The Difficulties Witnessed by People with Intellectual Disability in Transition to Work in Saudi Arabia

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Abstract—The transition of a student with a disability from school to work is the most crucial phase while moving from the stage of adolescence into early adulthood. In this process, young individuals face various difficulties and challenges in order to accomplish the next venture of life successfully. In this respect, this paper aims to examine the challenges encountered by the individuals with intellectual disabilities in transition to work in Saudi Arabia. For this purpose, this study has undertaken a qualitative research-based methodology; wherein interpretivist philosophy has been followed along with inductive approach and exploratory research design. The data for the research has been gathered with the help of semi-structured interviews, whose findings are analysed with the help of thematic analysis. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with parents of persons with intellectual disabilities, officials, supervisors and specialists of two vocational rehabilitation centres providing training to intellectually disabled students, in addition to that, directors of companies and websites in hiring those individuals. The total number of respondents for the interview was 15. The purposive sampling method was used to select the respondents for the interview. This sampling method is a non-probability sampling method which draws respondents from a known population and allows flexibility and suitability in selecting the participants for the study. The findings gathered from the interview revealed that the lack of awareness among their parents regarding the rights of their children who are intellectually disabled; the lack of adequate communication and coordination between various entities; concerns regarding their training and subsequent employment are the key difficulties experienced by the individuals with intellectual disabilities. Training in programmes such as bookbinding, carpentry, computing, agriculture, electricity and telephone exchange operations were involved as key training programmes. The findings of this study also revealed that information technology and media were playing a significant role in smoothing the transition to employment of individuals with intellectual disabilities. Furthermore, religious and cultural attitudes have been identified to be restricted for people with such disabilities in seeking advantages from job opportunities. On the basis of these findings, it can be implied that the information gathered through this study will serve to be highly beneficial for Saudi Arabian schools/ rehabilitation centres for individuals with intellectual disability to facilitate them in overcoming the problems they encounter during the transition to work.

Keywords—Intellectual disability, transition services, rehabilitation centre.

I. INTRODUCTION

THE shift from adolescence into early adulthood or work environment for young people with intellectual disabilities tends to present a change from dependence to independence, which makes the transition services plans in this stage to be very critical in preparing them to become more responsible

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toward their life and career. Young individuals with disabilities encounter some pertinent difficulties and challenges while endeavouring to grow and develop professionally and personally in a successful and socially responsible manner. In the perspective of Stewart et al. [1], the teenager's discipline is adjudicated by the way he or she handles time and opportunities. More precisely the challenge facing the teenager is one of moving from an externally ordered, comfortable and guided framework of the school, to the context of work where adult choices are expected about work schedules and deadlines [1].

Furthermore, as the individual explores the differences in the known academic workload and the unknown professional workload, along with the proper social-economic pressures and commitments, he/ she realises the challenges associated with this transition [2], [3]. However, in the context of the difficulties faced by intellectually disabled individuals in the transition to work, the challenges encountered by them are comparatively more complicated than for other individuals because of their restricted ability and their dependence on others to function more independently [4]-[6].

Consequently, the transition of non-disabled students from the school to the workplace varies regarding the number of challenges faced by the intellectually disabled individuals during the transition process [7]-[9]. Such persons are examined to be encountering numerous physical, behavioural, developmental, sensory and mental challenges while moving from one environment to another, which not only hampers their transition from school to work but also restricts their personal and professional growth and development in life (Tideman and Sevensson) [10]-[13].

Schalock, Luckasson, and Shogren [14] assert that due to the dependence of individuals with intellectual disabilities on others for assistance in respect of communication and self-care since childhood, they usually have limited awareness about themselves and their potential. They usually possess less information and there is a need to improve their skills and talent [14], [15]. The literature states that these difficulties are exacerbated by the environment in which intellectually disabled persons live. In particular, there is a lack of care and attention from society because of their prejudices and perceptions about people with intellectual disabilities [15], [16].

Atkinson [6] has argued that the changes demanded for professional and personal skills in the workplace create a challenge for individuals with intellectual disability because they have a limited ability to work independently in the absence of the flexibility they desire.

The problem in adapting with the new procedures quickly and being able to focus on the performance of a single task at a time, further limits their abilities and opportunities for growth [6], [17], [18]. In this context, De Ligt et al. [19] highlights that the habit of dependence on others for assistance and the need for continuous monitoring among the individuals with an intellectual disability makes it difficult for the employers to justify their recruitment. This is because it creates a social and economic pressure on the organisation while endeavouring to take care of such people [19], [20]. Heymann et al. [21] further highlight that the prejudices and stereotypes associated with intellectual disability further undermine their self-respect among colleagues and make them victims of self-pity and empathy, which also becomes a subtle hindrance to their growth and transition to work [21], [22].

