

# Social Resilience in the Labour Market: Learning from Young Adults with Visual Impairments in Oslo and Delhi

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## Abstract

Globally, young adults with visual impairments (YAVI) encounter multiple employment barriers. However, many circumscribe the risk of labour market exclusion and secure gainful employment. This article surfaces protective factors that enable some qualified YAVI from Oslo and Delhi to participate in the labour market. It answers what similar individual and structural protective factors enable YAVI to overcome employment barriers in Oslo and Delhi. The article is theoretically couched in the three dimensions of social resilience linked to the individual's coping, adaptive and transformative capacities, which are mediated by formal institutions, that is, disability organizations and public employment agencies. This comparative article is based on a qualitative case study wherein 29 YAVI were interviewed. It sparks a much-needed cross-national dialogue within youth studies and disability research to view YAVI as resourceful agents and not passive actors.

## Keywords

Youth, social resilience, employment, visual impairment, Norway, India

## Introduction

The youth studies literature has for long discussed the challenges concerning labour transition for young adults, as such transitions have become protracted, non-linear, risk-laden, fragmented, chaotic and more individualized (Brzinsky-Fay, 2007; Coles,

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2018; Goodwin & O'Connor, 2005; Walther, 2006; Woodman, 2012). Young adults are expected to be navigators and negotiators to measure and respond to uncertainties prevailing in the labour market (Furlong et al., 2011; Roberts, 2018). Youth precariousness is amplified, as youths encounter greater risk of being entrapped in flexible or temporary contracts. They might be asked to take up low-paid and unskilled jobs, and in periods of economic recession, they are the first to be dismissed and often the last in the labour market queue. Thus, a general trend towards individualization, coupled with increasing labour market flexibilization, has contributed to labour market precariousness among the youth population (Hvinden et al., 2019; Walther, 2006). These youth transitions become even more precarious for disabled youth on account of individual and structural barriers (Bussi et al., 2019; Chhabra, 2020). First, they encounter rigidity within the education system and labour market. Second, they face inaccessibility within the general environment, transportation systems and information and communications technology. Third, they experience discrimination concerning their capabilities and the soft bigotry of low expectations (King et al., 2003). Historically, within youth research, disabled youth have constituted a marginalized position (Coles, 2018; Halvorsen & Hvinden, 2018; Singal, 2008). There has been a limited focus on comprehending their lived perspectives (Gregorius, 2014). This article foregrounds the under-explored and under-reported employment experiences of young adults with visual impairments (YAVI), such as blind and low-vision youths.

Globally, YAVI have a precarious employment situation, as they encounter high employment barriers and limited job opportunities, resulting in poorer employment history, premature labour market exit or permanent exclusion (Chhabra, 2020; Cmar, 2019; Zhou et al., 2013). YAVI are considered to be at risk and/or as risk members within the labour market (Cavanaugh & Giesen, 2012; Connors et al., 2014; Shaw et al., 2007). Historically, youth research entailing vision-impaired youth has inordinately focused on employment barrier amelioration; however, limited emphasis has been accorded to their experiences associated with employment success (Gregorius, 2014; Shaw et al., 2007). The purpose of this comparative article is to move beyond the discussion of barriers, constraints and limitations and offer positive perspectives grounded in individual capabilities and structural resources which enable a few qualified YAVI to secure employment in Oslo and Delhi.

This exploratory article asks what similar individual and structural protective factors enable YAVI (aged 20–35) to overcome employment barriers in Oslo and Delhi. It discusses the commonalities associated with the employment success of a few YAVI, despite their unique personalities and life circumstances, on the one hand, and the different institutional arrangements and contextual factors prevailing in Oslo and Delhi, on the other. It has a pragmatic point of departure and aims to understand what works by comparing the employment narratives linked to resilience. It refrains from applying a reductionist approach to comprehend resilience (Ungar, 2008). It uncovers individual actions, coupled with institutional enablers, that operated concomitantly to facilitate a few YAVI to accumulate requisite human capital and secure employment in Oslo and Delhi.

