



# Understanding the Employment Gap for Ugandans with Down Syndrome

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# Client: Global Livingston Institute

- ▶ Mission:
  - ▶ To educate students & community leaders on innovative approaches to international development and empower awareness, collaboration, conversations, and personal growth.
  - ▶ Job creation, education, community development, culture sharing, public health, and economic development
  - ▶ “Listen. Think. Act.”
- ▶ Workforce Development department:
  - ▶ to provide job training and placement to Ugandans in order to alleviate poverty and create sustainable living conditions
  - ▶ Angel’s Center: improving the quality of lives of people with disabilities
  - ▶ Co-coordinated first two workforce development pilots in Uganda for Ugandans with Down Syndrome (DS).



# Research Questions

- ▶ 1. What prevents employers in Uganda from hiring job seekers with DS?
- ▶ 2. What key factors separate Ugandan employers that have hired people with DS from those who have not?
- ▶ 3. From the employers' perspective, what factors contribute to long-term employment in Uganda for employees with DS?

# Method: Data Collection



- ▶ Oral interviews via Zoom and WhatsApp
  - ▶ Recorded using Zoom and Otter
  - ▶ Transcribed using Otter
  - ▶ Open-ended questions
- ▶ Paper survey distributed by Angel's Center
  - ▶ Multiple-choice, Likert scale, & open-ended questions
- ▶ Sample: 12 employers
  - ▶ Non-probability sample: sample statistically not intended to be generalized to the general population
    - ▶ Convenience sampling: choosing employers who are partners of GLI and Angel's Center due to ease of access

# Method: Data Analysis

- ▶ Analyzed mixed methods raw data
  - ▶ Coded data
  - ▶ Identified patterns
  - ▶ Reduced information to present it in a way that is meaningful to GLI's and Angel's Center's efforts
- ▶ Interpreted findings
- ▶ Produced useful, practical recommendations





# Findings: 5 Categories

- ▶ Candidate search process
- ▶ Employer perceptions of people with DS
- ▶ Differences between employers who have hired people with DS and those who have not
- ▶ Factors promoting positive employer perceptions
- ▶ Maintaining employment

# Candidate search process

## Those who had not hired a job seeker with DS

- 5 out of 6 respondents had never had an applicant with DS
  - Other 1 of 6 did not know
- 82% very likely or likely to employ
  - 18% neutral
- Likelihood of hiring based on how disability manifests and each person's skill set

## Competition

- 64% of respondents have 10 or fewer applicants
- 36% of respondents receive 20 or more applicants
  - 50-200 applicants
- Those who had hired people with DS typically had more applicants for open positions

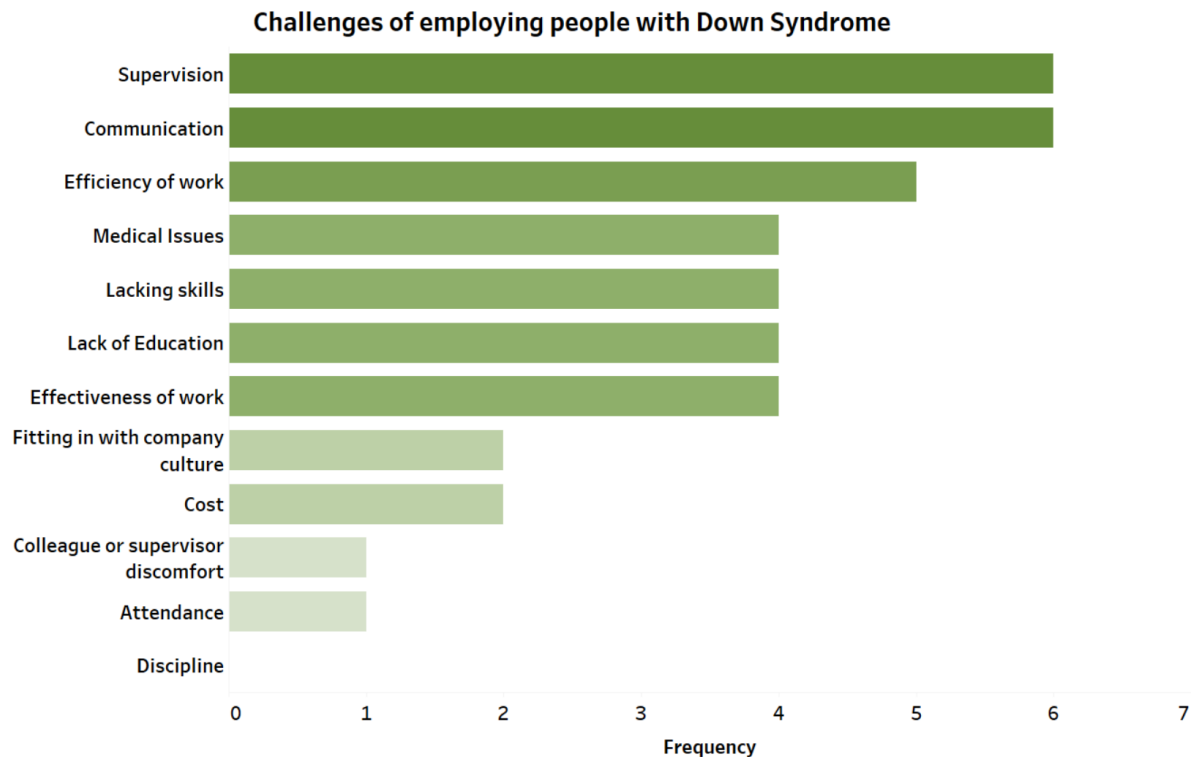
## Pandemic

- Not able to afford hiring new staff
- Had to lay off staff
- Will attempt to rehire laid off staff

