

Perceptions of Students with Disabilities on Reasonable Accommodation at a Tertiary Education: A Case of a Rural University in Limpopo Province, South Africa

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Abstract: The advent of democracy in South Africa has put initiatives to redress social injustice suffered by women and people with disabilities. Enrollment of students with disabilities at universities increases yearly, influencing an increase in buying assistive technologies to enable a teaching and learning environment.

This paper explores the perceptions of students with disabilities on the role of reasonable accommodation in terms of accessibility and facilitation of teaching and learning at the university based on the human rights approach. A pre-CorvID-19 pandemic survey used a convergent parallel mixed-method design to evaluate perceptions of reasonable accommodation on the campus. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected roughly simultaneously and integrated into interpreting the overall results. A focus group comprised of the representatives of students with disabilities was interviewed. The surveyed population comprised all students with disabilities between the ages of 18 and 25 registered with the Disability Support Unit (DSU) of the University of Venda. The questionnaires collected reasonable accommodation perceptions and satisfaction rates from students about organizational support and training. The distributed questionnaires produced a 90% response rate. The findings highlighted that students with disabilities encountered barriers of inaccessibility to classrooms and residents. Adequate learning material is a barrier for students with visual disabilities. Institutional budget and item costs render buying assistive technologies and building new infrastructures for students with disabilities a constraint. Policy and practice in the institution remain a limitation to interfacing education and disability smoothly.

Keywords: Accessibility, accommodation, disability, gender barriers, marginalized, perceptions.

INTRODUCTION

The prevalence of disability in South Africa is 7.5% [1]. Among these impairments, intellectual disability presents particular difficulties for diagnosis and therapy. Intellectual impairment [2] is characterized by restrictions in cognitive functioning and adaptive behavior, which impair a person's capacity for learning, communication, and daily activities. With an emphasis on their diagnosis, treatment, and the requirement for reasonable accommodations, this article will examine the unique difficulties faced by people with intellectual disabilities inside South African higher institutions. The rate of disability prevalence is higher amongst females than males at 8.5% and 6.5%, respectively. Prevalence of disability per age group is as follows: 15-19 years is 2.6%; 20-24 years is 2.4%; 25-29 years is 2.5%. White Paper on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (WPRPD) [2] propagates the removal of barriers to access and participation as well as protecting the rights of persons at risk of compounded marginalization. Gender equality in education overlooks the added problem faced by students with disabilities [3]. This paper proposes to focus on the situation/condition of students with disabilities within a South African tertiary institution. A reasonable accommodation proposed in this paper relates to the change in ways things are usually done for the provision of equal opportunities/treatments for students with disabilities. It

implies that the auxiliary aids and services offered are effectively compatible to meet the needs of students with disabilities. The incidents of females with disabilities [1] are among the marginalized in a society whose need for equal participation is neglected in educational discourse. More females than males attend tertiary education [1], and 1/5 are individuals with severe difficulties. The population group with the highest access rate at the tertiary level was found to be whites, whereas black Africans form the lowest category.

In Canada, the Ontario Human Rights Commission [3] found that barriers to education for students with disabilities occur because of the failure of an education provider to make available needed accommodations promptly. Some barriers relate to inadequate funding based on budgetary considerations done without the actual needs assessment of students with disabilities. In some instances, physical inaccessibility is evident through the lack of ramps and /or elevators in multilevel school buildings. Accommodation roles and processes are found wanting by being not provided on time, insufficiently, or not provided at all.

Disability is a diverse group with gender identity and different socio-economic statuses. D'Andrea [4] argues that even though the enrolment of students with disabilities has increased in the higher education of South Africa, there is a high rate of inaccessibility in the learning environment, especially for physically and visually impaired students. Visual-impaired students find it difficult to integrate into the learning environments due to academic and social barriers [5]. Limited access to information made it difficult for disabled students to demonstrate academic knowledge in standardized tests. Social barriers include bullying from other students; academic barriers include the inability to access the

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institutional buildings for the learning environment. Some buildings are fragmented, making them inaccessible for physically impaired students [3].