This article is valuable on three fronts. First, it has a unique empirical vantage point, as it gives primacy to the marginalized narratives of YAVI from Oslo and Delhi, which has hitherto never been contrasted. Second, comparative research

focusing on the perspectives of disabled youth from the Global North–Global South context is rather scarce (Gregorius, 2014). Their experiences and viewpoints have largely remained absent from academic literature, policy discourse and youth studies research (Chhabra, 2020; Singal, 2008, 2010). Third, the successful employment experiences of YAVI may serve as a magnifier for other disabled youth undergoing an education to employment transition. Furthermore, their experiences of circumnavigating employment challenges may overlap with youth who do not have a disability. Thus, the underexplored and underreported employment insights of YAVI could contribute in a cross-national, interdisciplinary dialogue between youth studies and disability research.

### **Analytical Framework: Resilience**

The concept of resilience has been applied in disparate fields, such as biology, economics, psychology, ecology, anthropology and social policy (Keck & Sakdapolrak, 2013). It has also been employed to explore labour market transitions among the youth population (Bigos et al., 2014; Hvinden et al., 2019). More recently, it has been successfully applied to cross-nationally compare employment precariousness for disabled youth (Bussi et al., 2019). At a fundamental level, resilience entails an individual's capacity to bounce back from adverse, stressful, unfortunate and vulnerable situations. Resilient individuals are often associated with possessing protective psycho-social attributes, such as a healthy self-concept, high self-esteem and a strong sense of self-efficacy (see King et al., 2003, pp. 93–94). In addition, they are shown to demonstrate a positive temperament, internal locus of control, problem-solving skills and an optimistic outlook (Angelocci, 2007; Murray, 2003), which enables them to accumulate human capital, fend off adversities and secure desired well-being. However, this essentializing, individual-centred and outcome-oriented understanding of resilience has been thoroughly critiqued (Ungar, 2008; Wright & Masten, 2015) and has given way to a more holistic, context-dependent and process-oriented understanding (Keck & Sakdapolrak, 2013). Historically, within youth research, the concept of resilience has followed 'four waves' (see Hart et al., 2016, pp. 1–2). The first wave gives primacy to individual characteristics that uniquely enable a person to overcome external adversities. The second wave explores the significance of familial, educational and communitive resources as protective factors, which facilitate circumscribing the negative outcomes associated with risk (Murray, 2003). The third wave contextualizes the micro- and meso-levels through the lens of culture (Ungar, 2008). The fourth wave follows an ecological framework grounded in bio-psycho-social explanations (Wright & Masten, 2015). This final wave of resilience offers a broad framework to situate the individual experience, attributes and aspirations within the context of formal and informal institutions, which corresponds well with the concept of social resilience.

Social resilience entails coping, adapting and transformative capacities (Keck & Sakdapolrak, 2013, p. 10) that empower an individual to adjust successfully to present and future risks and secure well-being. First, coping capacities enable individuals to absorb immediate risks by mobilizing the resources proximally available, enabling them to mitigate the negative consequences of risk and to restore well-being. Second, the adaptive capacity entails the individual being proactive and

anticipating and preventing the occurrence of risk, so that present and future well-being becomes likely. Third, transformative capacities entail individuals raising their sociopolitical consciousness, actively partaking in civil society organizations and, through sustained collective action and representation, creating social institutions enabling their individual well-being. Within youth research, the concept of social resilience offers a critical and normative framework to comprehend the significance of contextual factors (Bussi et al., 2019; Keck & Sakdapolrak, 2013). It encompasses the influence of protective factors across the individual, relational, community and cultural levels on accumulating human capital and overcoming adversities (Hvinden et al., 2019; Murray, 2003; Ungar, 2008).

### **Contrasting Youth Transition Regimes in Norway and India**

The labour market contexts in Norway and India are significantly different, as they are shaped by distinctive economic, social, cultural and legal factors and varying institutional arrangements (see Chhabra, 2019, pp. 85–86). However, to comprehend the protective factors associated with social resilience and positive employment outcomes for YAVI, it is crucial to pinpoint a few notable differences. Norway is a social democratic welfare state with generous and universalistic welfare provisioning (Halvorsen & Hvinden, 2018). There is a well-funded and centralized public employment agency called the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV). Among its responsibilities, it coordinates the work and rehabilitation policies for disabled youth. The labour market in Norway is highly regulated, with robust employment protection (Bussi et al., 2019; Hvinden et al., 2019). In addition, comprehensive safety nets, that is, disability pensions, are available for disabled youth (Halvorsen & Hvinden, 2018), and such pensions can be combined with earnings from part-time employment (Unge Funksjonshemmede, 2016). Moreover, the Norwegian regime follows a developmental trajectory and undertakes social investments by giving access to higher education to all its citizens almost free of charge (Bussi et al., 2019, p. 143), thereby enabling human capital accumulation.

