs. The sub-themes were reviewed to check their alignment with the data. Themes must exhibit coherence, internal consistency, and pertinence to the study issue (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). The reviewed themes were then labelled by offering a precise description of their meaning and importance within the data. There were four finalized themes for both the interview groups (managers and PWDs) that were aligned with the research objectives and question of the study. Subsequently, the themes were labelled based on the research objectives. The label of codes, sub-themes and themes extracted from the interviews from managers are shown in the table 3. However, there were two separate interview guides for both the sets of participants, hence, there analysis was done separately. The themes generated through interviews from PWDs are shown in table 4.

Table 3

Themes Generated through Interviews with Managers

Codes	Sub-themes	Themes
Initial Phase of DEI	Stage of DEI	Initial phase of Diversity Equity Inclusivity
DEI standards		
Equality		
War Wounded	Types of PWDs	
Physical Disability		
Mental Disability		
Reserved Seats	Hiring of PWDs	
Quota		
Without Quota		
Referral hiring		
Percentage of PWDs		
Bed Ridden	Exceptional Cases	
Leverage on recruitment		
Same recruitment process		

Merit based recruitment	Ways of Recruitment		
Disability Certificate			
Disadvantages	Disadvantages	Efforts for growth and progression of PWDs	
Extended Contracts	Strategies for progression		
Trainings and skills			
Workshops			
Rotations			
Educational opportunities			
Performance assessments			
Career paths			
Decision making process			
Job Positions			
Time based promotions			Promotion Policies
Performance based promotions			
Anti-discrimination Policies	Strategies to facilitate PWDs		
Support from management			
Accommodating PWDs			
No transfers			
Equal Employment opportunities			
Teamwork			
Healthy environment			
Family support			
Meetings			
Flexibility			
Transportation			
Workforce planning			
Communication			
Awareness and acceptance			
Grievance handling			
Difficulties faced by PWDs	Challenges	Challenges faced by PWDs	
Burden			
Lack of seats			
Elimination of challenges	Career Sustainability	Growth and Career sustainability of PWDs	
Motivation			
Satisfaction			
Productivity			
Turnover Rate			
Advantages of PWDs			

Lastly, a comprehensive report that effectively showcases the identified themes, substantiated by compelling evidence derived from the collected data was compiled. This report aims to offer a comprehensive and intricate comprehension of the research issue. Thematic analysis can be performed using a deductive approach, where topics are

predetermined based on established theories or literature or using an inductive approach, where themes are derived directly from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Clarke & Braun, 2014; Kiger & Varpio, 2020). Thematic analysis is a highly adaptable and extensively employed technique for examining qualitative data due to its versatility (Clarke & Braun, 2014).

Table 4

Themes Generated through Interviews with People with Disabilities (PWDs)

Codes	Sub-themes	Themes
Types of Disabilities	Disability & Severity	Career Development Strategies and Their Usefulness
Recruitment of PWDs	Recruitment Process	
Quota Hiring		
Referral Hiring		
Merit-based hiring		
Accommodate	Facilitation Strategies	
Competitive Salary		
Medical security		
Communication		
Support		
Grievance handling	Progression Strategies	
Perspective on strategies		
Promotions		
Job Rotations		
Task division		
Skills and Trainings		
Performance Assessment		
Teamwork		
Educational Opportunities		
Exposure and Networking		
Coaching and Mentoring		
Work from Home		
Career Path		
Rewards and bonuses		
Positives of the organization		
Ways of promotions		
Perspective about Strategies	Usefulness of Strategies	
Stagnant Growth	Reasons to Choose this Job	
Opportunity to Excel		
Job Security		
Brand name		
Salary		
Field of interest		
Loss in business		
Anti-Discrimination		

Need of job		Expectations and Experiences	
Growth Opportunity			
Organizational system			
Experience			
Environment	Ambivalent environment and experiences	Challenges Faced by PWDs and their Solutions	
Positive Environment			
Negative Environment			
Issues and Difficulties	Challenges		
Difficult Communication			
Work-life Balance			
Unheard Queries			
Stereotypes			
Solution & recommendations			
Involvement in Decisions	Decision making process		
Sustainable Careers of PWDs	Career Sustainability		Career Sustainability of PWDs
Turnover rate			
Motivation			
Job Satisfaction			

3.4. Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations hold significant importance in all research studies due to the thorough and comprehensive nature of the research process. Ethical considerations become more critical when conducting face-to-face interviews with vulnerable groups of participants (Arifin, 2018).

From the beginning of this study, it was suspected that some organizations or participants might be unwilling to participate. Consequently, the participants and organizations were contacted in advance to obtain authorization from organizations and encourage people with disabilities (PWDs) who work in these organizations to participate. Therefore, enough time was taken by the eligible participants to actively engage in contemplation of their choice to participate in the research. They took approximately 1 to 2 weeks for approval; they agreed on their own will without any reminders. It was made sure that participants are free of any harm or exploitation (Rani & Sharma, 2012).

All individuals participating in our research were handled with respect and absolute trust. The study was conducted with respect for participants, irrespective of their age, gender, color, religion, political opinions, lifestyle, or any other significant differences between them and the researcher (Mirza et al., 2023). The researcher refrained from employing any form of discourse, be it academic or personal, that undermines or belittles the individuals involved. The participants were allowed to communicate openly without any obstruction, interference, or apprehension (Wa-Mbaleka, 2019). Individuals were encouraged to use the language they feel most at ease with.

First of all the participants were debriefed about the research. The process research begins with acquiring consent in qualitative study involves informed consent and process consent (Munhall, 1988). Informed consent is the act of giving individuals enough information so that they may make a voluntary and knowledgeable decision about whether to participate in a research or not (Wa-Mbaleka, 2019). Where as process consent ensures that participants are kept informed about new developments or changes in the study, and their willingness to continue is regularly reassessed. The permission from the participants was obtained voluntarily; they had a clear understanding of the research, and the individuals involved were adults who possessed the capacity to grant consent. In order to participate, individuals were provided sufficient knowledge about the study and the autonomy to decide whether to participate or decline (Arifin, 2018; Mirza et al., 2023). The participant's consent to participate in this study was obtained only after a comprehensive explanation of the research methodology. In addition, the participants were also requested to provide their process consent. Potential participants were explicitly informed that they had the authority to withdraw from the study at any point, even after signing the informed consent. Participants had right to withdraw anytime within the research process. They were also asked for their consent to record

the interview. Verbal permissions were taken for every individual step of the data collection process.

The anonymity and confidentiality of the participants were maintained by withholding their names and identities during the data collection, analysis, and reporting of the study results. The confidentiality of the participants is maintained by ensuring that any information related to their identity or responses is not shared with anybody outside the study team. This safeguards the person from any form of psychological, legal, or social detriment (Wa-Mbaleka, 2019). The confidentiality of the participants was likewise guaranteed in this instance. It pertains to the act of abstaining from gathering any personal information unless it is directly relevant to the research. The process does not incorporate any algorithms to detect and associate responses with the individual's personal information (Saunders et al., 2012, 2019). Moreover, the responses have exclusively been utilized for scholarly purposes.

The privacy and confidentiality of the interview environment were meticulously maintained throughout the telephone communication, interview session, data processing, and analysis (Rani & Sharma, 2012; Wa-Mbaleka, 2019). Every interview was conducted in a secluded and quiet setting with no presence of external individuals. Only the researcher possesses the authority to correlate the identities of the participants with their respective voice recordings. The data transcription and translation were carried out in an isolated room, utilizing headphones to prevent any potential observation by others nearby. All identifying information of the participants, such as their names, organization names, or any other significant feature of their identity, was excluded throughout the data transcription. When presenting the study's conclusions, the participants were referred by their anonymous identities in the verbatim quotes. However, participants were informed that their demographic information would be used to report the interview data.

The issue of trustworthiness was taken into account to ensure the reliability and accuracy of the outcomes. Trustworthiness refers to the extent to which the researcher's presence may have impacted the data, leading to potentially misleading results (Mirza et al., 2023). In order to address this problem, the researcher employed proactive measures to reduce their influence and bias, thus ensuring the credibility of their research (Wa-Mbaleka, 2019). This was achieved by taking into account the perspectives of managers and individuals with disabilities and setting aside their own opinions while analyzing the data using thematic analysis.

It was verified that the language and vocabulary were comprehensible and straightforward to understand. The sentence structure was easy, and any potential flaws in the interview questions were eliminated to prevent misinterpretation. Ultimately, the findings and examination are disclosed with complete transparency and accountability, devoid of any instances of plagiarism (Helgesson & Eriksson, 2015). Any data extracted from previous literature has been accompanied by references to acknowledge the original researcher according (Rani & Sharma, 2012). The report and results are precise and unbiased, without any influence or preference towards any organization or individual.

3.5. Chapter Summary

This chapter explains the methodology of the research, including the research design adopted. Additionally, this chapter highlights the target population, sampling technique, sample size, and the interview guides used for data collection. Lastly, it elaborates on the process of data collection and data analysis along with ethical considerations.

Chapter 04: Results and Findings

4.0. Chapter Introduction

This chapter encompasses themes derived from the analysis of interviews. The tabular structure displays the themes, providing a concise summary of the perspectives of managers and persons with disabilities (PWDs) regarding these themes along with quotes that exemplify these themes. It further includes five sections explaining detailed analysis of different themes from perspective of managers and PWDs. This study employed thematic analysis to analyze the data collected from interviews. Five themes were derived from 19 interviews with people with disabilities (PWDs) and managers. Both sets of participants shared three of these themes. However, the other two themes had more detailed information from either one of the participant groups. The themes include Initial Phase of Diversity, Equity, Inclusivity (DEI), Strategies for Growth and Progression of PWDs, Challenges Faced by People with Disabilities (PWDs), Expectations and Experiences from the Job, and Career Sustainability of PWDs. An interesting aspect is that thematic analysis is used to analyse two different interview guides so the results include two perspectives. Each theme will present PWDs' and managers' perspective separately, to present their perspective in a more systematic manner. The section of each theme starts with an introduction to the theme then a table providing summary of theme, managers' perspective followed by PWDs perspective and concludes with main findings from the theme.

