
An insight into the experiences of persons affected by acquired brain injury (ABI) in the South African workplace

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Abstract

This article has been written as a follow-up article from a previously published article titled: An exploratory analysis of the deficiencies of the South African employment equity framework to regulate the management of acquired brain injuries in the workplace, which was written based on a theoretical framework developed for this study. This study, based on a phenomenological investigation, provides an overview of the problems experienced and barriers faced by people gaining employment as a result of ABI's in South Africa.

The results of this study provide managers with information that will facilitate early detection and strategies to assist in the employment of persons following the diagnosis of employees affected by ABI's in the South African workplace. The resultant findings of this study propose that it is essential that the management of ABI-related issues should take place in terms of language and communication, promotion and development, motivation, the design of awareness and rehabilitation programmes, and ensuring job security.

Key phrases

Acquired brain injuries; employment equity, awareness programmes, rehabilitation programmes and workplace

1. INTRODUCTION

The article provides an overview of the problems experienced and the barriers faced by people gaining employment following acquired brain injuries (ABIs) in South Africa. Additional studies need to be undertaken in order to examine the experiences of people with acquired brain injuries (ABI's) regarding employment and survival in the workplace.

“South African organisations need to attain diversity in the workplace; however, they lack accommodation for people with ABI's” (Akbar & Wissink 2015:3). The phenomenological approach used in this study may encourage other researchers to study ABI and other disabilities in South Africa through the lived experiences of persons with ABI to understand the direct needs, challenges and successes of people with this type of disability. The results of this study provide managers with information that will facilitate early detection and strategies to assist in the employment of persons following an ABI in the South African workplace. This study also responds to the numerous calls for research in the area of employment of persons affected by ABI's in South Africa. The literature suggests that minimal research has been conducted in the area of the perceptions and experiences of employment of persons, post-ABI in South Africa. Therefore, this study makes a unique contribution to the expansion of knowledge on this issue.

There are many other references in legislation and in governance procedures that have been described and evaluated in relation to disabilities and their impact and effects on employment in the South African labour market. However, an area of concern is a particular division of disabilities namely ABI. In comparison with other developing countries, it is estimated that the prevalence of ABI in South Africa is higher than the worldwide average and accounts for more than a third of all deaths resulting from injuries (Brown 2006:126). Of those who survive, many live with significant impairment of the brain function. Furthermore, the incidence of neurotrauma is high amongst young people which places a considerable burden on society and in terms of effects on both individuals and gaining a means of survival and independence through attaining employment (Hardy 2010:2). Bogdaova *et al.* (2016:419) contend that “Improvement of executive abilities and attentional capacity also contributes to recovery in other functional domains and may significantly reduce disability and improve quality of life of individuals with ABI”. This indicates that the need for employment post-ABI is also beneficial to the recovery process for individuals, post-ABI. In recent years, some investigators have broadened the scope of research to identify the needs of individuals at various stages following ABI and employment globally.

However, an important gap in literature that has been neglected is the employment of these individuals following ABI, and the manner in which diversity in the workplace is affected by the employment of these individuals. Most employers do not have the necessary human resource policies and procedures to assist these affected individuals. Hence, the focus of this study was to provide evidence that individuals affected by ABI are not gaining or sustaining sufficient employment. This study also focused on diversity management in the workplace and the impact that the accommodation of ABI-affected employees may have on meeting diversity requirements in the workplace.

Another potential outcome of this study was firstly, to create an awareness and secondly, to encourage people with ABI's and strokes to become aware of existing employment prospects. A third outcome envisaged for this study was to provide organisations with recommendations on how to assist these individuals by amending their human resource (HR) policies and procedures to accommodate this category of disabled persons.

Although ABI publications in South Africa are scarce (Hugo & Coetzer 1997:46), local epidemiological statistics indicate brain injury to be a major health problem in South Africa (Brown 2006:126). "The impact of TBI (traumatic brain injury) on return to work can be devastating, with employment rates at less than 10 to 40% post-injury" (BIAA 2016). The barriers to employment of individuals affected by ABI's in South Africa have created significant problems and concerns for an increasing pool of unemployed persons affected by ABI. This study bridges the gap that exists in South African literature and research with regard to the provision for this group of individuals and the social, economic, psychological and practical needs of returning to the workplace, and being accommodated in a meaningful manner.

2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIVES

2.1 Research questions

The following research questions guided the research study and influenced the research methodology used:

- What are the experiences of people affected with ABIs with regard to employment in South Africa?
- Do people affected by ABI feel the need to be employed and how would employment benefit these individuals?