In contrast, India has a protective welfare state that is highly means-tested, with limited coverage (Chhabra, 2019). There exists no centralized public employment agency coordinating employment policies. The labour market is predominantly informal and fragmented with a poor participation rate (Chhabra, 2020; Singal, 2008). Access to higher education is limited for disabled youth, as it requires paying steep tuition fees. However, financial loans and grants are available for a relatively few disabled youths to pursue higher education (Singal et al., 2011). There is a limited focus on human capital development for and restrictive access to meagre disability pensions, in addition to poor employment protection (Chhabra, 2020; Singal & Jain, 2012; Singal et al., 2011).

This article acknowledges the wide structural and institutional differences prevailing in Norway and India. Notwithstanding the contextual differences, YAVI encounter labour market precariousness in both Oslo (Berge, 2007; Opinion, 2018) and Delhi (Chhabra, 2020; Singal & Jain, 2012; Singal et al., 2011).

## Methods

This article is based on a comparative case study method (Yin, 2012). Qualitative interviews were employed to map and understand the influence of protective factors enabling a few qualified YAVI from Oslo and Delhi to secure gainful employment. Semi-structured interviews were conducted, as they give 'privileged access to people's basic experience of the lived world' (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 32). During the fieldwork spanning November 2017–June 2018, 29 YAVI were interviewed—17 from India, based in Delhi and neighbouring cities, and 12 from Norway, based in Oslo and neighbouring cities. The interviewees belong to the age group of 20–35 years, with an almost equal gender representation: 15 males and 14 females. Twenty-one interviewees had secured part-time or full-time employment, and six were actively seeking jobs. In addition, one interviewee from Norway was on disability pension, and one was not on disability pension and did not seek a job. Furthermore, almost all the interviewees had concluded higher education (see Table 1 for the interviewee characteristics and Table 2 for job profiles). It is

**Table 1.** Interviewee Characteristics.

	Total	Norway	India
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	15	6	9
Female	14	6	8
<b>Age</b>			
20–25	3	1	2
26–30	20	9	11
31–35	6	2	4
<b>Level of visual impairment (based on ICD-10, 2006)</b>			
Moderate vision impairment	4	2	2
Severe vision impairment	13	7	6
Blindness	12	3	9
<b>Nature of visual impairment</b>			
Congenital	13	6	7
Progressive	8	4	4
Adventitious	8	2	6
<b>Highest level of education</b>			
High school	7	4	3
Bachelor's	9	6	3
Master's	13	2	11
<b>Employment status</b>			
Employed, not seeking job	16	6	10
Employed, seeking job	5	3	2
Unemployed, seeking job	6	1	5
Unemployed, not seeking job	1	1	0

(Table 1 continued)

(Table 1 continued)

	Total	Norway	India
Disability pensioner	1	1	0
<b>Nature of employment</b>			
Full-time	16	5	11
Part-time	5	4	1
<b>Sectors of employment</b>			
Government	7	3	4
Private	7	3	4
Non-profit	7	3	4

**Source:** Chhabra (2020, p. 8).

**Table 2.** Job Profiles.

India	Norway
Public bank official	2 Communication and administration advisor in public sector
Public sector teacher	1 Public and online school teacher
Private bank official	1 Information technology: accessibility and user tester
Information technology/ accessibility consultant	2 Health instructor in the non-governmental sector
Computer and English-language trainer	2 Physical trainer in the non-governmental sector
Recruitment consultant	1 Recruitment consultant
General administration/ organization consultant	1 General administration/organization consultant
Travel operator for hotels	1
Legal advisor	1

**Source:** Based on data collected from the field study and subsequently analyzed.

worth noting that, relatively speaking, the interviewees were more privileged, as they had concluded higher education, had a less chequered employment history, were more conscious of their employment rights and seemed to be more socially mobile, which stands in stark contrast to the socio-economic realities experienced by the majority of youth with visual impairments globally.