4.1. Theme 1: Initial phase of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusivity (DEI) Standards

The managers extensively discussed the preliminary phase of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), which served as a central theme during their interview, as all of their responses were closely tied to this early stage. Furthermore, this theme analyzes the perspectives of both managers and individuals with disabilities (PWDs) regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives. Additionally, it explores the influence of diversity, equity, and inclusion

(DEI) on strategies and practices. The table 5 shows summary of this theme 1 that is Initial phase of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusivity (DEI) Standards

Table 5

Summary of Theme 1: Initial phase of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusivity (DEI) Standards

Theme	Managers' Perspective	PWDs' Perspective	Quotes
Initial Phase of Diversity, Equity, Inclusivity (DEI)	Managers believe that firms are now in the early stages of implementing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives. This has an impact on the systems, practices, development of strategies, and their execution. Furthermore, they are learning through experience and will implement necessary improvements in the future.	Individuals with disabilities did not have significant interest in the DEI stage. Their objective was to enhance the prevailing circumstances. Furthermore, they believed that the initial phase of DEI should not be solely held responsible for any prevailing issues, but instead, organizations should focus on improving their processes to embrace change effectively.	E3: "We are currently working on the DEI standards and everything, but the most DEI involves are inclusion and recruitment of females within the firm and some inclusion of PWDs is taken into consideration." E4: "We are at very initial stage of accepting PWDs in the organization, not only us but almost all the organizations around us here in Pakistan"

4.1.1. Findings from Managers

The findings from the managers explained that the organizations are still in a very early stage of Diversity Equity and Inclusivity (DEI) standards. The managers had highly focused on this during their interviews. Almost all the participants had a similar point of view, and none of them expressed any contradictions. It was observed that additional inquiries posed during the interview were linked to the fact that these organisations are currently in the early stages of implementing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) practices. Furthermore, the absence of

implementation or measures was also attributed to the program's novelty. So, they had plans to implement them in the future as well.

4.1.1.1 Stage of Diversity Equity and Inclusivity (DEI)

There are various stages of DEI such as aware, complaint, tactical, integrated, and sustainable as discussed in Harvard Business Review (Washington, 2022). According to the participants, their organizations are still in the very initial phase, where they are focusing on Equal Employment Opportunity and recruitment of PWDs. These organizations are still in between the aware and compliant stages. As stated by a participant:

E2: "Only one employee is hired for now. I think there is a belief about PWDs that will take time to change. As far as my company is concerned this just the beginning".

Similarly, another employer stated that:

E4: "We are at very initial stage of accepting PWDs in the organization, not only us but almost all the organizations around us here in Pakistan"

While one of the employers hired their first PWD employee a few months back despite their DEI policies being made years ago. It explains that DEI maturity is at initial phase where organisations are still working on hiring PWDs.

4.1.1.2. Types of PWDs

The information collected through the interviews reveals that three types of PWDs are hired in the organizations that are people with physical disabilities, mental disabilities, and war-wounded individuals. Maximum number of organizations hired people with physical disabilities. Interviews revealed that there is only one organization that hired a mentally disabled person. As told by the participants,

E3: "They have physical disabilities. No, we don't hire people with mental disabilities for now."

However, the employer of that organization that hired personnel with mental disability stated that:

E4: "I currently I only have one employee who is disabled but a brilliant worker. one employee with a disability, specifically, autism"

While one organization was made to support war wounded individuals. However, they also hired people from open merit recruitment. It was a unique finding that an organization is operating in Pakistan that has a complete focus on PWDs provide Equal Employment Opportunity to PWDs, specifically ex-military men. They have reserved seats, higher salaries and allowances for PWDs. PWDs are prioritized in the organization. Though these organisations are in initial stages but are trying to implement policies to hire people from various backgrounds with different types of disabilities. Some of these are focusing on military men where as other on civilians who are underrepresented.

4.1.1.3. Hiring of PWDs

As the government of Pakistan has set a quota for hiring PWDs in organizations, it is implemented in several organizations. According to the responses, two organizations had a quota for PWDs, but the percentage is less than 3%, which is set by the government. Which shows that PWDs are still underrepresented despite of the efforts for Equal Employment Opportunity. The participant quoted:

E7: "We have a fixed quota of hiring 3 people at 3 specific positions."

In Addition, two of the organisations opted for referral hiring. They were dubious about hiring PWDs, due to which they hired people they already knew as a trial to make their environment more inclusive. While one of the organizations had reserved seats for PWDs. As reported by a participant, they had 50 seats for PWDs from military services, however, they also hired PWDs from civil background. One of the astonishing unique findings was that an organization also had exceptional cases where people are bedridden who did not report to the

office but were given a set salary. However, they were not promoted and were paid a fixed salary. The participant was astounded to reveal:

E1: "we have hired people who are completely bed ridden and do not even come to their work but are paid because of their nomination and recruitment policies. They stay at home, but we pay them because they are unable to move or get up from bed"

The interviews showed that less than 3% of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) were employed in the organizations. Two firms have a higher percentage due to their small workforce, and one employee with disabilities contributed to a larger percentage. Hence, it further strengthened the finding that PWDs added to workforce are lesser than the fixed quota.

4.1.1.4. Ways of Recruitment

These organizations are in the early stages of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) development, and their recruiting process for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) is rudimentary but aims to enhance inclusivity. While others hire based on merit or through the same process of initial testing and interviews as their other employees. Another crucial component mentioned by a participant was the disability certificate, necessary for applying for quota-based vacancies or protected seats. The participants expressed that:

E1: "The recruitment process is same for everybody that is initial test then interviews. PWDs get a leverage that they do not have give a test but only the Interview for lower ranks..."

4.1.2. Findings from People with Disabilities (PWDs)

The interviews of PWDs yielded no such theme. Nevertheless, when asked about the DEI practices in their organizations, individuals with disabilities expressed a divergence of viewpoints. Managers formulated their organizational policies and strategies by considering the level of DEI maturity. Persons with disabilities (PWDs) held the belief that DEI programs cannot progress without effort. The lack of efficiency in implementing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) strategies cannot be solely attributed to the initial stage but rather

stems from an unorganized organizational system. It is imperative for organizations to prioritize the enhancement of their systems rather than adhering to their current practices. They also believe that organizations must adhere to established standards, such as government quotas and other laws, in order to progress to the next stage of DEI maturity, which is the compliant stage.

PWDs exhibited a solution-oriented approach. They wanted the organizations to focus on enhancing interaction with individuals with disabilities. Additionally, engaging persons with disabilities (PWDs) in the decision-making process is essential to enable organizations to develop policies and strategies that are more relevant and imperative. In addition, there was a desire for organizations to progress beyond the concept of Equal Employment Opportunities and instead focus on providing assistance to existing employees while recruiting new personnel. In addition, they wanted organizations to establish attainable objectives by integrating the specific requirements of individuals with disabilities, enabling them to compete with employees who do not have disabilities effectively. Therefore, they aimed to enhance the organization's structure for improvement and were unwilling to attribute the flaws to the newness of DEI.

The main finding of this theme is that the stage of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) plays a crucial role in developing strategies and practices to effectively manage the career advancement and sustainable development of people with disabilities (PWDs). Managers prioritized the stages of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), while people with disabilities (PWDs) were more focused on progress and transitioning to the next stage. However, the absence of strategies or obstacles faced by persons with disabilities (PWDs) is not solely caused by the initial phase of DEI, but inadequate organizational systems and practices play an equal role.

4.2. Theme 2: Strategies for Growth and Progression of PWDs

This section explains two themes generated from interviews with managers and PWDs as the interviews generated similar theme. It includes efforts and strategies for the growth and progression of PWDs extracted from interviews with managers and career development strategies and their usefulness explained by PWDs. Both the themes explore progression and facilitation strategies and their influence on the development of PWDs, hence, these themes are discussed under one section. This section explains the theme from the perspectives of managers and people with disabilities. The table 6 shows the summary of this theme.

Table 6

Summary of Theme 2: Strategies for Growth and Progression of PWDs

Theme	Managers' Perspective	PWDs' Perspective	Quotes
Strategies for Growth and Progression of PWDs	Managers acknowledged using strategies to ensure the professional progression of people with disabilities (PWDs). Their primary emphasis was on career paths and trajectories as a crucial strategy. They also identified managerial and colleague support, teamwork, and access to training and educational opportunities as the most essential strategies. Furthermore, the implementation of different sorts of promotions, both vertical and horizontal, contributes to the	Individuals with disabilities (PWDs) provided information about the strategies used for facilitation and to make progress, as well as how effective these strategies were. They prioritized accommodations and communication as the most important aspects of facilitation. Training, mentorship, awards, teamwork, exposure, promotions, and rotations are crucial for growth and development. Organizations still need to establish career pathways and trajectories, although they are planned for the future. These tactics were beneficial in	E5: "Yes, we provide training and skills development to our employee with a physical disability to enhance their career growth although they are optional and they can opt for them... they can also be a part of training other employees are getting if it relates to their job. Equal opportunity of all." P5: "To get rid of these problems as much as possible, the organization needs to completely change how it handles communication, ease, and inclusion. Only hiring does not make a difference each employee has needs specially for somebody like me. Conveying things on emails does not make me happy although I get why they are doing this but if I am sitting in an office I want to have an office life as well."

<p>growth and development of the PWDs. These methods significantly enhanced employee productivity.</p>	<p>fostering the personal and professional development of people with disabilities (PWDs).</p>	<p>where I can talk to people and work and have a good work life. Face to face communication is also necessary. I hope you get what I am saying. Proper system is what I think is missing here. Which can be worked upon easily not many changes would be required."</p>
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4.2.1. Managers’ Perspective on Growth and Progression Strategies

The interviews revealed different tactics used by organizations to promote the growth and advancement of people with disabilities. The tactics can be categorized into facilitation strategies and progression strategies, which were combined to help PWDs to grow.