- To what extent do South African organisations provide reasonable accommodation for people affected by ABI in the workplace?
- Do people affected by ABI feel that their employment contributes towards workplace diversity?
- Are people affected by ABI aware of legislation, including policies and procedures related to human resource management (HRM) practices that affect their employment prospects?

2.2 Objectives of the study

This study endeavored to achieve the following objectives:

- To understand the experiences of people affected by ABI in seeking employment in South Africa;
- To ascertain views held by people affected by ABI regarding the importance of employment;
- To determine the extent to which people affected by ABI are accommodated in the workplace;
- To investigate the level of contribution to diversity that people affected by ABI experience as part of an organisation; and
- To establish the extent to which people affected by ABI are aware of legislation or policies that determine their employment opportunities.

These research questions and objectives guided the research and the data analysis and assisted the researcher to develop recommendations as to how HR policies, practices, regulations and codes of conduct should be altered to accommodate individuals with the above-mentioned conditions.

3. RESEARCH APPROACH

3.1 Research methodology

The research methodology known as phenomenology was followed in answering the research questions and is briefly explained below. Owing to the fact that a phenomenological study requires extensive data collection and analysis, the proposed time frame was extended when required in order to ascertain that significant outcomes of the study are achieved. This study looks at creating a phenomenon through understanding and analysing

the employment experiences of people affected by ABI in South Africa. This study therefore utilises a qualitative and phenomenological methodology.

3.2 Research instrument

Semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews were used and developed according to the research questions of the study. The major advantage of using this methodological dimension in the proposed research study is that more in-depth and comprehensive accounts concerning changes in professional work can be produced. The measurement of attitude was based on research question four: Do you feel the need to be employed? This answer was further explored through the process of follow-up interviews.

This research question also explored whether people want to be employed following an ABI diagnosis. Measurement of attitudes and awareness was gained from the experiences and perceptions shared in the interviews. Because the significance of the study is to understand personal experiences and perceptions of respondents, it is therefore purely a phenomenological study.

3.3 Access to the sample

A major limitation of the study was access to respondents who were capable of co-operating with the researcher for the duration of the interview. Owing to the fact that the majority of the members of the ABI population are currently in the process of rehabilitation and recovery and that some are severely brain damaged, communication in all instances was challenging.

Owing to this possible limitation, extra ethical measures were taken, such as asking professionals in the field to assist respondents when necessary. This was due to an ethical clearance requirement by the Ethical Clearance Committee of UKZN to ensure that participants were not emotionally traumatised and that, if an uneasy situation arose, professionals would be able to assist and monitor the situation.

3.4 Sampling procedure

In this study, the sample population comprised people with ABI who form part of Hardy and Associates in Kwa-Zulu Natal, Headway Stroke and Brain Injury Association, and I Can!, a disability academy in Gauteng Province, South Africa.

The sample size for this study comprised four in the focus group interviews and 12 in the semi-structured interviews. A pilot study was carried out prior to the actual data collection to

ensure that all research questions addressed the objectives of the study. This pilot study also contributed towards increasing the study's validity and reliability.

3.5 Data analysis techniques

The study also made use of the data analysis software Nvivo to ensure that the data analysis was accurate. The use of Nvivo allowed the researcher to formulate precise findings through the coding of themes and the data analysis techniques that the Nvivo software systems permit. In conjunction with analysis using Nvivo, content analysis and narrative analysis were conducted during this study.

3.5.1 Content analysis

Content analysis was applied to examine any piece of writing or occurrence of recorded communication. Content analysis is currently used in a variety of fields, ranging from marketing and political science to psychology and cognitive science as well as many other fields of inquiry.

3.5.2 Narrative analysis

Narrative analysis usually involves life story research or oral history. This technique adopts a qualitative approach, using structured interviews rather than questionnaires and therefore can be said to be suitable for this study. This method of qualitative research requires accurate recordings of the stories of the research subjects and attempts to understand the relationship between the experiences of the individuals and their social framework. This assisted in achieving the objectives of the study and is in keeping with the research design of phenomenology.

A total of 12 interviews were completed out of the 12 being administered. Therefore, the response rate achieved was 100%. The findings from the main study report on the inductive thematic analysis conducted. Themes emerged from the data throughout the analysis through an iterative process of reading, re-reading, coding and re-coding. Nvivo 10 software was used to code and analyse data, and create word frequency queries, word trees, and matrix queries. These queries were used to broadly explore the data, and allowed for a preliminary exploration of potential themes and patterns across the data.

The findings of the study provided an overview of the problems experienced and barriers faced by people gaining employment following ABIs in South Africa.