The interviewed youth were purposively recruited through snowball sampling. Potential leads concerning interviewees were retrieved via important disability organizations operating in Delhi and Oslo. When the initial interviewees were recruited, they recommended their colleagues and friends to participate in this study. The face-to-face interviews were based on a semi-structured interview guide that was used as a springboard to elicit the employment narratives of the interviewees. The interview guide explored the aspects such as the interviewees' biographies, experiences at the previous and current workplace, employment barriers, experiences of participation in employment programmes and work rehabilitation measures, assessment of disability policies, activities of disabled people's organizations and

their career aspirations. Voluntary, informed consent was sought, and appropriate ethical clearances were obtained from the Norwegian Data Protection Official for Research Agency (research project reference number 51653). All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed.

The interviews were thematically analysed to identify ‘repeated patterns of meanings’ in a data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 86). At first, each interview was analysed on an individual level and then compared across broad themes to identify the repeating patterns for each country. Initial codes were assigned manually while perusing the transcripts, and they were compared with the field notes taken immediately after the interview (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Comparison of notes coupled with the search for broad and relevant words in the transcripts led to the refining of the codes and condensation of meanings, which resulted in clustering and comparison of themes for both Oslo and Delhi. The analytical framework of social resilience (Keck & Sakdapolrak, 2013) enabled organizing the themes concerning some individual and structural protective factors contributing to the employment inclusion of a few qualified YAVI in Oslo and Delhi.

## **Youth, Social Resilience and Employment**

This section presents the youths’ perspectives and views them through the analytical lens of social resilience, to map the protective factors located at the individual and structural levels. The first subsection discusses the individual protective factors associated with employability (Angelocci, 2007; King et al., 2003). Research concerning the employment transition of disabled youth has demonstrated that the individual can possess coping, adaptive and transformative capacities to overcome immediate risks, plan for future contingencies and collectively mobilize to take action and alter social arrangements, economic relations and formal institutions (Bussi et al., 2019). However, an individual’s agential capabilities are bounded and influenced by external protective factors and context-specific institutions that mediate their opportunities, behaviour and experience (Hvinden et al., 2019; Murray 2003, Ungar, 2008; Wright & Masten, 2015). Therefore, the second section discusses the crucial influence of structural protective factors, such as the services offered by disability organizations and public employment agencies, that allowed these YAVI to manifest social resilience and circumscribe the risk of unemployment.

### *Individual Factors: Coping, Adaptive and Transformative Capacity*

In spite of employment adversity, many YAVI are successful in securing gainful employment. A few protective factors associated with coping, adaptive and transformative capacities, which enable them to circumscribe the risk of unemployment, are discussed below.

#### *Coping Capacity: Assistive Technology*

One pivotal employment barrier in Oslo inhibiting labour market inclusion of YAVI is employers’ negative attitudes and misconceptions concerning their work capacity and independent functioning (Berge, 2007; Chhabra, 2020). Many interviewees



employed an active reliance on assistive technology to assuage their prospective employers' concerns and demonstrate their capabilities, in order to avert the adversity of labour market exclusion. The interviewees in Oslo were cognizant of their abilities and shortcomings and appreciated the value of open communication while participating in job interviews. This notion is best encapsulated by Interviewee 19 (blind, female, employed):

I think it's very important that you believe in yourself and that you know yourself pretty well and that you know your needs [...] What kind of accommodations do you need to get to do your job [...] they [prospective employers] ask for some things which you need, how do you use a computer and small questions like that. I just show them that this is not a big thing and I can also tell them that my visual impairment has matured me and is also one of my strengths.