Consequently, students with disabilities are not accorded the same social rights as others. Inclusive education, which propagates to allow people with disabilities to participate effectively in a free society, is unlikely to materialize. Man-made barriers still hinder students with disabilities' opportunities to access knowledge freely at the tertiary level. At tertiary institutions, students with disabilities have moved from a protective environment in which personnel is legally responsible for identifying and providing appropriate services to an environment in which the students self-identify with a disability and request specific accommodations with the disability unit. Rugoho and Maphosa [6] argued that females face the typical disadvantages of gender inequality because they are not allowed to learn about sexual and reproductive health compared with their peers due to prejudice and perceptions of being non-sexual.

Research Brief on Disability and Equality in South Africa [6] contends that most universities do not consider the needs of students with disabilities in the formulations of language policies or residence placement policies. Reasonable accommodation conditions remained a challenge to many students with disabilities in historically disadvantaged institutions of high learning in South Africa. Some premises within the institution do not provide for physically and visually impaired people and are pedestrian-oriented [7]. Many students with disabilities have difficulties accessing the heavy doors of their residences and some lecturing venues. The lecture room's setting arrangements still have podiums and boards inaccessible or far away to physical and visually impaired students. The seating arrangements provide little spaces that are inaccessible for students using wheelchairs. A reasonable accommodation is still viewed as an individual problem rather than an environmental one. Access to education represents a barrier evidenced by a lack of visibility and voice of students with disabilities in positions of authority. The study [7] focused on challenges faced by staff serving students with disabilities in a historically disadvantaged tertiary institution, such as lack of resources and funding and the disproportionate ratio of staff to students. On the other hand, this paper seeks to evaluate perceptions and practices prevailing in addressing the plight of a diverse group of students with disabilities at different educational levels in terms of providing reasonable accommodation conditions in the tertiary institution.

Intellectual Disability Diagnosis and Challenges

Intellectual disability (8) is often diagnosed during childhood through comprehensive assessments that measure intellectual functioning and adaptive skills. These assessments may include standardized intelligence tests, interviews, and observations. However, diagnosing intellectual disability can be challenging due to factors such

as cultural differences, limited access to proper assessment tools, and the need to consider coexisting conditions.

In South African tertiary institutions, students with intellectual disabilities may face barriers to obtaining accurate diagnoses. Limited resources and awareness about intellectual disability among educators and support staff can contribute to delays in identification and intervention. These challenges underscore the importance of early and accurate diagnosis to ensure that students receive appropriate accommodations and support.

In South Africa, the Bill of Rights, Chapter 2 of the Constitution, states that everyone has the right to basic education, including adult basic education. It has created the opportunity to address the inequalities experienced during apartheid. The new dispensation provides for all types of disabilities to enjoy fundamental freedom on an equal basis and areas where adaptations must be identified to enable people with disabilities to exercise their rights effectively. Taormina-Weiss [9] asserts that the cost of marginalizing people with disabilities is very high not only for family members but also for the public. Marginalization makes people with disabilities dependent upon society and excludes them in many areas of social participation. People with disabilities should be free to pursue active lives complete with social interactions, and society would benefit greatly. Limited resources and facilities in institutions of higher learning made it possible only to accommodate a limited number of students with disabilities, such as blind students, partially sighted, and physically challenged students. The limited resources could be a shortage of Braille system, tape recorder, writer, and computer and audio-visual devices.

Disability Support Units in South African universities offer assistive services such as screen readers, Braille system, audiobooks and journals, special typewriters for the blind, and extra time for tests and examinations, but the barriers to academic curricula, physical environment, teaching and learning support, allocation, and distribution of resources to the disabled remains a daunting task to overcome [10]. The Disability Unit is responsible for organizing structural adjustments to enable students with disabilities to attend classes and find alternative ways to make curricula accessible. Not all universities in South Africa can provide disability services effectively because of being historically disadvantaged in terms of financial and human resources. Plan International [11] argues that girls experience discrimination and vulnerability because of gender and disability. Hence, there is a need to understand lived experiences and challenges faced in the lecture rooms and campus environment impacting students' performance with disabilities.