Nevertheless, Altman [3] contrasts their perspective and argues that it is the lack of suitable training and employment opportunities for these people, which aggravate their hindrances. Consequently, they are required to compete with the non-disabled persons and their disability is not considered [3], [23]. The overload of expectations exerted upon them makes it difficult for them to justify their abilities and skills. In support of these arguments, Beyer and Kaehne [24] emphasise that the attitude of people in general also play a crucial role in aggravating these challenges for them because of the absence of sensitivity towards them, along with expressions of negativity, pity or negligence, which are usually encountered by them, and which hamper their confidence and heightens the lack of support towards them [24]-[26].

In the perspective of Vaziri et al. [18], Heymann et al. [21] and Mansour [27], the use of assistive technology also makes the persons with disabilities less dependent on others for supporting them and enables them to perform their work by themselves. In this regard, it allows them to use e-websites and related digital-mediated technologies to undertake effective communication, share ideas and interact with others in professional domains [28], [29]. However, according to the International Labour Organization [2], the relevant authorities and entities play a crucial role in supporting and offering reasonable accommodation to people with disabilities in the process of their recruitment. In this respect, Chen et al. [7] explain that the coordination between relevant authorities and entities can serve to be highly beneficial in increasing the opportunities for recruitment for the persons with disabilities. In the context of this, Beyer & Kaehne [24], Pandey & Agarwal [25] and Mansour [27] supported the critical impact of the coordination between relevant entities in transitioning people with disabilities to work.

In the light of this literature, the current research has sought to evaluate the difficulties and issues experienced by individuals with intellectual disabilities in Saudi Arabia while transiting from school to the workplace. These difficulties hinder not only the access to opportunities for the economic prosperity of individuals with intellectual disability, but also restrict their personal growth and development [29]-[31]. For this purpose, some specific research questions are developed

to examine the difficulties encountered by the individuals with intellectual disabilities in transition to work in Saudi Arabia. These are:

Research Question 1. What are the difficulties faced by individuals with mild intellectual disabilities in the transition from the school/ training programme to work in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia?
Research Question 2. What kinds of programmes support them in this transition?
Research Question 3. What is the Role of Vocational Rehabilitation Centres in Facilitating the Individuals with Intellectual Disability in Serving the Community?
Research Question 4. What are the factors that ease or complicate their transition?

II. METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN

Interpretive philosophy has been applied to this research because this study is qualitative and requires a personal and flexible research structure that is receptive and helpful in deriving meaning in human interaction and understanding [32]. Furthermore, as the interpretivist philosophy facilitates a more detailed understanding of motives, reasons, meanings, perceptions and other subjective experiences bounded by time and context, it will be highly suitable for this research, and will assist in exploring the reasons and factors causing difficulties for those with intellectual disabilities transitioning from the study or training stage to work [33].

The application of an interpretive paradigm in this research helps to yield detailed insights and understandings of the cultural behaviour of people towards those with intellectual disability in Saudi Arabia and to determine how it is different from other cultures [34].

This research has followed an inductive approach, under which the reasoning proceeds to a generalised conclusion, which is likely to be true but might not be certain in light of gathered and examined evidence [35]. The research approach provides an efficient direction to the research that helps in reaching a logical and rational conclusion. In the context of this research, the inductive research approach has been applied and considered to be appropriate because this research moves from specific observations (difficulties faced by those with intellectual disabilities in Saudi Arabia while transitioning from study to work) to general observations (difficulties faced by those with intellectual disabilities while transitioning from education to work across cultures) [36]. Thus, this approach is helpful in seeking an appropriate direction and focus on the research.

The research design seeks to provide a clear framework that aligns the research problem with suitable methods of data collection and analysis [37]. Exploratory research design has been applied to this research because as this research is based on the examination of the difficulties faced by those with intellectual disabilities transitioning from study to work, it is helpful in obtaining a better overview of the research problem and exploring the critical underlying casual factors [38]. Further, this research design is primarily characterised by a high degree of flexibility and lacks a formal structure. This

makes it not only in alignment with the inductive approach and interpretivist philosophy (thereby enhancing the credibility of the research) but also helps in obtaining a detailed insight into the different aspects of the research problem by employing a range of methods for data collection and analysis [39].