4.2.1.1. Strategies for facilitation of PWDs

Employers state that their organizations are in the initial phases of adopting DEI. They are concentrating on empowering persons with disabilities to reach their full potential so they can adapt and thrive in their organization. These employers want to demonstrate Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO), increase awareness about Persons with Disabilities (PWDs), and encourage acceptance. As it is the primary objective of the DEI program. One of the employers expressed:

E3: "We are currently working on the DEI standards and everything, but the most DEI involves are inclusion and recruitment of females within the firm and some inclusion of PWDs is taken into consideration.

Most organizations offered support from management to people with disabilities, and two businesses also extended support to their families by providing medical facilities or career opportunities. Two employers reported that they even modified their policies to

accommodate people with disabilities. whether it was for multiple family members working in the organization or transfers of PWDs to other cities or offices. The employer stated that:

E1: " Family members cannot be in 1 office or directorate, but we accommodate PWDS for their ease of traveling and working"

The PWDs are provided with a supportive and progressive environment. The participants reported an open-door policy along with two way communication to manage the concerns with utmost priority. They have established formal or informal grievance handling procedures by forming a committee or placing a complaint box. Moreover, they also thought that regular meetings were a great strategy to keep in touch with their employees. The participant reported that:

E2: "Environment has become friendlier and accepting... an inclusive workplace where everybody is treated with respect and that specific employee is given space because we know that he needs one"

The employers also mentioned that PWDs struggle to adjust in the work environment, so they can opt for Work from Home and Hybrid operations. Similarly, Transportation is available for anyone facing difficulties with conveyance. It is observed that working with PWDs can lead employers to alter their strategies. Hence, employers realized the importance of workforce planning through their collaboration with PWDs and have hired workers fit for each employment role. Another participant also stated that they had chosen a teamwork technique to improve interaction among their staff, boost learning, and distribute the workload of PWDS. This technique has enhanced working conditions and increased productivity. He stated:

E2: "Teams were made to help him and create acceptance. Work according to the strengths."

The findings show that organisations implemented various strategies like teamwork and workforce planning to accommodate their disabled employees. They changes their environment and working conditions according to needs and requirement of PWDs.

4.2.1.2. Strategies for Progression of PWDs

After EEO, it is essential for the organizations to provide growth and progression opportunities for the PWDs. As reported by the participants, these organizations' career management strategies support both vertical and horizontal development, as well as working tactics and approaches. These organizations have distinct visions, and their strategies correspond to their objectives. An employer reported that job enrichment and enlargement will help them manage their careers by allowing them to explore new avenues of development and learning. He stated:

E1: "If PWDs gives an application to be shifted for rotation, enlargement, or enrichment in staff positions if possible but there is no internal hiring for Officer grade position, for that there is open merit policy.

These organizations are using job rotations for horizontal development and had diverse approaches to promotions, one of which believed that time-based promotions were the most equitable way to advance all employees. Others, however, believed that performance-based promotions would increase employee productivity and efficiency, as well as ensure development. These organizations provide opportunities for development and learning. The organizations are facilitating PWDs in their pursuit of education for their continued development. Some organizations provide PWDs with specialized training, while others organize training sessions for the entire department, which PWDs may attend along with others. Similarly, apart from training one employer also intimated provision of short courses and workshops for their employees. He mentioned:

E7: "In the start of every year we publish a training schedule for the workers which includes the workshops and short courses and workers can apply for those... Yes! We do provide trainings yes.."

Teamwork was another strategy used for progression of PWDs. The employer realized that these PWDs need acceptance from other employees and sometimes need extra assistance

so they implemented teamwork and group tasks. Initially, teams were formed for task completion, and then job rotation was implemented to increase interaction between employees, increase acceptance and learning, and broaden the experience and network of PWDs within the organization. An employer expressed in delight:

E2: "He started doing better in a team.."

In addition, they have maintained similar policies for PWDs and other employees in order to foster a competitive environment, but they have provided PWDs with some advantages and leverages, such as a prolonged initial employment contract and a 10-year age relaxation compared to abled employees. Another strategy reported by respondent was employee assessment, as employees are assigned tasks based on their strengths, their managers evaluate their performance. These are then discussed with the higher authorities and PWDs in order to inform them of their strengths and weaknesses and solicit their feedback. One organization is focused on creating career paths for individuals to guarantee their advancement and progress. This program was implemented to establish precise objectives and concentrate on specific decision-making by the personnel. Interviews reveal that few organizations include people with disabilities in their decision-making processes and consider it to be crucial when managing them. It was stated that:

E4: "For career progression, Now we are planning to make career paths of all employees as they are my assets and it will be better if we grow together."

Job positions are utilized as a strategy to promote the advancement of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs). Based on interviews, the majority of the organization expressed willingness to hire Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) for any position based on their education and expertise. One of the organizations was set aside to ensure that those with disabilities are not overwhelmed by those without impairments, creating a fair competition only among

persons with disabilities. Moreover, they can improve their abilities and knowledge to advance within the organization.

4.2.2. Perspective of People with Disabilities on Growth and Progression Strategies

The interviews with Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) revealed that the organization recruited individuals with various physical disabilities, including sensory disabilities, single or multiple amputations, and polio. They ranged in severity from mild to severe. Nevertheless, they all had access to the same prospects for progression and resources offered by their organization regardless of their circumstances. Various strategies were reported by the organization that helps these PWDs to grow and develop which starts from recruitment process.

4.2.2.1. Recruitment Process

According to participants, several of them were hired through standard recruitment process of their organizations that comprised of initial test, interviews and medical checkup, these strategies are used alone or in combinations. Therefore, P 6 and P 9 gave initial test, P 9, P10 and P 12 had their medical check-ups. While all of them had interviews in their recruitment process. One of the participants explained:

P7: "I was employed through a standard application process, which included submitting my resume and attending interviews. The organization has inclusive hiring policies and provides equal opportunities for career progression to persons with disabilities (PWDs) in accordance with applicable laws and regulations."

Similarly, the public organization had quota or reserved seats to hire PWDs and increase inclusivity. It was stated that:

P9: "There was a job position only for PWDs here in this firm, so I applied and got the job. Policies were simply. This department has a fixed seat for PWDs, and pre-requisite was having a degree related to computer studies. So, I applied and got the job. There is medical board form which is required to apply for this job. Basically, a disability certificate and then a health checkup."

Some were hired through reference. They still had to go through interviews to be selected. In addition, it was mentioned by a few PWDs that their organization has internal hiring policy.

This strategy helps these PWDs to learn and develop skills in order to progress in their organization. Different organisations explored different ways of hiring to make the process unbiased and systematic. However, there was still some leniency from a few organisations to ease recruitment process for PWDs.

4.2.2.2. Facilitation Strategies

The strategies implemented can be further divided into two categories facilitation to progress and progression strategies. Facilitation strategies assist employees in adapting to the organization, excelling, and ensuring the implementation of other development and progression strategies. It was known from the interviews that most of the organizations accommodate their employees with disabilities by changing policies according to their needs. As P8 explained that she was on the verge of leaving the only job opportunity she got as a female PWD because of the accessibility issues. However, on discussing with the manager this issue was resolved and she was able to continue with her job. In multiple excerpts she stated:

P8: Environment was good everyone was very accommodating. I was one of the just 3 pwd individuals in the entire company. People didn't treat me any different than anyone else however they were very helpful if I faced any difficulties. I did not face any discrimination. Every body is friendly and helping towards me."

Later in the interview she added:

P8: "Since it was difficult me to roam in the office so they gave me the option of wfh (work from home) which was not a norm for them. Otherwise, I would've had to leave the job but they accommodated me. I can also opt for hybrid system where I come to office when required"

Some participants expressed satisfaction with the remote work arrangement in interviews, however P6 had a differing opinion due to dissatisfaction with his organization's accommodation regulations. He desired a remote or hybrid solution, but the corporation was uncooperative. He said:

P6: "I like to work here. These strategies have should remove the barriers and issues I face. it should work on some personal needs as well rather than focusing on just the whole population simultaneously. as for i am concerned i just need flexitbility in work i.e., work from home or hybrid system"

There were various individuals P9 to P12 appreciated transportation facilities, while most of them had medical insurance or facilities. These were two facilities that were mentioned frequently by the PWDs. The support from management and colleagues facilitates the employees to stay in an organization and excel. On the other hand, PWDs think communication is the key to resolve issues and they have good communication with their managers and colleagues or the grievance handling committee. However, P1 and P5 have different experience where they are unable to communicate within the organization. P2 stated that:

P2: "Open communication helped resolving any challenge that I faced"

While P5 shared his experience and said:

P5: "To get rid of these problems as much as possible, the organization needs to completely change how it handles communication, ease, and inclusion. Only hiring does not make a difference each employee has needs specially for somebody like me. Conveying things on emails does not make me happy although I get why they are doing this but if I am sitting in an office I want to have an office life as well. where I can talk to people and work and have a good work life. Face to face communication is also necessary. I hope you get what I am saying. Proper system is what I think is missing here. Which can be worked upon easily not many changes would be required."

4.2.2.3. Progression Strategies

Since, Equal Employment Opportunity was the main motive of the organization they also wanted their employees with disability to progress. Therefore, they had formulated and implemented various Strategies for growth and progression according to their knowledge and understanding. According to PWDs, all of these organizations claim to have identical strategies for all, while some make minor modifications to cater to the requirements of PWDs, and a few organizations do not follow through their claim. As one of the participants sadly stated:

P5: "There are ways progress in your job but those policies are vague. and I am often left out of the loop. They don't care about my needs because they don't have many handicapped employees. For the reason that they will hire someone else if I quit"

The information collected through interviews reveal that both horizontal and vertical developments are offered by the organizations. Participants have mentioned job rotations and cross training for horizontal progression while promotions for vertical. There are different promotion strategies. One participant i.e., P1 reported time-based promotions and while all others had performance-based promotions. While a participant also reported that his job position of office runner does not lead to progression neither was he interested in increasing his education or skills to progress. Whereas, another participant P1 disclosed that during the selection interview that he was assured a promotion within 6 months of being hired, which was a noteworthy discovery.