The Three Formulations of the Nexus Requirements [12] assert that reasonable accommodation is an alteration to some elements of the status quo that are intended to enable a person with a disability to participate in higher education,

residential living, or public life to the same extent as the non-disabled. The changes may include the physical environment, time schedules, adjustments of requirements and policies, provision of assistive devices, and commuting related to accommodations. The study by Clarke and Sawyer [13] views a disability as an impairment that substantially limits one or more life activities and that its range of possible accommodations is limited by human imagination. Disability support services vary across universities as a function of the number and quality of staff and the scope of services provided [14]. Barriers cited by students on [14] are the attitude of faculty and staff who are not familiar with disability challenges, access to textbooks in alternative formats, and student advocacy skills.

Taylor, Turnbull, Bleasdale, Francis, and Forsyth [15] posit that students with disabilities in the United Kingdom face different barriers to higher education concerning learning activities in certain courses. The difficulties faced related to assessment activities include difficulties reading examination papers or writing answers or difficulties engaging in social aspects such as disclosing their needs. Hence, the United Kingdom Equality Act 2010 [3] requires reasonable adjustments to be made to the curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment for students with disabilities to avoid discriminatory practices. However, to claim this right to such an adjustment, a prospective student must be able to demonstrate that he or she is disabled.

Per [13], when the disabled student registers at university, or at some point during their studies at university, he or she needs to provide medical evidence or undergo some form of assessment so that appropriate adjustments can be put in place. Such adjustments will typically be documented in some form of the individual student learning plan. Hidden disabilities account for most students disclosing a disability as they enter higher education. Ingeno [16] advocates that reasonable accommodation should not have to wait until someone comes and self-identifies, but rather equal access needs to be possible and implementable from the beginning.

In Australia, equity in quality learning bodes well for students with disabilities, but barriers continue to hinder the realization of these goals [17]. There is an increase in the number of students with hidden disabilities unrecognized by many university staff. Disabilities cited in this regard include specific learning disabilities, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and autism spectrum disorder (ASD). In (15), if a student does not reveal an impairment "in sufficient detail to allow an institution to respond to it", the institution is not obligated to adjust under the discrimination act.

Fleming, Oertle, and Plotner [18] assert that services available to students with disabilities are unclear, unknown by many, and underutilized. This is exacerbated by a lack of a closer working relationship between staff in DSU and other campus services such as career or counseling centers. It is difficult to know what kind of help disabled students can get

on campus in some instances. In (16), the increase in visibility of offices of disability resources through the increase of university staff who are aware of disability resources is necessary. On the other hand, De Los Santos, Kupezynski, and Mundy [19] argued that higher education institutions should reorganize support services to meet a multitude of needs for students with disabilities. The question remained that of ascertaining to what extent the support service provided by university management fulfills the objectives and situations of the students.

Treatment and Support Strategies

Once diagnosed, people with intellectual disabilities [19] need specialized care and support methods to advance their social and academic growth. These tactics should concentrate on developing an inclusive environment that encourages study, independence, and social integration in tertiary institutions.

Educational institutions should provide specialized services, such as individualized education plans (IEPs) and support from disability service units. These plans outline specific accommodations and interventions that address the unique learning needs of students with intellectual disabilities. Accommodations [15] may include extended time for assignments and exams, simplified instructional materials, and assistive technology.

Collaboration between educators, organizations that provide services to individuals with disabilities, and professionals in mental health is necessary to create and administer effective treatment programs. Training teachers and staff on identifying and assisting children with intellectual disabilities can result in a more welcoming and supportive learning environment.

Hence, the objective of the study sought to evaluate how students with disabilities were assisted in achieving reasonable accommodation conditions at different educational levels on the campus through organizational and academic support. The following hypotheses were used:

Hypothesis 1: Instructors use different methods for teaching content and alternative ways for students with disabilities to participate in class activities (auxiliary aids).

Hypothesis 2: All students experience campus fully and equally by utilizing the same practices through reasonable accommodation efforts.