A. Data Collection and Analysis Techniques

The data for addressing the research questions in this study have been gathered from interviews, whose findings were analysed with the help of thematic analysis. The use of interviews in this research has enabled an in-depth investigation of the problems and issues faced by individuals with intellectual disabilities during their transition from study to work. The interviews were conducted with 15 participants, consisting of directors and supervisors of different vocational training centres offering training to persons with intellectual disabilities, parents of persons with intellectual disabilities and disabled employment officials in some companies and websites.

The participants for the interviews thus included the director of the vocational rehabilitation department at the Ministry of Labour, two supervisors at vocational rehabilitation programs in Riyadh; four specialists who train intellectually disabled persons at vocational rehabilitation centres, four parents of intellectually disabled individuals who have graduated from the centres and are still looking for work. In addition to that, one Ministry of Labour official responsible for the employment of the intellectually disabled, two members of staff of companies with a large number of intellectually disabled employees in the city of Riyadh and one supervisor at Wasata, the largest e-website for the recruitment of intellectually disabled persons in Saudi Arabia. The selection of these participants was undertaken using a purposive sampling method, which is a non-probability sampling method drawing from a known population and makes for flexibility and convenience in identifying the participants for the research.

B. Data Collection Method: Interview

At the very beginning of my empirical study, interviews were conducted at two vocational rehabilitation centres (East and West) in the city of Riyadh and the General Director at the Ministry's Vocational Rehabilitation Department. Interviews were also conducted with four parents of intellectually disabled individuals who had graduated from these two centres and were still looking for work (two from the eastern centre and two from the western centre). All interviews with both specialists and parents were conducted at either the eastern Riyadh centre (one supervisor, two specialists and two parents) or the western Riyadh centre (one supervisor, two specialists and two parents).

Following this, interviews were conducted with the Ministry of Labour and Social Development official responsible for the employment of special needs of individuals, and also with those responsible for the recruitment of the intellectually disabled people at two companies in the city of Riyadh. The author visited the Ministry of Labour and Social Development to conduct an interview with the official responsible for the employment of people with intellectual disabilities. The author also went to the Saudi Food Company and Panda (the second company) and conducted interviews with the executives responsible for the recruitment of intellectually disabled persons at these companies (one supervisor from Panda and one supervisor from the Saudi Food Company). Finally, an interview was conducted with the owner of Wasata, the largest e-website for the recruitment of disabled people in Saudi Arabia, which is owned by a physically disabled individual.

C. Data Analysis Technique: Thematic Analysis

This research has made use of thematic analysis; the six steps of this method followed in this study, along with their details, are discussed below [40]:

1. Familiarisation with the Data

Under this step, to gain familiarisation with the research findings, the author carefully listened to the interview responses and examined them in the light of the literature review. It allowed to develop a deeper understanding of the implications of the findings and the ways they fit to address the research objectives, as well as provided a basis for the thematic analysis.

2. Generating Initial Codes

Under the phase, it was possible to draw the codes from the examined data such as 'coordination', 'awareness', 'vocational training', 'society', 'training programmes', 'limited programmes, 'media', 'technology', 'social inclusion', among others. It is important to be highly flexible and subjective while determining the codes so that the relevance of each code can be established within the research aim.

3. Searching the Themes

Under this phase, the different codes were categorised into potential themes and assigned the suitably coded extracts to the identified themes by referring the theories, concepts and the contextual background literature associated with the subject of this research.

4. Reviewing the Themes

In this phase, the identified sub-themes and themes were revised and reviewed, and their coherence and compatibility with the data were examined in the research [41]. This helped in the revising, adapting, and adjusting of themes and development of more related and clear themes, as well as aligning them more closely to the research question.

5. Defining and Naming Themes

In this phase, themes were developed for the thematic analysis such as 'Lack of coordination between various entities', 'Lack of awareness among their parents about the rights of their intellectually disabled children', 'The lack of awareness and poor education of the families', 'Absence of tools and equipment to provide effective training', and

'Instructors and trainers need to be trained and qualified'. Each of these themes aimed at addressing the research question.

6. Producing the Report

This was the final phase, under which a detailed discussion of the themes in the light of the secondary data and the literature review was conducted to draw meaningful answers for the research questions.