## Interview Process

- Phone Interviews
- Short list
- In-person interview with multiple decision makers

# Employer perceptions of people with Down Syndrome



- Soft skills- Hospitality & Communication skills
- People with DS vs. People with disabilities
- Likelihood of teammates having concerns:
  - 45% very likely or likely
  - 36% neutral
  - 18% unlikely or very unlikely
- Stigma- no employers subscribed to beliefs
  - Witchcraft, maternal wrongdoing, contagious
  - Results in poor or no education
  - Driven out of communities
  - Hiring practice discrimination
  - Left out of governmental decisions



# Differences between employers who have hired people with DS and those who have not

## Similarities

- Unique Skills
- Importance of data
- Cultivate potential
- Nonprofit vs. Private hiring
- Communication and hospitality skills most important

## Differences

### Perception of preparedness

- Have employed: Moderately agreed to slightly agreed
- Have not employed: Strongly agreed to strongly disagreed

### Value added

- Have employed: Strongly agreed
- Have not employed: Varied in levels of agreement

### Exposure & relationships

- Have employed: Higher exposure/more relationships
- Have not employed: Little or no interaction

### Consider employee with a job coach

- Have employed: Polarized
- Have not employed: Moderately to strongly agreed

### Supervisory skills

- Have employed: Confident
- Have not employed: Not confident

### Motivation

- Have employed: Social action ideals
- Have not employed: Business mindset

### Skepticism about capabilities

- Have employed: No skepticism
- Have not employed: Skeptical

## Factors that promote positive perceptions

- World DS Day
- Videos
- Awareness program/champions
- Interaction
- Tax credit

## Maintaining employment

- External financial support
- Internal & External trainings



## Interpretation of findings

What prevents employers in Uganda from hiring job seekers with DS?

- ▶ **Lack of applicants:** Societal shame, hiding family members, valued less so deterred from applying, belief that employers will not recognize value, lack support services, transportation, lack of internet
- ▶ **Competition is high:** Perceived as less valuable and less educated relative to other candidates, lack social skills [communication & hospitality skills], high dropout rates
- ▶ **Cost:** Cost in addition to pandemic's impact on budgets
- ▶ **Supervision & Communication challenges:** International studies suggest supervisor discomfort as barrier

(continued...)

## What prevents employers in Uganda from hiring job seekers with DS?

- ▶ **Perception of being inefficient & ineffective:** Aligns with prior research, use of term “children”
- ▶ **Perception of skills & education deficits:** People with DS are nearly twice as likely to have never attended school (19%), special education lacking, special education schools lack environments conducive to learning, informal household skills overlooked
- ▶ **Medical issues:** Past studies suggest that hygiene can be a highly rated barrier, can be perceived as less hygienic; Fear of contagious illnesses



# What key factors separate Ugandan employers that have hired people with DS from those who have not?

## Perception of preparedness

- Employers who had not hired a job seeker with DS were **polarized** in their views of whether candidates with DS are prepared for the workforce
- Strongly agree: May have overestimated education & job prep resources accessible
- Strongly disagree: May have underestimated skill sets acquired by people with DS

## Job Coach

- Employees who had not hired were more likely to agree that they would consider hiring someone with a job coach
- Lack of comfort supporting employee
- Research varies regarding this hiring strategy
- Would have benefitted from providing a definition

## Confidence in supervisory skills

- May avoid hiring people whom they believe they would be unsuccessful supervising
- Prior studies: Uncomfortable supervisors being barrier
- Employers stated they were comfortable, but were not confident in their skills
- Accurate self-reporting?

# What key factors separate Ugandan employers that have hired people with DS from those who have not?

## Motivation to hire job seekers with DS

- Social action mindset: more likely to have hired
- Business-based mindset: less likely to have hired
- Prior studies: social-action oriented approach unsuccessful

## Skepticism of capabilities

- Current international research aligns
- Correlation between employers with little or no interaction with people with DS and their doubts regarding capabilities in the workplace

## Number of applicants

- Employers that hired people with DS receive more applicants
- Small sample
- Further research needed



From the employers' perspective, what factors contribute to long-term employment in Uganda for people with DS?

- ▶ Organizational financial health
  - ▶ General struggles with finances plus effects of the pandemic on employer budgets
- ▶ Professional development training for supervisors and employees with DS
- ▶ May not be aware of issues that will arise over time, so ongoing support is beneficial



# Recommendations

- ▶ **Rec 1: Job application skills training**
  - ▶ Address lack of applicants
  - ▶ Resume, job search, applications
  - ▶ Assistive technology & adaptive devices
  - ▶ Increase candidates & normalize idea of job seekers with DS
- ▶ **Rec 2: Connect potential employers with current colleagues and supervisors of employees with DS**
  - ▶ Address concerns & discomfort
  - ▶ Increase confidence in supervisors
  - ▶ Increase credibility of skills
- ▶ **Rec 3: Inclusive supervisory training program**
  - ▶ Address lack of confidence
  - ▶ Potential, upcoming, and current supervisors
  - ▶ Will require grant or donor due to employer budget cuts
- ▶ **Rec 4: Job carving**
  - ▶ Propose assigning specific job description tasks to candidates with DS
  - ▶ Studies show increased employment opportunities
  - ▶ Saves employer \$
- ▶ **Rec 5: Tax credit amendment advocacy**
  - ▶ Larger tax incentive with fewer stipulations



LISTEN THINK

# Workforce Development for Persons with Down Syndrome



Thank you to GLI & Angel's Center staff for your collaboration, guidance, and passion for creating a more equitable society.