The Rationale of the Hypotheses

The rationale for creating accessible spaces and course content on the campus is to ensure that students with disabilities are encouraged to discuss the accommodation with instructors in assisting in creating a supportive environment. Teaching is made accessible to all students through all modalities, such as sign language, seeing, and

touching, to break down discrimination and stereotypes leveled against disability and special education needs.

The Rationale for Students with Disabilities to Enjoy Reasonable Accommodation Conditions

The rationale for the hypothesis is to ensure that ongoing development that provides an inclusive environment also embraces and celebrates diversity. Barriers for students with disabilities in terms of inclusion and other range of characteristics, such as policies, practices, and procedures, should regularly be reviewed and removed where possible. People with a disability should be visible on campus in positions of power and authority (administrators, student leaders, and faculty officers). Reasonable accommodation efforts should promote social integration.

Theoretical Perspective

This paper followed a Social Model of disability, human rights, and development propagated by Albert [20]. It is a radical alternative to the individualized medical conception of disability, asserting that people with disabilities are disadvantaged not because of their impairments but because of the limitations imposed by social, cultural, economic, and environmental barriers.

Disability, in this regard, is not about health or pathology but discrimination and social exclusion. Unlike the medical model assumption of individual abnormality and the primacy of cure, the social model implicitly acknowledges the normality of impairment while not rejecting intervention. Medical advances have so far reduced the number of people with disabilities and led to an increase, as people not only live longer but are also better able to survive illness and injury [21]. Hence, removing disabling barriers and strongly emphasizing human and civil rights could put people with disabilities in the driving seat of their destiny.

By considering impairment as an ordinary part of life, the social model attempts to extract disability from the medicalized and special needs people and push for mainstreaming disability concerns in all developmental policies and practices [22]. This model brings people with disabilities together in a common struggle for equality and rights. People with disabilities should be actors in their lives rather than passive care recipients. Putting people with a disability into roles that could control and lead their lives offers a powerful device for liberating those who remain the poorest of the poor in all the countryside. A human rights approach offers a societal transformation and a way for people with disabilities to transform their sense of who they are- from stigmatized objects of care to values subjecting their own lives.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The first phase of a survey was conducted with the students with disabilities (N=110) to establish the extent of

efforts made to reasonable accommodation in terms of academic and organizational support in the institution. The second phase focused on soliciting data through interviews with a focus group of students with disabilities (N=7) to establish the satisfaction rate in terms of reasonable accommodation efforts preferred by disabled students.

Participants

The population consisted of (N=110) registered students with the Disability Support Unit (DSU) of the University of Venda. The self-administered questionnaires distributed produced a response rate of 90%. Participants were from age 18 to 35 years old, comprised of 49 males and 51 females. The rationale for conducting the survey design was based on the economy of the design and rapid turnaround in data collection. Questions addressed hearing, learning disabilities, and motor and visual impairment in terms of academic and organizational support.

Instruments

The self-administered questionnaires with a Likert scale for closed-ended questions were used. The Linkert scale questions addressing academic support were depicted by choosing one of the following (not offered; offered less than 25% of the time; offered 25% to 50% of the time; offered 51% to 75% of the time; offered more than 75% of the time). The questions addressing organizational support ranged from (not used; used less than 25% of the time; used 25% to 50% of the time; used 51% to 75% of the time to use more than 75% of the time). The semi-structured questions were used as an interview guide for the focus group. The satisfaction rate measured the reasonable accommodation in terms of academic and organizational support. The instrument was pre-tested on a sample of different groups of disabled students. It was used to measure the needs for accommodation and satisfaction rates with support services. A focus group discussion comprised partially sighted, blind students with Albinism and physically disabled.

Ethical Consideration

Permission to conduct the research was sought from the Disability Support Unit. Participants were briefed on the nature and scope of the study. Participants in the focus group discussion and those who completed the questionnaire were assured of voluntary participation and confidentiality and that their identities would remain anonymous.

Procedure

The data collection process occurred over the four-week window period. The participants completed the questionnaire addressing the subjective well-being rating and satisfaction with the accommodation. Before data analysis, a survey was reviewed for missing data. In the case where a survey contained two or more missing items, the questionnaire was not considered for analysis. The quantitative and qualitative

data were analyzed separately such that quantitative results were used to plan the qualitative follow-up.