TABLE I
CODING PARTICIPANTS AND THEIR STATUS IN THIS STUDY

Respondents	Codes
Director of the Vocational Rehabilitation Department at the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs	A
Supervisor 1 with the vocational rehabilitation programs in Riyadh	B
Supervisor 2 with the vocational rehabilitation programs in Riyadh	C
Specialist 1 training intellectually disabled students at vocational rehabilitation centres	D
Specialist 2 training intellectually disabled students at vocational rehabilitation centres	E
Specialist3 training intellectually disabled students at vocational rehabilitation centres	F
Specialist 4 training intellectually disabled students at vocational rehabilitation centres	G
Parent 1 of an intellectually disabled individual who graduated from the centre and is still looking for work	H
Parent 2 of an intellectually disabled individual who graduated from the centre and is still looking for work	I
Parent 3 of an intellectually disabled individual who graduated from the centre and is still looking for work	J
Parent 4 of an intellectually disabled individual who graduated from the centre and is still looking for work	K
Ministry official responsible for the employment of intellectually disabled individuals	L
Officer 1 of a company with a large number of intellectually disabled employees in the city of Riyadh.	M
Officer 2 of a company with a large number of intellectually disabled employees in the city of Riyadh.	N
Supervisor at Wasata, the largest e-website for recruitment of intellectually disabled in Saudi Arabia	O

III. FINDINGS

A. RQ1: Difficulties Encountered by Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities in the Transition from School/ Vocational Rehabilitation Centre to Work

In response to the questions asked in regard to the difficulties faced by the individuals with intellectual disabilities in transition from school environment to workplace Respondent A, the Director of the Vocational Rehabilitation Department of the Ministry of Labour stated that:

"The individuals with intellectual disabilities come across numerous issues while making the transition to the workplace from the rehabilitation programme".

In support of this, the respondent further added that:

"…lack of awareness among their parents about the rights of their intellectually disabled sons and lack of coordination between various entities, concerned with their training and subsequent employment act as a major setback in assisting the intellectually disabled person to gain proper employment".

Adding to this, Respondent B (Supervisor) also commented:

"A key obstacle for the recruitment and training programme is the attractiveness of the monthly allowance, rather than the future careers of their intellectually disabled children".

Respondent B further gives evidence in support of this point:

Many parents refuse to allow their sons to go for pre-employment interviews at the different companies, as they fear losing their monthly allowance. The key reason for families' perception is explained by their lack of awareness and poor education.

Contrary to this, Respondent B said:

"There are some families that are greatly interested in the rehabilitation programs administered to their intellectually disabled sons".

In the context of the factors influencing the recruitment of disabled individuals, Respondent C, the Specialist (1) working on the rehabilitation program in Eastern Riyadh stated that,

"There are many problems, whether during the vocational rehabilitation phase, the post-vocational rehabilitation phase or the job-hunting phase. During the vocational rehabilitation phase, we need tools and equipment to provide effective training; instructors and trainers need training and development, and assistance from the private sector is needed for the professional training program, the Ministry of Labour has so far failed to respond to the many letters that we sent in connection to that".

Supporting the views of Respondent A, and Respondent B, the Respondent C noted:

"The extent of the weak coordination between senior officials at the Ministry of Labour and the vocational rehabilitation centres is such that the intellectually disabled individuals don't know where to go after completing the professional training".

The most noticeable factor is the respondents' negative attitude towards the intellectually disabled people. The views of Respondent C (specialist) are not compatible with the views of various authors presented in the literature review section. The research conducted in Saudi Arabia exhibits that intellectually disabled people are neglected by society, and the opportunities and services provided to them to address their needs are also minimal. As well, society tends to create negative pressures on the families of intellectually disabled individuals [15], [42].

Further, Respondent D, the Specialist (2) of a rehabilitation program in Eastern Riyadh noted that,

"Society at large has to trust and believe in the capabilities of intellectually disabled people and that they can work effectively in many sectors if given half a chance".

In similar aspects, the data presented in the literature review section also emphasises that the lack of support from the society and the absence of political policies at the central level affects the use and integration of technology for the betterment of intellectually disabled individuals in Saudi Arabia, thereby highlighting a key difficulty that influences the employment of persons with intellectual disability [43].

B. RQ2: Programs that Can Be Helpful for Individuals with Intellectual Disability in Preparing for the Transition to Employment

The findings of the research revealed that some programmes had been developed by the Government of Saudi Arabia to assist individuals with intellectual disability in preparing and managing the transition to the workforce. In this context, the findings of the interview revealed significant information in respect of the prevalence and effectiveness of these programmes.

Respondent G (specialist) explained:

"There are certain training programs that are in high demand in the Saudi market, such as book binding, agriculture, communications and green grocer. Hence, intellectually disabled students who complete their vocational rehabilitation in such professions usually find immediate employment. Such professions currently provide an exceptional employment opportunity for the intellectually disabled people since the Government has decreed it exclusively Saudi-ized."