4. SUMMARY OF THE KEY FINDINGS

4.1 Objective 1: To understand the experiences of people affected by ABI in seeking employment in South Africa

Key findings: A range of pilot, individual and focus group interviews were carried out in order to understand the experiences of persons following ABI in seeking employment in South Africa. The findings suggest that a number of respondents had previously been employed in numerous capacities, while some experienced their ABIs at a young age and therefore had no prior history of having worked; some have capitalised on their strengths to follow new career choices in response to the challenges and lack of opportunity for returning to their original careers. Some respondents have returned to their original positions with additional support from their companies to accommodate any challenges they may experience as a result of their ABI, whereas other respondents were not as fortunate and did not return to work following their acquired ABI.

4.2 Objective 2: To ascertain views held by people affected by ABI regarding the importance of employment

Key findings: Despite the varied accounts of employment provided by the respondents, the findings suggest that there is a common thread; they not only expressed a desire to work but also felt that they were just as capable of working as others are. This desire to work was common ground amongst all participants. ABI patients wanted to be seen as 'normal' individuals, fully-fledged beings with a holistic sense of identity and completeness. This explains why participants want to perform activities that are deemed to create a sense of a whole self, such as working and so actively participating in and contributing to society. While participants want to come across as 'normal' as possible, they also need people to understand that they have ABI but that this in no way should detract from being this whole, idealistic self. There were numerous reasons offered by respondents as to why people suffering with ABIs should be employed. Amongst these were assisting with routine and purpose, helping to overcome apparent differences, improving confidence, keeping themselves occupied, receiving an income, achieving self-actualisation, ensuring a sense of purpose and utility and assisting with a speedy recovery.

4.3 Objective 3: To determine the extent to which people affected by ABI are accommodated in the workplace

Key findings: Multiple perceptions and experiences have emerged with regard to working for companies. These varied perceptions hint at inconsistency in overarching policies and

regulations when it comes to employing and incorporating ABI sufferers into the organisation. The inability to visually conceive of an ABI and the tendency for ABI sufferers to avoid those tasks that betray their lack of 'normality' may explain why people do not accommodate them in the workplace as well as required. However, findings suggest that companies do not reasonably accommodate individuals with ABI in the workplace.

4.4 Objective 4: To investigate the level of contribution to diversity that people affected by ABI experience as part of an organisation

Key findings: Despite the perception that companies hold some stereotypes regarding ABI sufferers' abilities, most respondents were of the belief that the companies, and the people working for the companies, would be understanding and accepting of their situation. However, respondents indicated that companies did not take the time to learn about people with ABIs and did not come to see them as persons separate from their ABI, with their own relative strengths and weaknesses. Thus, they were not treated as a means of contribution to the level of diversity in the workplace.

4.5 Objective 5: To establish the extent to which people affected by ABI are aware of legislation or policies that determine their employment opportunities.

Key findings: Most of the respondents commented that there was a lack of legislation specifically pertaining to their injuries. The Road Accident Fund (RAF) seems not to have grappled sufficiently with the realities of ABI, perhaps also owing to a lack of understanding of the consequences and repercussions of brain injuries. In addition, because of poor understanding of phenomena surrounding brain injuries, poorly defined legislation and therefore inappropriate processes, people awaiting compensation, for example, from the RAF are forced to go back to work before full recovery has taken place in order to survive.

5. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The researcher had to consider the following considerations before embarking on the study to ascertain the feasibility of accomplishment. This was done in order to ensure that anticipated constraints imposed by methods, location and situation of research were addressed.

- The sample size was relatively small, owing to the nature of the study and the use of the phenomenological approach. This makes it difficult to generalise about the situation of ABI sufferers and employment in South Africa as a whole. However, the aim of such a

study is not to generalise to the population as a whole but rather to begin a process of understanding the phenomenon of employment following ABI in South Africa.

- There were participants who have severe speech problems due to their injuries and these presented a major language barrier as they could not understand the interviewer. Others were not willing to participate and were not really interested or motivated towards thinking about their lives for some reason. These interviews had limitations.
- Some participants did not meet the selection criteria that were proposed and were actually not capable of talking. This made it difficult to ensure collaboration during interviews.
- The study originally set out to have a balance of participants from Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg but, owing the fact that participants had to come to institutions for the interviews, as professionals had to be present throughout interviews, they were not capable of attending owing to financial constraints. This resulted in the securing of interviews with participants in other locations.
- Owing to the fact that the sample of the study formed part of an ethically vulnerable group, ethical constraints indicated that professionals within the field had to be present during all interviews. This had financial implications as professionals had to be remunerated for their time and appointments with participants had to coincide with their availability. This negatively affected data collection period.
- Many participants were unemployed and therefore did not have financial means to attend interviews.
- There was limited access to guidance and training for the data analysis software, Nvivo, which made the process of analysis challenging.
- Participants with mild ABI suffer from temporary memory loss, which led to much repetition during interviews.

6. IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The findings of this study have several implications for future research that needs to be conducted in this area of study within the fields of management and entrepreneurship, governance, HRM and industrial relations. In terms of research approach, the phenomenological approach used in this study may encourage other researchers to study ABI in South Africa through the lived experiences of persons with ABI to understand the direct needs, challenges and successes of people with this type of disability.

The understanding of the challenges and successes of persons, post-ABI in the South African workplace in this study will make a substantial contribution to the phenomenon of employment following ABI in South Africa. From the perspective of the theory, experiences and findings of this study, it can be said that this study has the potential to assist South African companies in formulating HR policies and practices and implementing these in a manner that would assist both the development of the South African workplace with this form of disability as well as individuals, post-ABI.

6.1. Policy implications

Since the advent of a new constitution in South Africa, there have been many changes in the South African workplace that have impacted on the management of people with disabilities. Preparing employees to function successfully and contribute to the achievement of organisational goals, both nationally and internationally, is imperative. This forms part of the comprehension and alignment of the new constitutional requirements and allows policies to be crafted so that organisations can manage people effectively in the workplace by coordinating efforts of individuals inside and outside the organisation. There has been an extended debate regarding the legislation related to disabilities and its impact on employment in the South African labour market (Hardy 2010:30).

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Article 23 states that everyone has the right to work, to a free choice of employment and favourable conditions of work, as well as the right to protection against unemployment (UNHR 2008). Employers are required to work within strict legal frameworks. It is the Constitution of South Africa that provides measures that foster the protection and advancement of people who have been disadvantaged by unfair discrimination in South Africa (Dupper & Garbers 2010:16).

An international perspective in this regard is that people post-ABI is more likely to encounter discrimination when they are younger or are white in the western United States (Cloe & Cecka 2014:262). This is an indication that discrimination against ABI sufferers in the workplace exists internationally. It is therefore important to minimise this discrimination though the aid of existing legislation of a country.

The Employment Equity Act of 1998 (EEA) states that people with disabilities must be reasonably accommodated in the workplace and it is therefore the duty of the employer to ensure that such employees have access to the resources in the organisation. Section 1 of the EEA defines reasonable accommodation as "...[a]ny modification or adjustment to a job

or the working environment that will enable a person from a designated group to have reasonable access to or to participate or advance in employment". The above definition highlights that the working environment can also be modified for others who are already defined by the EEA as designated groups (Snyman 2009:55).

The Code of Good Practice plays a pivotal role in the employment of people with disabilities taken from the EEA (Employment Equity Act 1998). The Code of Good Practice relating to the employment of people with disabilities was issued in terms of Section 54 (1) of the EEA on 19 August 2002 (RSA 1998).

However, there is a need for the legislative framework around disabilities in South Africa to be amended according to the different types of disabilities that exist in the country. As empirical and theoretical evidence in this study suggests, there is a need for government to identify ABI as a disability, to create a definition of what distinguishes ABI sufferers as disabled and to provide guidelines as to how companies should support employment of individuals, post-ABI in South Africa.

The model depicted in figure 1 has been derived from the data analysis reported on in the study (Akbar 2016:182). The following categories have been formulated in order to assist companies in the employment and sustainability of individuals with ABI in South Africa: Category One consists of ABI after effective rehabilitation; Category Two consists of mild ABI during rehabilitation; and Category Three consists of ABI with non-effective rehabilitation.

Multiple perceptions and experiences have emerged from respondents' working for companies. They are varied and indicate inconsistency in over-arching policies and regulations when it comes to employing persons affected by ABI and the procedures for incorporating them into the organisation.

This model will therefore serve as a guideline to organisations that are willing to employ people following ABI into their organisations. Without this guideline, it can be said that South African companies appear to have a tendency to view all ABI sufferers equally as 'unable' to work. The tendency of people to 'group' all ABI persons under the same umbrella hints at a perceived stigma in relation to persons affected by ABI.

6.2 Employability of persons who are affected by ABI

The following model depicts categories of people who are affected by ABI, and the qualification of the various categories in terms of the employability possibilities. An explanation of these categories is provided.

