

The Labor Market Situation of Visually Impaired Individuals

The labor market situation of visually impaired individuals is a unique and challenging area that raises important questions for both society and the economy. Any degree of visual impairment or loss not only creates difficulties in daily life but also poses significant disadvantages in the world of work. Affected individuals face challenges not only in accessing the labor market but also encounter workplace barriers that hinder their ability to perform effectively. Exploring and addressing these issues is essential, as integrating visually impaired individuals into the labor market can improve their quality of life, promote equal opportunities, and contribute to economic development.

For an individual, work is not only a means of livelihood but also a way to maintain independence, which is particularly important for visually impaired people. Employment allows them to actively participate in society, reducing feelings of marginalization and exclusion. Independence in this context extends beyond physical capabilities to include psychological well-being, as employment helps achieve personal goals, build relationships, and foster a sense of belonging. In this regard, protected employment forms provide visually impaired individuals with opportunities to gradually transition to the open labor market and develop their skills (Lengyel Júlia, 2018).

From an economic perspective, Zelderloo stated in his 2004 study: "...employing people with disabilities makes economic sense: they add value to the labor market and generate tax revenue, just like any other member of society. There is a clear trend in both policy and practice toward integration into the open labor market. Arguments for such supported employment highlight the following factors: they represent good employees for employers, impose less burden on taxpayers, and provide greater self-fulfillment for themselves" (Zelderloo, 2004). Additionally, employers may gain a stable workforce. In an interview, the President of the Association of the Blind and Partially Sighted of Heves County (VGYPHE) responded to the question, "What are the benefits for employers of hiring a visually impaired person?" with the following: "A person with a disability is more motivated to keep their job. They will be stable,

motivated, and dedicated. They will pay attention. They appreciate having a job” (VGYHME President, interview, 19:04).

Research Aim

Despite these positive arguments, visually impaired individuals are underrepresented in the open labor market and are more likely to be employed in accredited forms of employment. The aim of my thesis is to examine the labor market situation of visually impaired individuals, focusing on the various challenges and obstacles they face.

Research Questions:

1. How has the labor market situation of visually impaired individuals changed over time, and what impact has technological development had?
2. What differences exist in the labor market situation among individuals with different types of visual impairments?
3. How can employers' awareness and openness to employing visually impaired individuals be improved?

Methodology

My primary research consisted of two main components. First, I conducted an online survey that received 44 responses. My target population was visually impaired individuals of working age, whom I reached through associations and various social media platforms. The second part of my research involved interviews. To ensure a comprehensive investigation, I interviewed the President of the Association of the Blind and Partially Sighted of Heves County, seven currently employed visually impaired individuals, and one retired blind individual. Including a retired person was important to understand how the employment situation for visually impaired individuals has changed over time and to compare past and present experiences. This approach allowed me to observe changes between different periods and understand how society and the labor market have responded to the employment of visually impaired individuals over time.

Conclusion

I examined the societal perceptions, legal equality, and workplace accessibility

measures for visually impaired individuals. Additionally, I explored ways to motivate employers to hire visually impaired individuals and presented examples of specific companies. The role of technology in the workplace was also a focus, as advancements in assistive technology have opened new opportunities for visually impaired individuals, enhancing their ability to work effectively.