In this respect, Respondent J (parent) remarked:

"All those programs were weak, except the social partnership program for the training of intellectually disabled students offered by Panda Foods Company in the second term of the rehabilitation program".

The parent also highlighted the shortcomings and failure of the primary and secondary schools in the Kingdom in offering adequate education. The respondent further commented:

"They were very poor. During those stages, I depended largely on private teachers who taught my son at home. Our intellectually disabled son's mother and I contributed considerably to his education and training."

Nevertheless, Government officers also support these findings. Respondent B (supervisor) further supported these findings:

"No, they aren't useful. I know this better than anyone else, being a supervisor of a vocational rehabilitation centre. We moved into this centre five years ago, and I can tell you that it is only suitable for administrative purposes, but it is not suited for training on many professions, such as carpentry, computing and agriculture. I submitted many requests to senior ministry officials to change the location of the centre but received

no response. However, as for the trainers and the training plans are concerned, they are very good in my opinion".

In this context, Respondent A (director) highlighted pertinent reasons for the failure of these programmes:

"The routine is boringly lengthy in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. We submitted a request to the minister who asked for a detailed study of these programs. We did prepare a plan, but it will take a long time to get it approved".

Nevertheless, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs asserts and assures that considerable measures and efforts are being made on a regular basis for the improvement of these programmes. In this respect, Respondent B (supervisor) commented:

"I agree with you that some professions are obsolete, but not all. There are professions that are still in high demand in the job market, such as book-binding, computing, telephone exchange operation and carpentry. We have also submitted a request to the vice-minister for the addition of some professions that the job market currently needs namely communications, security, reception and foodstuff handling among others. I would like, however, to express my concern that senior officials had the time to meet with you and complain about the weakness of our programming content, yet had no time for us, nor did they communicate such complaints to us to change and modernise our programmes".

In addition to this, the programme supervisor of the vocational training, Respondent E (specialist) revealed:

"This easier said than done. First of all, the red tape in Saudi Arabia is tedious and complicated. I mean that to changes the professions that are currently available at the centre, I need many approvals from many ministries and the paper work will be lengthy and time-consuming, and there is no guarantee that at the end such changes will be approved. Furthermore, replacing the professions already on offer with other modern, more in demand professions means that rehabilitation centres will have to be re-equipped and re-staffed, which requires considerable financial outlay which I do not think the ministry will be willing to provide, especially considering the current economic circumstances".

These findings thus indicate a lack of adequate communication and coordination within the departments, which create a major drawback in the successful implementation of these programmes. The interview findings also reveal the measures that continue to be taken by the program supervisors for their improvement. In this respect, Respondent E (specialist) explained:

"I suggest that the Ministry of Labour actively cooperates with the private sector to modernise vocational rehabilitation centres and provide the required financial and technical support".

On the other hand, the programmes specialist also offers pertinent suggestions for the improvement of these programmes. In this respect, Respondent F (specialist) observed:

"In my opinion, it is better to focus on the professions most in demand in the Saudi job market, such as communications, libraries, shopping centres/ malls and horticulture. It is equally important to divide the training program into two terms, one to be conducted at the vocational rehabilitation centre and the other to take place in the real work environment. The trainee is then evaluated upon completion of the training program to determine whether or not he is capable of work".

Also, employment firms opine that in the presence of adequate training and necessary skills in individuals with disabilities, it will enable firms to employ such individuals. Respondent M (official) commented:

"Of course, I do. If those programs involve training on handling foodstuffs, we will be ready and willing to provide qualified trainers to these centres and will also be willing to employ many more of the intellectually disabled trainees. If the Government starts to seriously coordinate with companies, involved in various sectors, it would certainly be much easier to provide a large number of experienced trainers, specialized in many professions and the graduates of these centres would certainly be employed".

Based on these findings, it can be suggested that programme supervisors are aware of the weaknesses in the prevailing programmes and their solutions; nevertheless, there is a gap between the programme's design and its implementation, which would require an adequate coordination and communication between the various Government departments involved in them. There is a lack of relevant literature to support these findings.

C. RQ3: Role of Vocational Rehabilitation Centres in Facilitating Individuals with Intellectual Disability in Serving the Community

The findings of the literature reveal that vocational rehabilitation centres are one of the key initiatives undertaken by the Government of Saudi Arabia to facilitate and support the employment of individuals with intellectual disability [44]. In this respect, Respondent N (official) argued,

"I did not say they are not important because they are extremely important, but here in Saudi Arabia vocational training centres are very poor in every respect. That is why they will have to be completely overhauled to be effective and recognized by companies in Saudi Arabia".