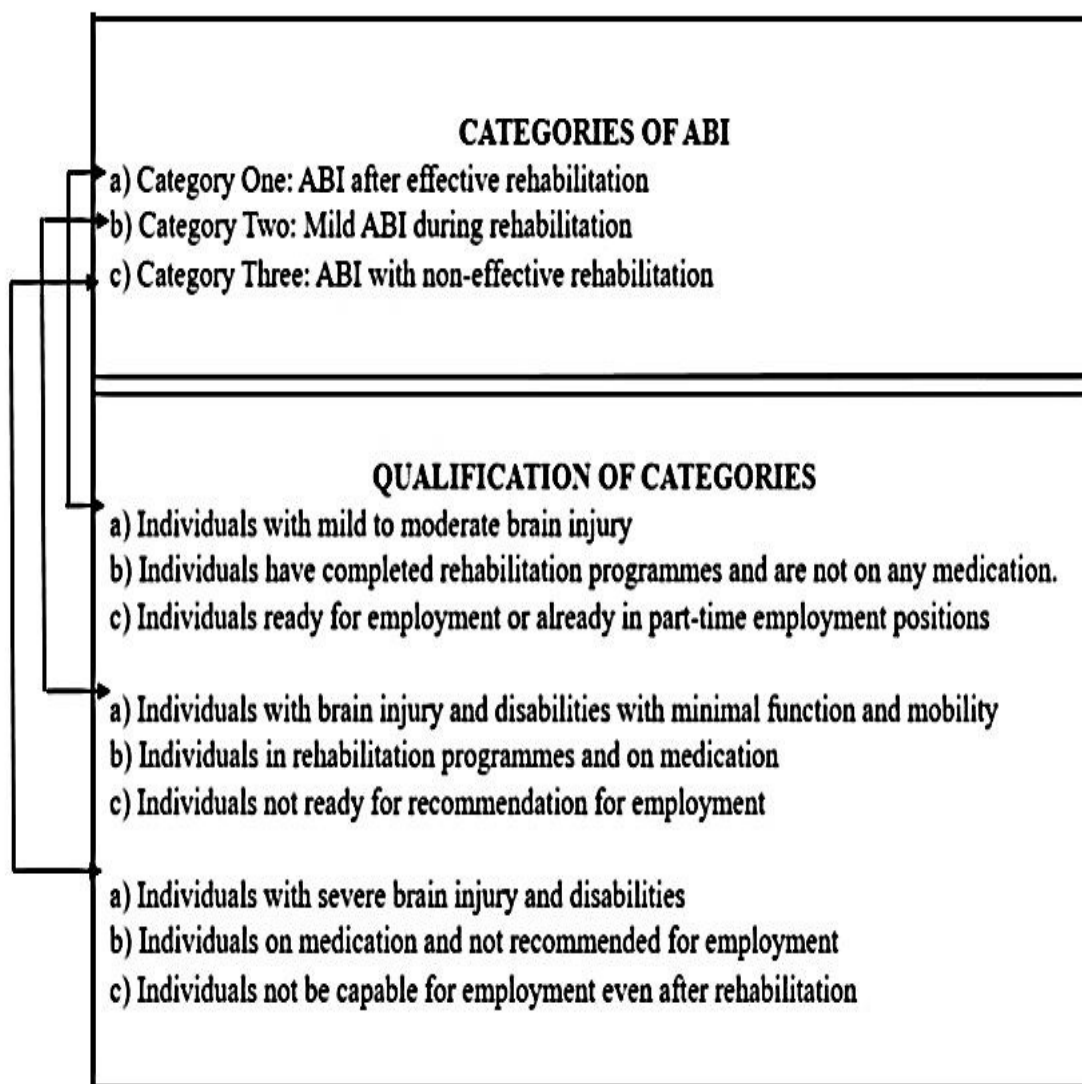


FIGURE 1: Model for employability of persons affected by acquired brain injury in South Africa

Source: (Akbar 2016)

Category One

This can be understood as a category that relates to individuals with mild to moderate brain injury. Individuals have completed rehabilitation programmes and are not on any medication.

Although most individuals with mild ABI recover within two to four weeks, up to one third of individuals remain symptomatic at one to three months after the injury (Kurowski *et al.* 2016:369).

They are ready for employment in both full-time and part-time positions. Data that related to this category provided evidence there is a need for raising awareness in companies about the existence and accommodation of this category of ABI in the workplace (Akbar 2016:186).

A major theme that emerged throughout the study was the need to raise awareness of and understanding about ABIs. Most respondents believed that the major cause of workplace challenges and problems regarding ABI is the absence of knowledge about ABI in South Africa. This can be addressed in academic publications, disability awareness campaigns, improved legislation to support this type of disability and the use of media and conferences to increase awareness of this disability.

The data analysed highlights the need for people in South African organisations to be educated about the repercussions of brain injuries. Another pragmatic concern are the continuous check-ups and tests required by people with ABI and the impact and accommodation of work to these needs. The lack of education and awareness surrounding ABI in the workplace results in persons with ABI not obtaining employment.