Data Analysis

The analysis of data was descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics were presented to profile the demographic characteristics, and inferential statistics were performed to investigate relations between variables. IBM SPSS version 25 was used for data analysis. The preliminary analyses, such as the normality test, were done to make sure there was no violation of the assumptions. An ANOVA was conducted to verify whether reasonable accommodation and social integration of the sample differ based on educational level. The Pearson product-moment correlation test was done as a follow-up to examine the relationship between accommodation, perception, and social integration. Based on the mean and standard deviation of these variables, a satisfactory rate was determined.

RESULTS

We performed a descriptive statistic to profile our participants, as illustrated in the tables below. The age variable was categorized into 2, i.e., 18 to 25 years and 26 to 35 years. Regarding gender, only two categories were used (female and male). At the same time, the levels of education were 1st year of university as 1st level, second year as 2nd level, third year as 3rd level, and fourth year as honors level. The participants were coming from 7 provinces, as indicated in the tables.

As illustrated in Table 1, the age group 18 - 25 constitutes 99% of the sample, while 26 - 35 years account for 1% of the participants. Many participants on the campus are below the

age of 25 years. Female participants were 51%, while males accounted for 49%. The results indicate that the majority of the participants living on campus are females. Many students (44%) are doing a third-year level, while 26 % are on a second-year level. Close to 17% are enrolled at the first-year level, while 12% are doing the fourth year, and only 1% are enrolled at the master's level at the university. Many students form an undergraduate category, which collectively amounts to 83%, while postgraduates constitute only 13%. The majority (64%) of the participants are from the Province of Limpopo, followed by Mpumalanga, accounting for 14% of the participants. Additionally, participants who hail from KwaZulu Natal made 9%, Gauteng made 7%, Free State made 3%, Eastern Cape made 2%, and North West made 1% of the entire sample.

An evaluation of the linear relationship between Organisational support, Social integration, and reasonable accommodation was measured using the Pearson correlation, as shown in Table 2.

Pearson's correlation was performed in Table 2 to examine the association between organizational support, social integration, and reasonable accommodation. Pearson's correlation for organizational support and social integration was 0.048 with a p-value of 0.63, indicating almost no relationship, and the results are statistically insignificant. Therefore, we can conclude that changes in organizational support do not tend to change levels of social integration. Although students with disabilities are provided with assistive devices and training in their use, the usage rate remains less than 50%.

Any analysis using Pearson's correlation coefficient indicated that there is a mild positive relationship between

Table 1: Demographic Profiling of Participants

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	18 – 25 years	99	99%
	26 – 35 years	1	1%
Gender	Female	51	51%
	Male	49	49%
Level of education	The first year of university	17	17%
	The second year of university	26	26%
	The third year of university	44	44%
	Fourth-year of university	12	12%
	Masters	1	1%
Province	Eastern Cape	2	2.0%
	Free State	3	3.0%
	Gauteng	7	7.0%
	KwaZulu Natal	9	9.0%
	Limpopo	64	64.0
	Mpumalanga	14	14.0%
	North West	1	1.0%

Table 2: Correlation between Organizational Support, Social Integration, and Reasonable Accommodation (N=100)

		Organizational support	Social integration	Reasonable accommodation
Organizational support	Pearson Correlation	1	0.048	0.464**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.633	0.000
Social Integration	Pearson Correlation	0.048	1	0.011
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.633		0.916
Reasonable Accommodation	Pearson Correlation	0.464**	0.011	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.916	

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

organizational support and reasonable accommodation since the coefficient was 0.464 with a p-value less than 0.05. The results indicate that high levels of organizational support are associated with high levels of reasonable accommodation.

Although students receive organizational support, it does not sufficiently translate into effective education acquisition due to accommodation constraints. Pearson's correlation between social integration and reasonable accommodation was 0.011, with a p-value of 0.916, implying a statistically insignificant relationship between social integration and reasonable accommodation. The result shows that changes in social integration are not necessarily associated with changes in reasonable accommodation.