He further asserted that there are drawbacks in the prevailing vocational training centres in the Kingdom:

"First of all, they lack well-qualified specialists in the various professions, and even those professions have to be in high demand in the job market. Secondly, they lack new buildings and well-equipped workshops for training. Thirdly, they have to be under the supervision of the Ministry of Education or a given university to be accredited and recognised here in Saudi Arabia".

In this respect, Respondent M (official) highlighted the absence of adequate awareness among persons with intellectual disability regarding the vocational centres:

"I asked many intellectually disabled individuals about what they do after finishing secondary school, and the answer was always the same, 'we sit around the house and do nothing, as there is no university, institution or training centre to accept us'".

Respondent K (parent) further highlights the drawbacks of the training facilities:

"I think that vocational training centres in Saudi Arabia need a lot of work, for example, the buildings are too old, the specialists or trainers are unqualified, as most of them do not hold any specialised degrees or even have adequate experience to train the students. Also, Riyadh vocational training centres are unaccredited, and many companies in both private and public centres do not even recognise its diploma".

These opinions are supported by Respondent J (parent), who highlighted that,

"However, I remember that the previous vocational rehabilitation centre where my son used to be trained was very primitive, with ancient buildings, zero equipment and obsolete professions, even the specialists were not well trained".

This respondent further elaborated,

"Before my son joined the vocational rehabilitation centre, I hoped for the best and thought that he would find a job immediately upon his graduation, particularly since some of the officials at the centre assured me. Unfortunately, however, two years have passed since his graduation, and we are still looking".

These findings can be supported with the help of the relevant literature that reveals that the limited number of such vocational programmes for students with disabilities in Saudi Arabia, and the limited capacity of each programme creates difficulties for a majority of students with multiple disabilities to gain optimum benefit from such programmes [16]. It has also been assessed that presently there are limited programmes that offer vocational rehabilitation for students with disabilities in Saudi Arabia and are operated under the direction of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, which restricts the potential of the education system in the country to facilitate a positive and successful transition [45], [46].

Based on these findings, it can be identified that the facilitates offered by the vocational training centres in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia are highly inefficient and fail to support individuals with intellectual disabilities in undertaking an effective transition from school or training to work.

D. RQ4: Factors that Influence the Employment of Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities

The findings of the interviews also revealed some key factors that influence the employment of individuals with intellectual disabilities in Saudi Arabia. It has been examined from the research findings that media and information technology can serve to be highly crucial in facilitating the employment of intellectually disabled individuals. In this respect, Respondent A (director) stated,

"The media could play a key role in solving this

problem since many senior Government officials are not aware of the magnitude of the problem and the number of intellectually disabled individuals who are looking for work. Technology is a secondary, rather than primary factor in assisting the subject in their job search".

Respondent B (supervisor) supports these findings:

"Technology can always be a positive factor in all fields, provided that it is always properly used."

The respondent further revealed,

"I know a lot of electronic websites that provide considerable assistance disabled people in finding proper employment, such as the Wasata network and the Saudi network. So, such sites are a valuable asset in the employment of disabled people, enabling them to apply for work online, thus saving them considerable effort and money".

Respondent D (specialist) observed,

"Sure, we can incorporate various technologies into our training programs. There have already been individual efforts to set up electronic websites to help intellectually disabled people find work".

However, the findings also highlight the shortcomings in the application of the technology. In this context, Respondent D argued that,

"There have already been individual efforts to set up electronic websites to help an intellectually disabled person find work, but they are just limited individual efforts, while the Government, which uses such technology for the employment of non-disabled individuals, as in the case of the human resource fund and the huge e-employment projects, unfortunately, does not see disabled persons as worthy of such effort!"

These findings were further elaborated by Respondent E (specialist):

"In the special education field, results derived from scientific research are an important factor in this regard. The problem is that we in Saudi Arabia do not put much stock by scientific research nor do we believe in its importance for the development of special education programs as in the more advanced countries".

Moreover, the attitudes of people with respect to religious and cultural beliefs, and their influence on the employment opportunities of individuals with intellectual disabilities, play a role in this aspect. In this regard, Respondent A (director) noted:

"There is another factor, namely the general attitude of the people in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia towards intellectually disabled people. I can tell you through the first-hand experience that most people look upon intellectually disabled people as objects of pity and compassion, thinking that they are incapable of work".