P1: "I was hired as an MTO initially but because I had previous experience so was promised assistant manager position after 6 months at the time of selection. Although the process takes 2 years to reach this position i.e., 1 year of MTO, then 1 years of HR officer and then Assistant Manager"

Though the promise was fulfilled he was unsatisfied because his next promotion was due after 7 years. So, he added:

P1: "I won't say very good experience because of extremely tough routine, and I don't like the experience because the next promotion will be due after 7 years of work and then further 8 years. So very long duration of promotion."

Similarly, some organizations provide learning opportunities for PWDs through different ways such as trainings, courses, workshops, these can be specialized trainings for PWDs or the whole organization. However, contradiction can be seen in some responses where organizations do not focus on providing any such opportunity despite of demand from the employees. The contradictory responses state:

P5: "They don't have specific training but obviously I cant afford to get them on my own"

These organizations also provide educational opportunities through which employees can pursue higher studies, certification or short courses to increase their knowledge and skills. These opportunities are also helpful in providing vast exposure and network building. It was observed that some organizations have also worked on workforce planning and task divisions to find right people for right work. Then teamwork is promoted to enhance collaborative effort. People with disabilities have stated that organizations have utilized teamwork as a strategy for progression. The organizations offered rewards and bonuses that were transformed into team rewards, motivating individuals to work towards their reward while also helping others accomplish their collaborative goals.

The organizations have two interconnected strategies: performance assessment and coaching and mentoring. Employees receive coaching and mentoring to support them in their tasks and responsibilities. Then they are evaluated based on these performances, which determines their advancement. Persons with disabilities (PWDs) receive feedback to enhance their performance and gain insight into their existing position within the organization. These performance assessments are reported to be of 2 durations annual and bi-annual. Lastly, individuals with disabilities added that working from home was an important strategy implemented by their organization. Individuals with disabilities also seek flexibility, remote work options, and hybrid systems to improve their working conditions.

4.2.2.4. Usefulness of Strategies

Everyone except P5 acknowledged that these strategies have been beneficial for them. These strategies have had a very favourable impact on their lives by enhancing their grooming, productivity, performance, lifestyle, learning, and independence.

P 9: "I came here as a fresh graduate but with time I have enhanced my skills and knowledge and all thanks to the workshops and training programs of this workshop. I have learned a lot. I was a amateur and they have made me a professional"

Several individuals with disabilities have been promoted as a result of these strategies and have opportunities for further growth, as promotion is regarded as the most desirable result of employees' efforts that all employees look forward to. Moreover, these strategies have enhanced the self-esteem of persons with disabilities, making them more confident by eliminating hurdles and challenges, thereby paving the road to success. PWDs who have not been promoted yet are optimistic about advancing in the future. A participants said:

P3: "These strategies have made a big difference in how I work. I can talk to people and express my self without listening or speaking. I am more confident... A lot of the problems and obstacles I face at work have been solved by the strategies".

The main finding of this analysis is that managers and people with disabilities (PWDs) share similar views on crucial strategies for the development and progression of PWDs, including training and skill development, educational opportunities, mentorship, accommodation and support, teamwork, promotions, rotations, performance evaluations, communication, and grievance handling. The only exception to this alignment is career path and trajectories. Additionally, these strategies benefit the productivity, personal growth, and professional development of individuals with disabilities (PWDs).

4.3. Theme 3: Challenges Faced by People with Disabilities (PWDs)

This theme presents the divergent perspectives of managers and people with disabilities (PWDs) regarding challenges encountered by PWDs. Numerous challenges occur during the employee lifecycle; nevertheless, the primary emphasis lies in analyzing career progression and sustainability barriers. The table 7 below shows a summary of this theme.

Table 7

Summary of Theme 3: Challenges Faced by People with Disabilities (PWDs)

Theme	Managers' Perspective	PWDs' Perspective	Quotes
Challenges Faced by	Managers claim that there are no	People with disabilities (PWDs) identified	P8: "Yes, roaming around the office in the wheelchair was

People with Disabilities (PWDs)	<p>significant obstacles encountered by persons with disabilities (PWDs) in their organizations, as they have implemented better strategies compared to other organizations. They did not consider accessibility, acceptance, and communication major or significant challenges. Nevertheless, they found it challenging to sustain a state of balance and equality between people with disabilities and non-disabled personnel. However, they offered solutions for obstacles very similar to those provided by people with disabilities (PWDs), such as effective communication, participation in decision-making processes, and the provision of assistive tools.</p>	<p>communication obstacles, limited accessibility, challenges in achieving work-life balance, lack of acceptance and stereotyping, as well as exclusion from decision-making processes as significant challenges. Furthermore, these problems can serve as a reason for PWDs to resign from their employment. They suggested that these issues can be addressed by implementing grievance management procedures, effective communication, support from managers, proactive measures, and active participation in decision-making.</p>	<p>quite difficult for me as not all the corridors were broad enough. So. I had to take diff routes then my colleagues. Similarly, going to other colleagues for work is also difficult. So, they cooperate and come to me, or we use phone but this is tiring and wastes a lot of time."</p> <p>E6: "As for challenge specific accommodations may be required for certain tasks, that are done through help and support by others. As it is a program run to support deaf people it is well organized, and challenges are minimized to almost zero"</p>
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4.3.1. Managers' Perspective on Challenges Faced by People with Disabilities (PWDs)

Employers' response indicates differing perspectives on the challenges encountered by people with disabilities. The majority of employers indicated that the Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) encountered few to no issues within their organization, due to the accommodations and support they provide. The participant affirmed:

E4: "Our employee hasn't faced significant challenges in our organization as I have been good with communication with my employees and they also encouraged to do so, and we are further committed to providing an inclusive and supportive work environment."

An employer stated that their program was carefully planned before being implemented due to the involvement of deaf individuals. Some argue that individuals with disabilities do not encounter challenges, but it is difficult for employers and organizations to ensure a fair balance among all employees and not show favoritism towards individuals with disabilities, as equality should be upheld for everyone.

E6: "Challenge is to create a balance between PWDs and Non PWDs, because equality is for both we can't favour one over the other despite of by soft corner"

However, the employer who stated few challenges were mainly related to the accessibility, acceptance of the PWDs, mobility issues, communication, and task completion. One significant obstacle encountered by Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) during recruitment is a lack of available positions. The number of PWDs is greater than the opportunities available to them. As stated by the employer:

E7: "One significant obstacle encountered by Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) during recruitment is a lack of available positions. The number of PWDs is greater than the opportunities available to them."

Moreover, the solutions provided the interviewees to resolve these challenges were already being implemented by these organizations such as grievance handling, assistive tools, communication, healthy environment, teamwork, involvement in decision-making process, and support. Furthermore, the employers were interested in hiring more employees and had a good experience working with the PWDs.

4.3.2. Perspective of People with Disabilities on Challenges Faced in the Organization

Where PWDs have reported positive and desirable features of their organizations they have also expressed the issues and difficulties faced by them. People with disabilities have voiced concerns regarding accessibility and accommodations. They find it difficult to travel

to an office and movement in a confined workplace space is even more challenging. Additionally, some persons with disabilities (PWDs) acknowledged facing adaptability and adjustment difficulties at the start of their careers due to a lack of acceptance and unwelcoming colleagues. Stereotypes about people with disabilities persist in our society, leading employees to make judgments about them based on preconceived notions unless they have firsthand experience working with them. The participants stated:

P8: "Yes, roaming around the office in the wheelchair was quite difficult for me as not all the corridors were broad enough. So, I had to take diff routes then my colleagues. Similarly, going to other colleagues for work is also difficult. So, they cooperate and come to me, or we use phone but this is tiring and wastes a lot of time."

Other than that, they have not seen discrimination but one of them mentioned favouritism in their organization. Moreover, these organizations have standard policies and strategies for all which ignores the special needs of PWDs. Hence, they feel left out in some regards. Moreover, a lack of participation in the decision-making process has exacerbated their challenges by silencing their opinions and inhibiting two-way communication. However, this was different for different individuals. Nevertheless, this varied among individuals. Some individuals with disabilities did not experience either of these obstacles, while others faced one or both of these challenges. PWDs expressed their issues and stated:

P12: "The strategies and policies are made by head quarters or the heads. We have no involvement but we can put forward our concerns."

P6: "Unfortunately, people with disabilities have zero involvement in the decision-making process for these strategies."

P7: "Yes, my organization places a strong emphasis on inclusivity, and people with disabilities are actively involved in decision-making processes related to career development and progression strategies"

Additionally, a unique finding was made that P3 was employed through a partnership program between their restaurant and an NGO. This NGO advocates for people with disabilities in the decision-making process. Additionally, these they also proposed continuous dialogue i.e., communication, pro-active measures, involvement in decision-making process, and

support from management and colleagues as a solution to all of the challenges above. As stated by a participant:

P11: "People sympathized with me and thought I couldn't work. People had stereotypes in mind and thought of me as useless as well."

The findings demonstrate two contrasting views on the challenges experienced by PWDs; managers believe their policies are flawless and devoid of any systemic problems, while individuals with disabilities explain the issues encountered in the organizations. Furthermore, the intensity of challenges varies for the two groups, as they reported the same challenges. However, managers saw these challenges as trivial, but they are significant concerns for people with disabilities (PWDS).

4.4. Theme 4: Expectations and Experiences

This theme encompasses the viewpoints of managers and people with disabilities (PWDs), rationales behind job selection along with explanation of the complex environment and experiences encountered by PWDs. Table 8 shows a concise overview of this theme.