Hypothesis 1: Instructors use different methods for teaching content and alternative ways for students with disabilities to participate in class activities (auxiliary aids). A descriptive statistic shown in the table (Hypothesis 1) indicates.

All the participants (100%) considered the accommodation efforts by the institutional resource allocation as reasonable, although not rated highly. However, regarding social integration, all the participants revealed that none of the listed accommodation efforts related to sign language, real-time captioning, oral interpreters, or transliterates were

used. Considerable organizational support was offered; this is supported by 67% of the participants who stated that organizational support was offered 25% to 50% of the time, whereas 31% of the participants believed support was offered less than 25% of the time. Only 2% mentioned that support was not offered at all.

Hypothesis 2: All students experience campus fully and equally through the utilization of the same practices through accommodation

A one-way ANOVA is conducted to test this hypothesis to determine if there were significant differences in organizational support and educational levels, Social integration and educational levels, and Reasonable accommodation and educational levels. Educational level was used as the independent variable, while organizational support, social integration, and reasonable accommodation were dependent.

Analysis of variable results for academic support, social integration, and reasonable accommodation was measured on an educational level. The preliminary analyses were done to check that there were no apparent violations of assumptions. Then, an ANOVA was conducted to verify whether reasonable accommodation, social integration, and organizational support of the sample differ as a function of

Hypothesis 1: A Descriptive Statistic

Construct	Category	Frequency	Percent
Organization Support	Not offered	2	2
	Offered less than 25% of the time	31	31
	Offered 25% to 50% of the time	67	67
	Offered 51% to 75% of the time	0	0
	Offered more than 75% of the time	0	0
Social integration	Not used	100	100
	Used less than 25% of the time	0	0
	Used 25% to 50% of the time	0	0
	Used 51% to 75% of the time	0	0
	Used more than 75% of the time	0	0
Reasonable Accommodation	Yes	100	100
	No	0	0

Table 3: ANOVA Test for Organizational Support, Social Integration, and Reason Accommodation

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Organizational support	Between Groups	0.146	4	0.037	3.300	0.014
	Within Groups	1.052	95	0.011		
Social Integration	Between Groups	0.025	4	0.006	3.413	0.012
	Within Groups	0.177	95	0.002		
Reasonable Accommodation	Between Groups	0.951	4	0.238	2.533	0.045
	Within Groups	8.919	95	0.094		

educational level. Educational levels were categorized into "1st year", and "2nd year". "3rd year", and "4th year", "Honours", and "Masters" (Table 3).

A one-way ANOVA found that organization support significantly differs across the educational levels $F(4,95)=3.3$, $p=0.014$, which implies that some instructors use different methods for teaching content. In addition, they seek alternative ways for students with disabilities to participate in class activities. Nevertheless, the nature and rate of organizational support differ with educational levels.

Regarding Social integration, a one-way ANOVA found significant differences across educational level $F(4,25)=3.413$, $p=0.012$, which indicates that social integration differs based on educational level. Therefore, we can conclude that social integration is not good at some level of education.

Relating to reasonable accommodation according to educational level, the ANOVA test shows that $F(4,25)=2.538$, $p=0.045$. This implies that the reasonable accommodation perception significantly differs with educational levels. Hence, we can conclude that reasonable accommodation is evident in some levels of education but not all.

Excerpts from group interview: Focus group discussion concerning accommodation

The representative of blind students had this to say: *"There are no constructed sheltered paths to protect us during rainy days whilst attending classes"*.

Physically disabled student representative had this to say: *"Some classes are inaccessible during rainy days due to mud and unpaved pathways"*.

The blind student representative reiterated and had this to say: *"We are seldom notified of new constructions that could obstruct our movement on the campus. Furthermore, the journey to the library and classrooms has cars and buses because of the absence of secluded pedestrian paths"*.

The physically disabled representative had this to say: *"A few places that have adapted toilets are Disability Support Unit and residence occupied by disabled students. The rest are old buildings which need to be renovated to comply with our plight"*.

The general concerns regarding residents were that many students with disabilities stayed on the ground floor,

- no privacy,
- no security,
- few or no warden patrols to monitor the buildings,
- absence of lift or lifts not working,
- no adapted showers to cater to different disabled people.