Respondent D (specialist) stated,

"Yes, there is the attitude of some people towards intellectually disabled people. I speak out of my experience in this program and other schools as well. I remember that my intellectually disabled students were extremely happy with their interaction with the non-disabled students. With time, they even became good friends. That contributed in no small measure to changing the attitude of non-disabled students towards the intellectually disabled students in a positive way. I think that if intellectually disabled people are given a similar opportunity at work, they will change and improve any negative attitudes towards them".

The respondent further highlighted that,

"Saudis are mostly good and religious people, who usually look positively upon the employment of intellectually disabled people. Rarely, however, you may find people who are against such employment. Naturally, this attitude runs counter to the precepts of true Islam, which urge Muslims to care for disabled individuals and help them fit into society. Also, while the media in more developed countries of the world played a positive and effective role in pleading the cause of disabled persons, Saudi media have not served the interests of the intellectually disabled people as effectively".

Respondent D (specialist) further extends the role of the society as crucial factors:

"There is also the trust/ belief factor. I mean society at large has to trust and believe in the capabilities of intellectually disabled people and that they can work effectively in many sectors if given half a chance. There is, as well, the school/ instructor factor".

Also, the findings highlight how the personal skills of individuals with disabilities can play a significant role in enabling them to seek employment. Respondent B (supervisor), in this regard observed:

"Enhancing the self-confidence of intellectually disabled people to better interact with their community. I see some parents already adopting an effective approach to enhance their children's self-confidence by depending on them in the performance of a lot of household chores while treating them as human beings and showing respect for their wishes".

In this respect, Respondent A (director) emphasised that,

"The instructor plays a key, yet largely unsung, role in caring for the student, and coordinating with the family, while at the same time focusing on the development of such values as personal hygiene, respect, self-confidence, independence and free choice. These are perhaps the most important factors in building an individual capable of getting and holding a job".

The literature in this respect states that to give students agency and commitment in their post-school trajectory, it is important that they are given a more central role in decision making about further education, employment-based training or employment [24]. However, the findings also highlight the role of the Government in implementing and executing the laws to facilitate the employment of individuals with intellectual disabilities. Related to this, Respondent A highlighted that,

"The State has not been remiss in enacting laws that assist intellectually disabled people in the various phases of rehabilitation and through the phases of employment

and subsequent career. However, the problem lies in the lack of activation of these existing laws".

These findings can be supported by the literature that states the social model of disability also includes political factors that may affect the sufferer markedly. The political factors may include civil rights or movements related to people [47].

IV. DISCUSSION

The findings of the interview revealed that individuals with intellectual disabilities suffer from numerous issues in the process of making the transition to work from rehabilitation programmes or school. In this respect, several factors were examined: the lack of awareness among their parents regarding the rights of their children who are intellectually disabled; the lack of adequate communication and coordination between various entities; concerns regarding their training and subsequent employment, which serve as crucial barriers for individuals with intellectual disability in seeking suitable employment. The focus of the recruitment and training programmes on earning a monthly allowance as the prime objective of seeking employment and not as a means to focus on a reliable and long-term career also acts as a barrier to the development of individuals with intellectual disabilities.

The interview findings also revealed numerous difficulties that individuals with intellectual disabilities faced at the vocational rehabilitation centres. This problem exists because of an acute shortage of adequate tools and equipment to provide adequate training, lack of required training among the instructors and trainers at the rehabilitation centres, the absence of desired support from the private sector for professional training and the support from the Ministry of Labour. In this respect, the findings also revealed that the training programmes offered by the rehabilitation centres were not sufficiently practical and helpful for them to be able to work in any business. They did not facilitate them in employment selection. The findings correspond to the literature, which further highlights that individuals with intellectual disabilities were unable to compete effectively in the social and professional arena because at the time of schooling and training they had not been imparted the skills required for this purpose [9].

The findings of the interviews revealed that there were a number of programmes that have been developed by the Government of Saudi Arabia to support the development of the individuals with intellectual disabilities in preparing and coping with the process of transition. In this respect, the findings of the interviews revealed that the most demanded programmes in training had been agriculture, book-binding, communications and greengrocer. The other training programmes also included programmes in computing, carpentry, agriculture, book-binding, and electricity and telephone exchange operations. Special education programmes also include itinerant teacher programmes, teacher-consultant programmes and resource room programmes and self-contained classroom programmes. The vocational centres are inefficient and fail to support the individuals with intellectual

disabilities in undertaking an effective transition from school to training to work. There is also a lack of advanced infrastructure and well-equipped workshops for training, and there is also a lack of accreditation and recognition of the courses and training programmes by the supervision of the Ministry of Education or a university [48]. The interview findings also revealed the absence of adequate awareness among people with intellectual disability regarding the vocational centres. The parents also highlight the absence of accreditation of the universities and the vocational training centres in private, as well as, public centres; consequently, the diploma and training offered is often unrecognised and not authenticated.