Table 8

Summary of Theme 4: Expectations and Experiences

Theme	Managers' Perspective	PWDs' Perspective	Quotes
Expectations and Experiences	Managers were aware of the lack of work opportunities and the urgent demand for employment among people with disabilities (PWDs). Furthermore, their strategies and implementation additionally enhance the interest of individuals with disabilities in their work and	Persons with disabilities (PWDs) joined these organizations due to necessity, personal interest, failure in earlier business ventures, job security, or the benefits offered by these organizations. They had raised expectations as a result of their prior circumstances. Furthermore, their	P1: "I chose to work in this organization because I had stagnant growth in my previous organization... Also, a big name of the organization... I won't say very good experience because of extremely tough routine, and I don't like the experience because the next promotion will be due after 7 years of work and then further 8 years. So very long duration of promotion. I am satisfied with the salary but not the way of

<p>organization. They believed that all employees have pleasant experiences at their organization, resulting in a turnover rate of 0%.</p>	<p>experiences depended on the level of support or obstacles encountered within the organizations. Similarly, certain PWDs had their expectations fulfilled, while others did not. Nevertheless, the turnover rate was low, indicating that either the employees were content with their current work or some were actively seeking better opportunities but could not find one due to a lack of available positions.</p>	<p>working and the system. There is no mental satisfaction because this job is like a pressure cooker. Too much work and higher ups create more burden of work."</p> <p>P7: "The environment in my organization is extremely welcoming and comfortable. It's a place where inclusivity and collaboration thrive... I'm fortunate to work with colleagues and students who treat me with utmost respect and kindness. The teachers and staff are highly cooperative, fostering a sense of unity and teamwork. The students' affection and enthusiasm for learning make my work incredibly rewarding, and I feel truly valued as a member of the organization."</p>
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4.4.1. Managers' Perspective on Job Selection and Experiences

The results obtained from the interviews with managers did not yield precise details regarding the job selection process or the experiences of individuals with disabilities. Nevertheless, they held an optimistic view of their organizations, which was regarded as the primary factor that attracted individuals with disabilities to their organization. The managers believed that their respective organizations were incomparable, and minimal organizations exhibited superior policies, systems, or environments. Additionally, they were aware that individuals with disabilities had a restricted range of choices of jobs available in the market. So, their organizations are the most suitable options for job and growth opportunities. Furthermore, based on managers' perspectives regarding the challenges encountered by people with disabilities (PWDs) within their organization, it can be inferred that they believed they

had implemented optimal strategies and had adequately addressed the needs of PWDs. Likewise, employers possess a subjective perspective regarding challenges and do not perceive them as significant obstacles, indicating their belief that persons with disabilities (PWDs) have had positive experiences within their respective organizations. Subsequently, they consider it as a substantial reason for zero to minimum turnover rate.

4.4.2. PWDs' Perspective on Job Selection and Experiences

The findings from PWDs revealed various factors influencing their decision to choose this job, including favourable and adverse conditions, job stability, and personal interests. In addition, they held certain expectations regarding their job and organizations because of the significant challenge faced by individuals with disabilities in securing suitable employment despite possessing the necessary education and skills. Upon commencing employment, individuals are confronted with various challenges or support systems that impact their capacity to thrive, subsequently resulting in the development of experiences pertaining to the organization.

4.4.2.1. Reasons to Choose this Job

The people with disabilities interviewed had different motivations for joining these organizations. Some individuals with disabilities joined these organizations out of necessity due to their urgent need for employment and lack of alternatives. Nevertheless, some had their own field of interest. Public sector employees value job stability, retirement benefits, and competitive salaries as the most advantageous aspects of their profession. Subsequently, some PWDs chose organizations because of their reputation and brand name. Most participants highlighted growth and opportunities for progression as key indicators that individuals with disabilities are progressing beyond Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) and seeking a secure profession with abundant growth and development prospects. Finally, the organizational system and its environment significantly affect people with disabilities (PWDs), making it a

crucial factor they consider before joining an organization. Moreover, some persons with disabilities (PWDs) have had negative past experiences, such as business failures or lack of promotion in former occupations, prompting them to transition to these more favourable opportunities. The a few of the excerpts relevant to this theme are presented below:

P8: "Basically the most important factor to choose this along with my interest in this field."

P2: "However, the pay range is similar to what other of the same position get and I have also got a promotion"

P1: "I chose to work in this organization because I had stagnant growth in my previous organization... Also, a big name of the organization."

4.4.2.2. Ambivalent Environment and Experiences

Moving forward, the individuals with disabilities reported a combination of positive and negative environments and experiences. PWDs encountered varying settings within their organizations. Therefore, PWDs had experiences associated with their working environment. Good environment led to positive experiences, while bad environment led to negative experience, and mixed reviews on environment formed a mix of both good and bad experiences. Hence, the participant stated:

P7: "I'm fortunate to work with colleagues and students who treat me with utmost respect and kindness. The teachers and staff are highly cooperative, fostering a sense of unity and teamwork. The students' affection and enthusiasm for learning make my work incredibly rewarding, and I feel truly valued as a member of the organization."

The findings of this theme explain the significance of job selection and organizational experience in the work life of people with disabilities (PWDs), highlighting their critical role in fostering growth and development. According to PWDs, these are the primary factors that contribute to the attraction and retention of people with disabilities within an organization. Nevertheless, managers held different points of view and asserted that their organizations were unmatched for providing the pinnacle of employee experience which attracts and retains PWDs.

4.5. Theme 5: Career Sustainability of People with Disabilities (PWDs)

This theme elaborates on the objective to find perspectives of both managers and PWDs on sustainable career development of PWDs through motivation and job satisfaction. A summary of this theme is provided in table 9.

Table 9

Summary of Theme 5: Career Sustainability of People with Disabilities (PWDs)

Theme	Managers' Perspective	PWDs' Perspective	Quotes
Career Sustainability of People with Disabilities (PWDs)	Managers expressed that people with disabilities (PWDs) are not only motivated but serve as a source of inspiration for others, which keeps them motivated. Furthermore, they experience job satisfaction as their problems are effectively addressed and resolved. This is the reason why they have a turnover rate of PWDs that is equal to zero. Persons with disabilities (PWDs) are making advancements and showing keen interest in their employment. All of the characteristics above will contribute to the sustainability of careers for people with disabilities (PWDs).	People with disabilities held diverse perspectives on motivation and job satisfaction. There was a mixture of people who possessed both motivation and satisfaction, neither of them or only one of these attributes. Likewise, just a few individuals also demonstrated interest in the field. PWDs with job satisfaction and motivation can lead to their career sustainability. However, other individuals with disabilities will need to seek out a more advantageous opportunity to facilitate their personal and professional development and ensure the sustainability of their careers.	E5: "These strategies have positively impacted our employee's productivity and job satisfaction" P7: "...It promote equal opportunities and career progression for employees with disabilities, ensuring long-term career sustainability."

4.5.1. Career Sustainability from Managers' Perspective

Career sustainability is being studied due to its significance in an individual's career. According to employer's responses, PWDs are considered as hardworking individual who overcompensate their disability by working to the best of their abilities. Despite of the stereotypical description of them being a burden, the employers had positive remarks related to these PWDs. The participants considered PWDs as an asset with unique ideas, time management skills, problem-solving skills, and low absenteeism. These were the key factors that were viewed as beneficial for both the organization and individual development. The participants explained:

E1: "They are hardworking, efficient and organized. they work promptly and manage work timely. I have good experience working with them, just normal and usual."

The current state of organizations, their strategies and support system has kept the individuals motivated. According to participants, PWDs are not only motivated but are motivational for others as well. The participants believed that productivity of the PWDs has increased which can be observed through their performance assessments. Specifically, teamwork, career paths, performance assessment and performance-based promotions have played a vital role in keeping them motivated and increase productivity. This has also changed their attitude to do better. An employer expressed:

E5: "These strategies have positively impacted our employee's productivity and job satisfaction"

Similarly, it was stated that job satisfaction can be seen through an almost zero turnover rate. The employees stay loyal and work to the best of their abilities in these organizations. The reasons stated by participants for job satisfaction are flexibility, a suitable environment, job security, anti-discriminatory policies, grievance handling, communication, and progression policies.

4.5.2. PWDs and their Career sustainability

A trend of opportunities for progression and career sustainability can be seen in the interviews of PWDs. They are striving for successful career to ensure independence and equality in the world. It can be seen in the following statement:

P7: "...It promote equal opportunities and career progression for employees with disabilities, ensuring long-term career sustainability."

The individuals with disabilities had different perspectives on their motivation and satisfaction in their workplaces. The results indicate different patterns of either lacking motivation or satisfaction or having one or both of these elements. These patterns are dependent on various factors such as environment, experience, organization's systema and challenges faced by the PWDs. However, most of the employees were both satisfied and motivated to work. The statements of participants are:

P6: "Sometimes I lose motivation to work but get on track with health and job satisfaction is good."

P1: "I am motivated to work because I want to work and give my 100%. But I am not satisfied with the job and no reinforcement further increases the dissatisfaction and demotivation"

P2: "I am motivated and I am satisfied with my job"

Motivation and job satisfaction influence the turnover rate and employees' intention to stay in the organization. All public sector personnel wanted to stay in their jobs because of the job security and incentives, regardless of the availability of growth prospects. Some highly motivated and satisfied employees in the private sector choose to keep working with the organization for an extended period to foster mutual growth. These personnel were eager for advancement and development, striving for career sustainability. Lastly, some persons with disabilities (PWDs) were either unsatisfied and demotivated or lacked any of these elements desired to shift to a better opportunity. However, none of the participants were willing to quit

their positions without securing a position in another company because of the limited work opportunities available. Motivated and satisfied PWDs reported:

P3: "I'm going to stay with this company for a long time. My life and attitude have changed for the better because of this job."