The following problems and barriers faced by people gaining employment following ABIs in South Africa were found to be the most predominant in this category when themes emerged in the analysis of data collection in the study:

- History of employment
- Reasons to employ someone post-ABI
- Perceived benefits of being employed
- Stigma and stereotyping
- Poor sense of identity and personhood
- Avoidance techniques
- The role of companies
- Rationalisation and contradictions
- Experiences at work

- The role of government and current legislation
- Misconceptions as a result of a lack of awareness and understanding of brain injuries.

Akbar (2016:186) describes these barriers to employment following ABI in this study. These barriers bring about challenges in sustaining employment for those who have been given the opportunity of employment following an ABI. Further complications regarding sustaining employment are misunderstandings in the workplace that are blown out of proportion, especially when employers and fellow colleagues are uncertain as to how to handle the person affected in the situation.

All of these problems ultimately stem from a poor understanding of and lack of education regarding people with ABI. In order to minimise the identified problems, challenges and barriers to employment following ABI in the workplace, it is essential that companies implement strategies that would assist these individuals in successful workplace integration. This can be achieved through the organisation's understanding and promoting appropriate behaviour in the workplace.

Work hardening (training and development to assist people post-ABI in the workplace) and vocational rehabilitation (reiterated by several professionals) can be developed and implemented. A facilitator can manage the transition into employment following vocational training and work readiness. This can be done by management in an organisation, human resource personnel or outsourced to recruitment agencies.

The findings of this study have also indicated that there is a need to raise awareness and educate people. Only once people have been educated is there an associated increased acceptance. With acceptance and understanding comes a decline in stereotyping and stigma. This need to educate people is not only to raise awareness, but also, in doing so, to normalise the behaviour of ABI sufferers. By explaining and getting people to understand how and why certain behaviours and responses occur, people are able to understand, and thereby normalise their behaviour.

In conjunction with the need to educate people around the topic of ABI in the workplace, there is a need to understand that different people will be more capable of performing particular duties than others – and it is advisable to get them into positions where there is a 'good job-person fit'. This will not only benefit the company, but also the individuals as they will not feel disempowered, especially given the fragile nature of their self-esteem to start with. However, the key to understanding the individual nature of persons affected by ABIs is

education. Before one can obtain this job-person fit, it is necessary to understand the persons and their individual needs and strengths, and to find ways to innovatively and practically accommodate them. Coupled with the need to educate fellow employees, one should allow the ABI sufferers a space within which they can act independently, but also impart to colleagues an appreciation and awareness of the nature of ABI, and the fact that they would need to assist them where necessary.

Creating this type of accepting culture and environment helps the ABI sufferers to feel as though they fit in and thereby to gain a sense of belonging. There is a need for proper guidelines and policies, especially HR policies, in order to adequately address and appropriately deal with people suffering from ABIs: in this manner, they can be given the necessary structure and support they need to thrive, to build their confidence and harness their strengths within a supportive and understanding environment. By setting up peer and organisational support groups, the ABI sufferers are given the chance to express their frustrations and share their lived experiences, but similarly, they allow an increased understanding of their lived experience by their peers and superiors as well.

Category Two

This can be understood as a category that relates to individuals with brain injury and disabilities associated with minimal function and mobility. These persons are in existing rehabilitation programmes and on medication. They are not ready for recommendation for employment, as stated in the recommendations. It is pivotal that 'work hardening' programmes are made available to these individuals during the workplace accommodation strategies of the organisation or in the induction stage of employment of these individuals. Often brain injuries manifest only when exposed to certain situations and tasks. Until that occurs, there may be no 'tell-tail' signs.

Organisations responding to people who fall into this category can provide counselling, support groups and mentors in the workplace to assist in the integration of these individuals. The fact that they would normally not be employed for a period of sometimes up to four or five years because of recovery means that work hardening is essential. They are not ready to get back into work or to fill a full post but they might be able to slowly develop into it by coming to work and following the routine of daily tasks in the workplace at a gradual pace.

Category Three

This category relates to individuals with severe brain injury and disabilities. They are on medication and not recommended for employment. Individuals that fall within this category cannot be considered for any type of employment in a company owing to the severity of their injuries.

The data analysis led to the recommendation of the theory above which constitutes the significant impact of this study. This study had made reference to the deficiencies of existing legislation in South Africa that can be used to assist people with disabilities, such as those suffering with ABI in South African organisations (Akbar 2016:186). A significant contribution to legislation in South Africa regarding people suffering with ABI in the workplace can be achieved by implementing the recommendations of this study on including the management of these categories in legislation.