The interviews also revealed that it was essential for professionals to enhance the training in respect of horticulture, libraries and shopping centres and malls. It is also essential that the training programmes are divided into a training programme with two terms, wherein the first can be conducted at the vocational rehabilitation centre, while the other can take place in the real-time workplace.

The findings of the interviews revealed that some pertinent factors influence the employment of individuals with intellectual disabilities in Saudi Arabia. In this respect, media and information technology have also been identified to be crucial to facilitate the employment of intellectually disabled persons. The interview findings highlighted that media could play a key role in solving the problems and issues associated with the transition of persons with intellectual disabilities. The media can be significant not only in facilitating the coordination and cooperation between Government entities and vocational centres, but also the parents of individuals with intellectual disabilities.

Technology is a secondary factor, yet it is identified as central to support job searches and for managing other problems associated with the transition. In this respect, the interview also highlighted the significant role and benefits that information technology can play in assisting individuals with intellectual disabilities in finding adequate and suitable employment opportunities. Sites such as the Saudi Network and the Wasata network have the potential to offer valuable assistance to persons with disabilities, enabling them in an online application for suitable jobs, thereby saving their time, effort and money. The incorporation of different technologies can be helpful for people with intellectual disabilities in developing their skills and capabilities. However, there will be a need for funds for access to human resource and to finance these employment projects.

In respect to the use of technology, the findings of the interviews highlighted the use of assistive technology as a significant means of enhancing the capabilities and potential of people with intellectual disabilities, thereby increasing their employment opportunities. The attitudes of people and of society were also identified as a critical factor in the transition. In this respect, the findings of the interviews revealed that the attitudes of the people regarding cultural beliefs restrict the subject from taking advantage of employment opportunities. Much of the population identify people with intellectual

disabilities as objects of pity and compassion, believing them to be incapable of work. The findings of the interviews also reveal that the lack of trust towards people with intellectual disability is a key factor that influences the transition of such persons. Such attitudes and lack of considerable success, despite making rigorous endeavours, serve as a significant demotivation for people with intellectual disabilities. In addition to the attitudes of people in their society, it was also addressed in the interview that society plays a crucial role in encouraging persons with intellectual disabilities, by trusting and believing in their potential, they can be motivated to seek suitable employment opportunities. These findings can be supported by the literature that reveals that the social model of disability also includes political factors that may affect the sufferer markedly. The political factors may consist of civil rights or movements related to people with a disability.

V. STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The key strength of this study is its wide scope, as it has examined the problems encountered by individuals with intellectual disabilities during the transition from schools to work. It helped in identifying the critical factors that can play a key role in overcoming those issues such as the use and application of information technology and assistive technology and even the attitudes of people in society and the workplace. The use of interview as a method for data collection has provided an in-depth understanding of the problems associated with the transition along with the kinds of programmes that support them in this transition, the factors that ease or complicate their transition and the benefits of the work for them. This method also helped in gaining a holistic view of the problem and exploring relevant measures to overcome those problems and facilitate the growth and development of such individuals.

Nevertheless, there are also some relevant limitations associated with the study. In this respect, it can be asserted that the sole reliance on descriptive and qualitative methods for data collection and analysis have bound the findings to subject interpretations, thereby undermining the scope of objective analysis. This limits the generalisability of the study. Therefore, it can be recommended that future research on this subject can include a quantitative method for analysis also such as survey to enhance the credibility and reliability of the study.

VI. IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The results of the studies, which have never previously been conducted in Saudi Arabia with these adults (to the knowledge of the researcher), can be used to stimulate responsible state authorities to do further studies on a larger scale and use the subsequent results for the formulation of policies and projects for the well-being of these individuals. Disabled people require constant support because of their challenging behaviour, particularly in post-school life, so it is not sufficient to concentrate on treating them only in their early years. Furthermore, the significant impact of the findings will

be for the development of the vocational centres and the schools for the students with intellectual disabilities. Moreover, this study also provides useful and realistic guidelines for workplaces regarding the ways they can enhance diversity and increase the sustainability of companies that hire people with intellectual disabilities. For this purpose, the use of information technology, social media, assistive technology and training of the faculties at schools and vocations centres can serve to be highly efficient and useful.

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