The findings elucidate the concept of career sustainability and its component factors: motivation and job satisfaction. The managers believed that individuals with disabilities (PWDs) are progressing towards achieving career sustainability due to their strong motivation and high level of satisfaction. However, according to PWDs, some individuals are actively seeking career sustainability. In contrast, others lack one or both of the necessary components that impact their capacity to sustain a career.

4.6. Results and Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT)

Taking the perspective of Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT), it can be observed that employers have had a positive experience working with PWDs, so they believe that disability has not played any such influence on the careers of PWDs. In addition, they did not mention any significant challenges or barriers faced by the PWDs. The employers have high self-efficacy. It shows that learning experiences have been positive due to perceived constructive personal input (disability) and contextual affordances (absence of barriers). Similarly, they believe that the DEI program is at the initial stages; therefore, the efforts placed to manage careers of PWDs seem high to them, and they have high outcome expectations. However, heightened self-efficacy and outcome expectations have increased interest in the DEI program and EEO. Similarly, they have explained strategies that are essential for career progression and have also increased the productivity of PWDs. These strategies assist individuals with disabilities in determining the measures they may undertake to foster their development and advancement. Finally, the ultimate goal is advancing and growing Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) and establishing a sustainable career that provides them with

motivation and job satisfaction. This will benefit people with disabilities (PWDs) and the organizations to grow simultaneously.

Drawing from SCCT, we can explain that PWDs have faced many challenges due to their disability. These challenges consist of environmental barriers as well as organizational challenges. They have been suffering from unequal employment for a long time. Now that they have EEO policies and laws, the percentage of hiring is still below 3%. It can be seen from the findings that people who face challenges in their lives and organizations have associated negative experiences with their jobs. Hence, their self-efficacy and outcome expectations are low. Meanwhile, those PWDs who had support throughout their lives have high self-efficacy and hopes for positive outcomes in the future. Furthermore, those who faced challenges but had support from the environment were eager to excel due to their high self-efficacy and outcome expectations.

Similarly, these three cases had different approaches to goal attainment. PWDs with negative experiences were demotivated and unimpressed by the organization's strategies and unable to achieve progression, development, or career sustainability along with zero to minimum efforts for improvement. The person with positive experiences had achieved promotions and was keen to grow further by taking advantage of strategies provided by the organization and putting efforts into improving education and skills. In relation to SCCT, it can be explained that a PWD with limited education was hired for a low job position and had support from the organization. However, his self-efficacy was low, and he was not interested in improving his condition due to low outcome expectations. So, PWD was not concerned with strategy or progression; he was just there to stay and retain the job. This shows that all these components are interrelated, and changes in one aspect also influence the other aspects.

4.7. Chapter Summary

This chapter above explains the five themes generated from data collection and analysis. It explains these themes from perspective of managers and PWDs. This chapter further elaborates the strategies adopted by organizations for career progression of PWDs along with the influence of initial stage of DEI, expectations and experiences. It also explains the challenges faced by PWDs and their impact on sustainable career development.

Chapter 05: Discussion and Conclusion

5.0. Chapter Introduction

This chapter begins with similarity and comparison of the findings from the interviews of managers and PWDs. Followed by relation between results and Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT). Then, results are explained in detail with the help of previous literature in the discussion. Moreover, the chapter ends with practical and theoretical implications, limitations and future directions of this research. There are a total of six sections and two of them are divided in two sub-sections each.

5.1. Similar and Contrary Perspectives of PWDs and Managers

Two distinct interview guides, each centred around the same research questions, were utilized to interview People with Disabilities (PWDs) and Employers. The study aimed to explore the strategies used by the organizations for development progression of PWDs, how these strategies impact performance and growth, and the challenges faced by the PWDs in developing career sustainability. The data obtained from the interviews provided thorough information and responses to the specified questions. Some information was consistent among the participants, but they also expressed differing viewpoints.

5.1.1. Similar findings from the interviews

Both cohorts provided identical information on the recruitment procedure, hiring, job positions, and organizational policies. Organizations have made significant efforts to promote awareness and acceptance of persons with disabilities to enhance inclusion. People with disabilities (PWDs) and employers share a mutual understanding in organizations, where the issues of PWDs are acknowledged and companies make efforts to accommodate and support them. They both agreed that only a small number of organizations include their employees with disabilities in the decision-making process. People with disabilities have little to no

involvement in the strategic processes of organizations. Both groups agreed that individuals with disabilities are diligent workers who can do just as well or even better if provided with necessary accommodations in the workplace. So, they should be hired in the organisation and given chance to show their abilities in professional setting. Furthermore, they also acknowledged that those with disabilities had distinct requirements compared to those without any disabilities. The organization's primary focus has been on Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO), leading to the hiring of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) through a standardized approach. The ratio of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) in organizations is low, even though the government has set a 3% quota.

Both groups outlined comparable strategies involving a combination of facilitation and progression techniques that are helpful in the development of individuals with disabilities. Both ends witnessed a zero turnover rate due to the scarcity of opportunities and high demand, making it extremely challenging to find an appropriate job. The stigma surrounding people with disabilities persists in society, leading many individuals to view them as inefficient workers without giving them a chance or having a prior working experience with them.

Both parties were optimistic about the future of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs), as employers are motivated to boost PWD employment and improve policies and strategies in the coming years. PWDs were encouraged to perform to the best of their ability as a way for both PWDs and organizations to progress synergistically.

5.1.2. Contrasting findings from the interviews

As observed in the interviews of employers that they all had focused on their initial stages in DEI program and how they are new to it, it is a kind of a hit and trial method for them. However, PWDs were more focused on developing this program, creating opportunities by removing the obstacles and focusing on the individual needs. In Addition, Employers

emphasized on their efforts on accommodation of these PWDs, while PWDs mentioned the accommodation but also included their day-to-day issues and how some organizations are willing to resolve those while others don't. Therefore, PWDs had their reasons to choose the job one of the main causes was dire need of job and lack of better opportunities. Similarly, it was mentioned by the employers that they provide higher salary or incentives for the PWDs, meanwhile PWDs did not share any similar information and explained how they have same policies and standards for all in the organization.

Employers in interviews expressed an emphasis on the earliest stages of their Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) program, acknowledging their newness to it and describing the methodology as trial and error. However, PWDs were primarily focused on expanding the program by creating opportunities, eliminating obstacles, and addressing individual needs. Similarly, employers praised their efforts in accommodating people with disabilities. While PWDs acknowledged the accommodations provided but underlined the challenges faced by PWDs, along with specifying that some organizations are willing to address these concerns while others are not. Moreover, employers additionally stated that they provide higher compensation and incentives for people with disabilities. Whereas individuals with disabilities contradicted this and stressed that these organizations maintained consistent norms and standards for all employees. Additionally, people with disabilities reported a dire need for employment and a lack of better opportunities as key reasons for choosing these jobs. In contrast, employers thought that the benefits of their organizations were intriguing for candidates.

Addressing strategies, employers emphasized facilitation strategies while people with disabilities focused on progression strategies. A unique finding from PWDs was ways of promotion; one of the PWDs was promised a promotion in six months at the time of recruitment

because the organization had only one vacancy, and the PWD was the most suitable candidate for them due to his prior experience.

Furthermore, most companies have recognized career paths as a way to progress, but people with disabilities have observed that they have not been adequately implemented. These measures had a consequential impact on the careers of people with disabilities. Employers have observed its influence on productivity and development. Meanwhile, people with disabilities have recognized the positive effects of these strategies on their personal and professional growth and progression of PWDs.

Both groups were asked about the challenges faced by the PWDs, where employers thought their organizations had no challenges. In contrast, PWDs identified daily challenges, each mentioning at least one specific challenge. Similarly, employers were satisfied with their organization's environment, although PWDs had some recommendations indicating potential improvement.

5.2. Discussion

The findings of this research indicate that studied organizations are still in the 'aware' stage of DEI maturity, though they are trying to be compliant with the laws of Pakistan, which is contrary to the Harvard Business Review (Washington, 2022). Pakistan is a developing country with a long journey to the maturity of DEI sustainability, as organizations have still not reached the 3% quota of hiring PWDs. However, our research secured a unique finding: public organizations hire bedridden employees who do not attend office and receive a salary. They are not eligible for promotions but get annual increments on salary. The results and demographics of this research show gender disparity in organizations. Female managers and PWDs were scarce; women had unequal employment opportunities. During the research conducted in 10 years, this inequality is evident. Ahmad & Zadeh (2014), Akbar (2018), and

Jahanzaib et al. (2021) report gender inequality and discrimination among PWDs, showing that circumstances have still not changed for disabled women in Pakistan. Not only females but males also face challenges and barriers to employment and progression, which are consistent with past research, such as accessibility, acceptance, work environment, career development, favouritism, stigmatization, stereotyping and lack of opportunities (Baker et al., 2018; Becker et al., 2004; Finstad et al., 2022; Gupta & Priyadarshi, 2020; Hussain et al., 2022; Morwane et al., 2021; Potgieter et al., 2017a; Z. U. Rehman et al., 2022; Soeker, 2020). However, in our study, the managers did not consider the challenges of PWDs to be significant. Hence, they thought their organization had no challenges as the intensity seemed different to both cohorts, even though they almost mentioned the same challenges. The intensity was low for managers and high for PWDs. Since managers greatly valued EEO, they consider job opportunities significant, believing that any related problems should be resolved while they are in their professional roles. Also, people with disabilities (PWDs) must adapt to the work environment like other employees. Managers are content with their organizational practices as they align with the first phases of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). Currently, there is a lack of research examining the disparity in viewpoints of PWDs and employers on the intensity of challenges. Therefore, future research can prioritize investigating the perspectives of persons with disabilities (PWDs) and their employers regarding the severity of challenges encountered by PWDs. While comparing their viewpoints and the extent to which they empathize with these PWDs.