Academic support to students with disabilities lags due to resource constraints. Many courses offered, including pure sciences, are not suitable for blind students. In this regard, tutors are expected to assist students with disabilities where the lecturers have failed. Policies depicting behavioral expectations and compliance are available. However, the implementation of such programs is slow.

DISCUSSION

Despite the legal frameworks and policies in place to protect the rights of individuals with disabilities, barriers persist in South African tertiary institutions. Limited financial resources, inadequate training, and inaccessible physical environments [21] can hinder the implementation of effective accommodations for students with intellectual disabilities.

The study findings showed that reasonable accommodation at tertiary institutions remains a challenge to meet the diverse student body with a multitude of needs. Disability Support Unit, administrators, and academic staff are pressured to meet diverse student needs where resource constraints are apparent. Although alternative ways or methods to address the plight of students with disabilities are used, such measures still do not adequately accommodate disabled groups to experience the campus environment fully and socially. It concurs with [4, 5, 9] assertion that students with disabilities are not accorded social rights as other students on the campus and that they have limited access to information that could assist in asserting their potential and abilities. Consequently, this defeats the end of full inclusion and accommodation.

The paper supports the research conducted in the field and shows how perceptions of accommodation affect the

academic environment for students with disabilities in tertiary institutions. It links with [7] assertion that the absence of reasonable accommodation is a barrier to providing visibility and voice for students with disabilities. Focus group response regarding the inability to access classes during rainy days exposes the environment in which students with disabilities find themselves. All the hypotheses revealed perceptions of accommodation shortcomings in shaping academic performance at tertiary education.

The students felt not supported by institutions despite the new education environment's potential to support greater participation. Many barriers still exist [2]. The students with disabilities are still being told that the institution is not equipped to provide them with the necessary support they require. Curriculum inflexibility and resource constraints regarding how it has been conceptualized remain the key barriers to the equitable participation of students with disabilities and their human rights [18].

Although the Disability Support Unit has a policy that seeks to provide reasonable accommodations such as changing term papers and extending examination sessions, changes to the sitting environment of a class to adaptive technology (such as note-takers, recording devices, and readers for personal use), efforts made do not reasonably accommodate the disability diverse needs due to resource constraints. The physical and social environment for students with disabilities is not adjusted sufficiently to accommodate [15] the quality of outcomes. Furthermore, students with disabilities are expected to compete at the level of non-disabled peers, which is unethical and unachievable in such a social and systematic environment of inequalities. To address these barriers, institutions must prioritize investment in resources and training. This includes providing funding for assistive technology, accessible infrastructure, and faculty development programs [22]. Moreover, fostering a campus culture that values diversity and inclusivity can contribute to the overall well-being of students with intellectual disabilities.

CONCLUSION

Although students with disabilities could access the institution of higher learning, it does not imply free full participation and reasonable accommodation in the learning environment. Physical disabled and visually impaired students are affected by the physical environment set-up. The diversity of students with disabilities exposes the inefficiency and ineffectiveness of institutions in addressing their plight. There are still some gaps between policy and practice to streamline the functions of academic staff with non-academic staff. Hence, IT specialists and mobility instructors should be enlisted to accommodate the student's interests with disabilities. Different categories of disabilities should be accommodated separately to observe human rights principles in institutions of high learning. The social difficulties described in this paper limit the important part of social connectedness and the ability to relate to others.

In conclusion, intellectual disability poses unique difficulties within South African higher institutions and necessitates a thorough approach to diagnosis, treatment, and accommodations. Students with intellectual disabilities can be empowered to achieve their full potential with the help of early and correct diagnosis, individualized treatment plans, and reasonable accommodations. Education institutions in South Africa may foster a climate where every student, regardless of aptitude, can flourish and make a meaningful contribution to society by removing barriers and encouraging an inclusive culture.

DISCLAIMER

The views expressed through this article are those of the individual authors writing in their capacities only and not those of their respective employers. The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

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Received on 09-02-2021

Accepted on 20-09-2021

Published on 08-12-2021

<https://doi.org/10.6000/2292-2598.2021.09.06.3>

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