In order for organisations to overcome the lack of legislation regarding the management of persons with ABI in the South African workplace, existing legislation can be used in conjunction with the model of employability for persons who are affected by ABI. Existing policies with regard to employment, such as the concept of Affirmative Action (AA) described by Akbar (2016:187), refer to specific measures undertaken by an employer to ensure that suitably qualified people from designated groups have equal employment opportunities and are equally represented in all occupational categories and levels in the workplace.

Such measures include providing reasonable accommodation for people with disabilities to provide an enabling work environment. However, organisations need be aware that the reasonable accommodation for people with ABI differs from that of other disabilities that are managed in the workplace. This is due to the specific challenges with which people with ABI are facing.

In terms of existing legislation that assists with understanding the need for employment, Section 9 of the constitution provides the basis for employment equality by asserting that:

- everyone is equal before the law and has the right to equal protection and benefits of the law;
- equality includes the full and equal enjoyment of all rights and freedoms; and
- legislative and other measures designed to protect or advance persons or categories of persons disadvantaged by unfair discrimination may be invoked to promote the achievement of equality.

Section 9(3) of the Constitution further declares: “The state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth.” This declaration guarantees people post-ABI employment.

This section plays a pivotal role in South African organisations and links legislation to the management of diversity in the workplace, regulating the management of an organisation’s workforce diversity in a manner that will result in the eradication of discrimination against any form of disability and diversity, including disabilities such as ABI. Govender (1998:338) asserts that to understand the relationship between the right not to be unfairly discriminated against and the right to equality before the law is central to the appreciation of the right to equality. It is also vital to point out that it is impossible to talk about equality without mentioning the concept of discrimination.

The Constitution sets an equitable foundation for the new South Africa based on the values of human dignity, achievement of equality, the promotion of human rights and freedoms, non-racism and non-sexism (McGregor 2007:6). Organisations employing persons with ABI should understand that not only are they implementing the Constitution in terms of human rights but they are also allowing individuals the right to human dignity, as returning to work improves the recovery process of a person with ABI.

The Code of Good Practice and the legislation according to Akbar (2016:190) are indications that, in order to create sustainable development in the South African workplace for persons post- ABI, organisations need to become more aware of how to deal with people with this type of disability. For people post-ABI, it is pivotal that ‘work hardening’ programmes are made available during the workplace accommodation strategies of the organisation or in the induction stage of employment of these individuals.

6.3 The importance of education awareness and the role of people with disabilities

The only way to overcome fears, myths and negative attitudes about the abilities of employees and applicants with disabilities is through vigorous education and training within the private and public sectors. Furthermore, experience has shown that people with disabilities are the best-qualified persons to be the drivers of such education and awareness programmes. An additional method that can be adopted is an interdisciplinary team. A well-

prepared interdisciplinary team is essential to provide relevant and supportive information and assistance that can broaden the understanding and awareness of ABI in the workplace (Gioia *et al.* 2016:400).

6.4 Guidelines for people with disabilities

The following guidelines for people with disabilities have been developed as a result of the findings of this study in order to assist people with ABI in the workplace in terms of reducing challenges that they face in gaining employment:

- Play a lead role in creating awareness in the workplace;
- Guide the development of all awareness programmes in the workplace; and
- Consider becoming members of trade unions and any representative structure within the workplace in order to create hands-on disability awareness training.

The above guidelines and legislation can be used in conjunction with the proposed model of employability for persons who are affected by ABI in South African organisations in order to minimise discrimination in the workplace regarding this type of disability. This will also assist people suffering with ABI in South African in gaining and sustaining employment.

7. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study responds to the numerous calls for research in the area of employment of persons following ABI in South Africa. The empirical and theoretical findings suggest that minimal research has been conducted in the area of the perceptions and experiences of employment of persons, post-ABI in South Africa. Therefore, this study will contribute to the expansion of knowledge on this issue. There is very little literature on employee perceptions and experiences of employment of persons following ABI in South Africa. Thus, the understanding gained here on how South African employees understand and experience misfit will make a notable contribution to existing research, theory and practice in the fields of governance, entrepreneurship, management, psychology and HRM.

As highlighted above, the South African organisational context represents fertile ground for the development of policies and procedures in the workplace that would assist employment of persons, post-ABI in South Africa. This dynamic area represents new opportunities for scholarly research into the phenomenon since limited research exists that specifically examines employment of persons following ABI in the South African organisational context.

The findings of this study have the potential to significantly contribute to South African practices and policies of HRM research by providing a local country-contextual theoretical understanding of what the employment of persons with ABI in South Africa means to both individuals and organisations and its causes and consequences.