The challenges assessed through the findings are also excessively reported in the literature (M. Coetzee et al., 2017; Finstad et al., 2022; Gupta & Priyadarshi, 2020; Hussain et al., 2022; Kiesel et al., 2018; Potgieter et al., 2017a; Prasad et al., 2020; Z. U. Rehman et al., 2022; Soeker, 2020). The most prominent barrier is accessibility, which restricts people from joining or retaining their jobs (khan et al., 2015; Z. U. Rehman et al., 2022). Secondly, PWDs

still face discrimination from their colleagues despite the policies; people are reluctant to talk to them, which creates communication barriers and social isolation (Villanueva-Flores et al., 2017). This is the leading cause of adjustment or adaptability concerns. Additionally, favoritism and a lack of support from management discourage PWDs from excelling, decreasing their productivity. The most common issue found was the underrepresentation of PWDs in the organization's decision-making process, restricting their voice and growth (Mithout, 2021). The most common solutions identified were participation in the decision-making process, strong communication, and employee relations (Kiesel et al., 2018; Morwane et al., 2021).

Building on Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT), our study contributes that experiences gained by PWDs through challenges or support have a vital role in reaching progression and career sustainability. Similarly, personal, environmental, and social factors directly form experiences that influence the career development of PWDs (Lent & Brown, 2019; Wang et al., 2022). Another study also explained that employment experiences were shaped by expectations and advocacy, along with training, supervision, flexible employers, and friendly coworkers and these components were crucial to transitioning into the labor market (Finstad et al., 2022). One of the past studies has elaborated that individuals persisted in low-paying positions within the service sector when they had a healthy work environment (Finstad et al., 2022); meanwhile, our results show that job security is the main factor that increase job retention of PWDs. Our findings also highlight that goals of progression are subjective for these PWDs. Some PWDs rely on organizations to help them develop; others put in effort and hard work to achieve their goals. Nevertheless, the results conclude that strategies and support from organization and personal efforts are essential for growth. In line with SCCT, our study used motivation, job satisfaction, and productivity of PWDs as drivers of career sustainability, as suggested by the literature (Heimerl et al., 2020; Hitka et al., 2021; Latan et al., 2022; Simon,

2022). The study explored that people who had a good experience at work were motivated and satisfied, and their productivity was high, which helped them progress and ultimately reach career sustainability. In contrast, people with a negative experience were demotivated and unsatisfied; they wanted to change their jobs and did not aim for progression or career sustainability but a likable job.

Our research concluded that managers were satisfied working with PWDs despite the extra assistance they require to work; the positive aspects employers mentioned regarding PWDs were low absenteeism, hard work, acceptance and awareness among colleagues, increased productivity, and unique perspective, which is contrary to the past literature that collected data on the barriers and concerns of employers in hiring PWDs in their organisations (Ayub & Babar, 2022). Showing that assumptions are sometimes derived from stereotypes, although it is important to note that stereotypes are not always accurate. Additionally, the findings explored various reasons for PWDs to work in these organizations. The most repetitive reason was the need for a job, rather than the field of interest and growth opportunities.

In addition, this research explored progression and facilitation strategies that were both interlinked and helped in the career development and career sustainability of PWDs. According to interviews, participants could not distinguish between the strategies that directly influenced development and progression and strategies that were working as helping tools for progression strategies to work. However, these strategies have been identified in this research and the past literature (Baldrige & Kulkarni, 2017; Bhaskar et al., 2023; Dispenza, 2021; Gupta & Priyadarshi, 2020; Heymann et al., 2022; Ikutegbe et al., 2023; Kulkarni & Gopakumar, 2014; Schloemer-Jarvis et al., 2022; Suresh & Dyaram, 2020). In line with this, where past literature focused on career trajectories of the PWDs, our study had a difference of opinion on career paths (Ballo & Alecu, 2023; Dispenza, 2021; Gupta & Priyadarshi, 2020; Pathiranage & Wickramaratne, 2020). The managers reported the use of career paths as a progression strategy;

meanwhile, PWDs revealed that career trajectories were still in line and had yet to be implemented. In addition, formal and informal trainings, skills learning, and educational scholarships were commonly used strategies (Gupta & Priyadarshi, 2020; Schloemer-Jarvis et al., 2022). Similarly, the findings of this research identified 2 types of developments focused by organizations: vertical and horizontal development. Vertical development gauged promotions to a higher position, whereas horizontal development led to the acquisition of more skills and experiences (Villanueva-Flores et al., 2014b, 2017).

5.3. Implications

5.3.1. Theoretical Implications

This research contributes to recent literature as it targets vulnerable population, i.e., PWDs. There is limited research on this sensitive sample as they are hard to access specifically in underdeveloped or developing countries. The prospects of career progression are explored in this study. There are various studies on challenges PWDs face, but this research has specifically examined challenges to the career sustainability of PWDs and their influence on components of career sustainability such as motivation, satisfaction, and productivity, which is a significantly trending topic for all employees.

The study demonstrates thorough methodology by utilising the qualitative approach to explore PWDs' and employees' perspectives on the career progression and career sustainability of PWDs. This study is unique in its exploration, which simultaneously identifies the various prospects of progression and career sustainability of PWDs. These factors encompass personal, social, and environmental components and issues related to motivation, job satisfaction and productivity. This research is significant as it incorporates the perspective of both PWDs and managers. In addition, it associates the research with Social Cognitive Career Theory, which is limited in the literature.

5.3.2. Practical Implications

This study has identified challenges encountered by people with disabilities (PWDs) and their experiences. It further presents a set of measures aimed at assisting decision makers and policy makers in reassessing their policies and practices from a practical perspective. Such measures provide ways to improve organizational policies for increased inclusivity and to provide equal employment and growth opportunity to PWDs.

First, the findings of the study indicate the presence of barriers that restrict career progression of PWDs. To implement DEI programs effectively, comprehensive support is required by management and colleagues to help PWDs adjust in the environment. Employees must have the right resources and prompt access to information to work efficiently. Organizations should provide more flexibility to employees to regulate their working schedules, both in terms of working hours and submission deadlines. This will ultimately encourage an optimal balance in their work-life domains.

Second, it was determined that accessibility played a significant role in influencing employees. Hence, organizations should support their employees by providing them with facilities such as transportation, ramps, reserved parking, and ease of mobility for wheelchair bound PWDs.

Effective communication is another important factor that helps PWDs to put forward their concerns. It also, allows their inclusion in decision making process. The decisions made should be communicated at all levels to involved everyone in a positive manner. This will preserve employees' concentration and help them stay connected to organizations' core. When employees are working from home, they are less likely to receive information from their supervisors and colleagues. Therefore, the manager should arrange regular discussions with employees regarding work-related goals and keep the latter updated via the right channels.

In addition, organization must formulate and implement strategies strategically. As PWDs require assistance in work, organizations must implement mentorship and guidance. In addition, organizations can invest in assistive tools to help PWDs flourish. Organizations must also adapt to new changes and bring assistive tools and mediums to help PWDs and other employees work together in a better way. This must be followed by the requisite training and awareness workshops. Training and education opportunities is the most useful strategy to help employees to progress and develop to obtain sustainable career. Career paths and trajectories are strategies that has been emphasized in the literature, each employee must have their career paths to ensure their career progress and sustainability. Career paths are an essential way to keep track of development as well. This will eventually result in increased productivity and less stress.

5.4. Limitations and Future Research

Despite the strengths, the study possesses certain limitations. During data collection, only one organization that hired a mentally disabled employee was reached. However, the PWD did not consent to participate, so this research only focused on physical disabilities. Future research can include both people with physical and mental disabilities. Similarly, the data was focused on PWDs, and they are hard-to-reach samples, so this research did not consider gender. However, the percentage of female managers and PWDs was low. Similarly, this study explores strategies organizations adopt to manage the careers of PWDs, and future studies can explore the strategies PWDs adopt for their career development and sustainability. Future studies can focus on the gender of PWDs, comparing their experiences, and social cognitive career theory (SCCT) can use extended components of person inputs such as disability, gender, age, education, and ethnicity.

5.5. Conclusion

This research aimed to explore the prospects of career development and progression of PWDs. Our findings elaborated on the career progression strategies adopted by organizations and their influence on the careers of PWDs. It also looked into the challenges that hindered the career sustainability of PWDs and their effect on motivation, productivity, and job satisfaction. The findings of the study were concerned with elements of Social Cognitive Career theory. The findings explained the significance of personal, social, and environmental factors on the career progression of PWDs. In addition, the results show disability causes challenges for PWDs through which they form different experiences. These experiences then form PWDs' expectations of career progression and their choice of action for their future.

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APPENDICES

Appendix- A

Categories and degree of disability

DISABILITIES	Physical Disability	Cognitive Disability	Health Disability	Psychiatric Disability	Sensory Disability
DEFINITION	A physical impairment is a physical weakening, damage, or deterioration of the body that is congenital or due to injury or disease.	A cognitive impairment affects a person’s ability to process information and includes the ability to concentrate, pay attention, perceive, plan, organize, write, speak, remember, make appropriate judgments, sequence information, and orient self to the surroundings.	A health impairment is when an individual has a chronic disease that lasts more than 3 months that generally cannot be cured by medications.	A psychiatric impairment is when mental illness significantly interferes with the performance of major life activities, such as learning, thinking, communicating, socializing, and working.	A sensory impairment is a weakening, damage, or deterioration to one of the five senses.
EXAMPLES	Spinal cord injury, muscular dystrophy, rheumatoid arthritis.	Mental retardation and traumatic brain injury, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder	Cancer, diabetes, asthma, fibromyalgia	Depression, borderline personality disorder, bipolar disorder, posttraumatic stress disorder, and schizophrenia	Impairment, blindness, hearing impairment, or deafness.
MILD DEGREE	Person can complete self-care (grooming, feeding) without help from other people. May need a walker or cane but can move around without the help of others. Can work and socialize without relying on others	Person is able to provide self-care, learn new information, communicate, hold a job, live independently, and use transportation. May require more time or training than others to learn skills and new information.	Illness is stable and under control with or without medication. Individual is in remission with little noticeable effect on daily living.	Mild symptoms such as depressed mood but generally functions well in activities of daily living. Is able to maintain a job and friendships.	Minimal loss of hearing or vision that can be corrected with glasses/contact lenses or a hearing aid/device.

<p>MODERATE DEGREE</p>	<p>Has some difficulty with self-care, moving around, and working. At times, needs help from others for these activities. May need a wheelchair to get around and other assistive devices to eat, dress, or use the bathroom. Example: a person who has no movement from the waist down.</p>	<p>Needs monitoring or assistance to complete activities of self-care and to perform work activities. Needs to live with others who can provide assistance with daily living and transportation.</p>	<p>Illness is unstable with medication. Individual is experiencing symptoms of illness and requires medical care or treatment and has periods of exacerbation that noticeably reduce ability to provide self-care and to perform work activities. May need to reduce work hours and level of activity, and may require some assistance from others for activities of daily living.</p>	<p>Moderate symptoms such as occasional panic attacks or moderate difficulty in functioning in daily life. May require medications to remain stable.</p>	<p>Some loss of hearing or vision that can be semicorrected with glasses/contact lenses, magnifiers, or a hearing aid/ device.</p>
<p>SEVERE DEGREE</p>	<p>Cannot provide self-care (dress, toilet, feed), hold a job, live independently, or independently use transportation. Would need an electric wheelchair for mobility as well as devices and the assistance of another person to eat, dress, or use the bathroom. Example: a person who has no movement from the neck down.</p>	<p>Cannot provide self-care (dress, toilet, feed), learn new information, communicate, hold a job, self-direct, live independently, or use transportation. Needs the help of others for the above activities.</p>	<p>Is dependent on medication, can no longer provide self-care, live independently, or use transportation independently</p>	<p>Significant symptoms such as suicidal ideation or frequent psychotic thought processes including hallucinations and delusions. Cannot provide self-care (maintain hygiene), communicate in a coherent or socially appropriate manner, hold a job, self-direct, or live independently. May require frequent hospitalizations and/or a group home living environment.</p>	<p>Legally deaf or blind and cannot be corrected using any device. May need a person, service animal, or cane to navigate surroundings. Is dependent on hearing aids or sign language for communication.</p>

Appendix – B

Demographics of PWDs

No.	Age (yrs)	Gender	Education	Location	Industry	Position	Experience	Previous job	Sector	Reference	Disability	Severity
P1	30	Male	Masters	Islamabad	Housing	Assistant Manager	7 years	Yes	Public	No	Daylight blindness & hearing	Mild
P2	38	Male	FA	Rawalpindi	Distribution	Warehouse supervisor	2 years	No	Private	Yes	Arm amputation	Moderate
P3	22	Male	Icom	Islamabad	Hospitality	Customer Service	1 year	No	Private	No	Hearing	Severe
P4	32	Male	ACCA	Lahore	IT	Accounts Officer	6 years	Yes	Private	No	Paraplegia	Severe
P5	31	Male	BBA	Islamabad	Education	Admin assistant	3 years	No	Private	No	Unilateral Deafness	Moderate
P6	39	Male	BA	Lahore	Accounts	Accounts Officer	17 years	No	Public	No	Impaired mobility	Moderate
P7	25	Female	BS	Lahore	Education	Teacher	3 years	No	Private	No	Polio	Mild
P8	25	Female	BS	Islamabad	Advertising	Content writer	2 years	No	Private	No	Physical (mobility)	Severe
P9	25	Male	BS	Rawalpindi	Defence	2 nd Incharge	5 years	Yes	Public	No	Leg amputation	Mild
P10	35	Male	Matric	Rawalpindi	Defence	Office runner	5 years	Yes	Public	Yes	Arm Amputation	Moderate
P11	29	Male	BS	Islamabad	Software	Sn. Software Engineer	10 years	No	Private	No	Polio	Moderate
P12	30	Male	BBA (enrolled)	Rawalpindi	Defence	Store Manager	7 years	Yes	Public	No	Legs amputation	Severe

Appendix-C

Interview guide for Employers

Checklist:

Gender	
Age	
Education	
Location	
Occupation/ Industry	
Job position	
Experience	
Sector (public/private)	
PWDs working under them	

Interview Question for Employers:

1. Kindly, introduce yourself? (Follow checklist)
2. What is the percentage PWDs working in your organisation?
3. How do you recruit them?
 - a. On which positions are PWDs hired?
 - b. What are the policies of their career progression, promotion, etc.?
4. How is your experience managing PWDs?
 - a. Advantages and disadvantages of hiring PWDs?
5. Are there any challenges faced by PWDs in your organisation?
6. What are the measures taken to accommodate PWDs in your organisation?
 - a. What are your grievance handling procedures?
7. Are there any strategies adopted by your organisation for career development and progression of PWDs?
 - a. How are these formulated and implemented?
 - b. Are people with disabilities involved in decision making/ (formulation) of these strategies?
 - c. Are these strategies of career development and progression similar for 'people without disabilities' or different?
8. Have these strategies made any difference in productivity of PWDs?
9. Do you provide trainings and skills to PWDs?
10. What is the turnover rate of PWDs in your organisation?
11. Do you think PWDs are willing to stay in your organisation for a longer period?
12. What are the strategies adopted to cater barriers and issues faced by PWDs in your organisation?
 - a. How can you eliminate issues and barriers face by PWDs in your organisation?

Relation between questions and RQs + Theory

Interview Questions	RQ1: Which strategies do organisations adopt for career development and progression of PWDs?	RQ2: How do these strategies enable PWDs to perform and grow in the organisation?	RQ3: What are the challenges PWDs face in developing sustainable career and how does that influence their motivation and career satisfaction?	Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT)
1. Kindly, introduce yourself? (Follow checklist)				
2. What is the percentage PWDs working in your organisation?			X	
3. How do you recruit them? a. On which positions are PWDs hired? b. What are the policies of their career progression, promotion, etc.?	X	X	X	X
4. How is your experience managing PWDs? a. Advantages and disadvantages of hiring PWDs?			X	X
5. Are there any challenges faced by PWDs in your organisation?			X	
6. What are the measures taken to				

accommodate PWDs in your organisation? a. What are your grievance handling procedures?	X			X
7. Are there any strategies adopted by your organisation for career development and progression of PWDs? a. How are these formulated and implemented? b. Are people with disabilities involved in decision making/ (formulation) of these strategies? c. Are these strategies of career development and progression similar for 'people without disabilities' or different?	X	X	X	X
8. Have these strategies made any difference in productivity of PWDs?		X	X	
9. Do you provide trainings and skills to PWDs?		X	X	X
10. What is the turnover rate of PWDs in your organisation?		X	X	X
11. Do you think PWDs are willing to stay in your			X	X

organisation for a longer period?				
12. What are the strategies adopted to cater barriers and issues faced by PWDs in your organisation? a. How can you eliminate issues and barriers face by PWDs in your organisation?			X	X

Appendix-D

Interview Guide for People with Disabilities (PWDs)

Checklist for PWDs

Gender	
Age	
Education	
Location	
Occupation/ Industry	
Job position	
Experience	
Previous jobs (if any)	
Sector (public/private)	
Any referral in the organisation (for PDWDs)	
Disability	
Severity of disability	

Interview Questions for PWDs

1. Kindly, tell me something about yourself? (follow checklist given above)
2. How were you employed in the current organisation you are working?
 - a. Kindly, explain the recruitment process and policies related to career progression of PWDs in your organisation?
3. Why did you choose to work in this organisation? (For career sustainability)
4. How would you explain your experience at work in your organisation?
 - a. How is the environment of your organisation?
 - b. How does people in your organisation treat you?
5. Have you faced any challenges at work?
6. What are the positives about working in your organisation?
7. Are there any strategies adopted by your organisation for your career development and progression?
 - a. How are these formulated and implemented?
 - b. Were people with disabilities involved in decision making (formulation) of these strategies?
 - c. Are these strategies similar for 'people without disabilities' or different?
8. Have these strategies made in any difference in your career development and progression?
 - a. Have you received any trainings or improved your skills?
9. If given an option, how long do you think can work in this organisation?
 - a. How has this job affected your personality/life?
 - b. Do you feel motivated for working?
 - c. Are you satisfied with your job?
10. Have these strategies catered the barriers or issues you face in an organisation?
 - a. If not, how can these barriers be removed/ minimized?

Relation between questions and RQs + Theory

Interview Questions	RQ1: Which strategies do organisations adopt for career development and progression of PWDs?	RQ2: How do these strategies enable PWDs to perform and grow in the organisation?	RQ3: What are the challenges PWDs face in developing sustainable career and how does that influence their motivation and career satisfaction?	Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT)
1. Kindly, tell me something about yourself?				
2. How were you employed in the current organisation you are working? a. Kindly, explain the recruitment process and policies related to career progression of PWDs in your organisation?	X			X
3. Why did you choose to work in this organisation? (For career sustainability)			X	
4. How would you explain your experience at work in your organisation? a. How is the environment of your organisation? b. How does people in your organisation treat you?		X		X
5. Have you faced any challenges at work?			X	X

6. What are the positives about working in your organisation?		X		
<p>7. Are there any strategies adopted by your organisation for your career development and progression?</p> <p>a. How are these formulated and implemented?</p> <p>b. Were people with disabilities involved in decision making (formulation) of these strategies?</p> <p>c. Are these strategies similar for 'people without disabilities' or different?</p>	X	X	X	X
<p>8. Have these strategies made in any difference in your career development and progression?</p> <p>a. Have you received any trainings or improved your skills?</p>	X	X	X	X
<p>9. If given an option, how long do you think can work in this organisation?</p> <p>a. How has this job affected your personality/life?</p>			X	X

<p>b. Do you feel motivated for working?</p> <p>c. Are you satisfied with your job?</p>				
<p>10. Have these strategies catered the barriers or issues you face in an organisation?</p> <p>a. If not, how can these barriers be removed/minimized?</p>	X	X		X