This study further has the potential to contribute to the governance, management, entrepreneurship, psychology and HRM literature by exploring an employee perspective on how organisations currently deal with the employment of persons following ABI in South Africa and how they can creatively assist, support and sustain employees, rather than encouraging them to exit or increasing challenges in the workplace. The data generated from this study is likely to stimulate greater interest and substantially improve the interpretation of the results of employment of persons following ABI in South Africa

With the number of ABIs steadily increasing in South Africa and in different parts of the world, it is imperative that managers develop a deeper understanding of what employment of persons following ABI in South Africa means, as well as its causes and resulting behavioural reactions so that they can effectively deal with this phenomenon in the workplace. The results of this study will provide managers with information that will facilitate early detection and strategies to assist in the employment of persons following ABI in South African workplace.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study have several implications for future research that needs to be conducted in this area of study within the fields of management and entrepreneurship, governance, HRM and industrial relations. In terms of research approach, the phenomenological approach used in this study may encourage other researchers to study ABI in South Africa through the lived experiences of persons with ABI so as to understand the direct needs, challenges and successes of people with this type of disability.

The understanding of the challenges and successes of persons, post-ABI in the South African workplace as presented in this study will make a substantial contribution to the improved understanding of the phenomenon of employment of ABI victims in South Africa. From the perspective of the theory, experiences and findings of this study, it can be said that this study has the potential to assist South African companies in formulating HR policies and practices and implementing these in a manner that would assist both the development of the South African workplace with this form of disability as well as individuals, post-ABI.

Since the advent of a new constitution in South Africa, there have been many changes in the South African workplace that have affected the management of people with disabilities. Preparing employees to function successfully and contribute to the achievement of organisational goals, both nationally and internationally, is imperative. This forms part of the comprehension and alignment of the new constitutional requirements and allows policies to be crafted so that organisations can manage people effectively in the workplace by coordinating the efforts of individuals inside and outside the organisation. There has been an extended debate regarding the legislation related to disabilities and its impact on employment in the South African labour market (Hardy 2010:30).

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Article 23 states that everyone has the right to work, to a free choice of employment and favourable conditions of work, as well as the right to protection against unemployment (UNHR 2008). Employers are required to work within strict legal frameworks. It is the South African Constitution that provides measures that foster the protection and advancement of people who have been disadvantaged by unfair discrimination in the workplace (Dupper & Garbers 2010:16).

As described by Akbar (2016:66), the Employment Equity Act of 1998 states that people with disabilities must be reasonably accommodated in the workplace and it is therefore the duty of the employer is to ensure that such employees have access to the resources in the organisation. Section 1 of the EEA (RSA 1998) defines reasonable accommodation as "...[a]ny modification or adjustment to a job or the working environment that will enable a person from a designated group to have reasonable access to or to participate or advance in employment" (EEA). The above definition highlights the fact that the working environment can also be modified for others who are already defined by the EEA as designated groups (Snyman 2009:55).

The Code of Good Practice plays a pivotal role in the employment of people with disabilities taken from the EEA (Employment Equity Act of 1998). The Code of Good Practice on the employment of people with disabilities was issued in terms of Section 54 (1) of the EEA on 19 August 2002. The amended EEA (Employment Equity Amendment Act 47 of 2013) makes provision for more stringent arrangements regarding the employment of people with disabilities, and the penalties that are applicable to those employers who fail to report (RSA 2013). However, there is a need for the legislative framework around disabilities in South Africa to be amended according to the different types of disabilities that exist in the country. Internationally, considerably more effort is being made to ensure appropriate attention to this

matter. As far back as 1976, the World Health Organisation in its Resolution (WHA 29.35) of the 29th World Assembly proposed the broad classification of impairments, disabilities and handicaps. This document served as a 'unifying framework' to suggest that it is critical to define these disabilities in order to ensure that all categories are catered for in legislative and regulatory systems (WHO 1980). As the empirical and theoretical evidence in this study suggests, there is a need for governance to identify ABI as a disability, to create a definition of what distinguishes ABI sufferers as disabled and to provide guidelines as to how companies should support the employment of individuals, post-ABI in South Africa.

9. CONCLUSION

This study indicated that there is a need for the employment of person's post-ABI in South Africa. This study has also indicated the significant need for future research in the area of ABI in South Africa as the findings have proved that there is a major absence of research around ABI in South Africa. It is anticipated that this study will lead to the creation of awareness in the South African workplace of this type of disability and that companies will use this study as a benchmark when formulating and implementing their HR policies and practices when integrating persons affected by ABI into the workplace.

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