This critical awareness of one's strengths and weaknesses allowed the interviewees to undertake 'content reframing' (King et al., 2003, p. 175), wherein they were able to focus on their capabilities and see their visual impairment in a positive light. This in turn helped some interviewees to signal their employability to their prospective employers during the recruitment process. In addition, many interviewees were able to demonstrate their problem-solving orientation. The experience of Interviewee 23 (low vision, male, employed) is illustrative:

Do not consider anything a problem that can't be fixed. For example if you read slow because the text is small, you make it bigger, if you write slow with hand but you are awesome at writing on a keyboard, get a job where you could do something with the keyboard [...] Never think you can't do anything unless you practically can't, for example drive a car...

Their problem-solving capacity enabled interviewees to reorient the job interview to focus on their individual capabilities, and not merely on their visual impairment. Previous research has found that employment outcomes are positively associated with YAVI who have built competence in the use of computers, alongside assistive technology solutions, that is, screen readers and magnifiers, and are able to demonstrate their employment-related skills during the recruitment process (Shaw et al., 2007; Zhou et al., 2013). The acquisition of computer competence strengthened the coping capacity of the interviewees and could enable them to overcome the immediate risk of employment exclusion.

Like their counterparts in Oslo, interviewees in Delhi were able to circumnavigate prospective employers' sceptical attitudes and risk of job interview failure by relying on their competence in the use of computers and smartphones in conjunction with assistive technology. The experience of Interviewee 4 (blind, female, employed) is illustrative:

in the interview they said okay you have done your masters [...] you can't see, how can you do [the job] [...] I took out my phone, I just composed a small text and I sent across [...] I can go and tell everybody about how I can do things, what I can do, what I cannot do [...].

This interviewee gave primacy to conducting open interaction and finding solutions by using her smartphone enabled by a screen reader, which averted her employment



exclusion. Research entailing the employment of vision-impaired people has found that competence in assistive technology enhances their likelihood for employment inclusion (Pal & Lakshmanan, 2012). Furthermore, interviewees learned the usage of assistive tools and technology through open Internet sources, that is, YouTube and podcasts, and all of them use smartphones. By building competence in the use of screen readers, they also bolstered their English-language proficiency, which was considered an important skill to cope within the Delhi labour market. The experience of Interviewee 2 (low vision, male, employed) is illuminating:

Apart from YouTube, the screen reader became my best friend to teach me English. Whatever pronunciation done by this screen reader, I was able to follow it properly. I followed [the screen reader], then I learned a bit of English, [subsequently] I started to speak in English wherever I went.

Interviewees in Delhi assessed that employing assistive technology and competence in the English language partly enhanced their employability.

To sum up, interviewees from both Oslo and Delhi viewed the adoption of assistive technology as a crucial protective factor making them more independent. Employers' negative perceptions often inhibit labour market inclusion of YAVI (Angelocci, 2007; Chhabra, 2020), and through the use of technology, YAVI can signal their employability to their prospective employers (Shaw et al., 2007; Zhou et al., 2013). Building competence in assistive technology allowed the interviewees to undertake content reframing (King et al., 2003) and become more solution-oriented, which in turn made them more optimistic and enabled them to cope with proximal employment adversities.

### *Adaptive Capacity: Networking*

YAVI who are able to accumulate and leverage their human capital and obtain paid/unpaid internships are more likely to secure future employment (Cavanaugh & Giesen, 2012; Cmar, 2019; Connors et al., 2014; Gregorius, 2014). Many interviewees in Oslo actively network and seek work internship opportunities. This urgency of engaging with the interested people and reaching out to them in potential fora is best encapsulated by Interviewee 22 (blind, male, employed): '[B]e out there, be in conferences, be around on interesting topics [...] I have been to lots of conferences and lots of people know me both by name and [through] internet [...]'. This initiative to network in part enhances their likelihood to secure future employment. As Interviewee 18 (blind, male, employed) stated:

[...] I feel like my ability to network play the role in me getting this job [...] I could say "hi again..its me again" you know, "you already know me [...]And that's not gonna get you a job right away but at some point [...] it increases your luck or it makes those impossible coincidences a little less impossible[...] its [networking] is going to increase your [employment] chances.

The interviewees undertook this active networking by reaching out to professors from their universities and vision-impaired friends, and they also leveraged the network from family members. YAVI who are able to successfully tap their network

stand a better chance of averting the risk of employment exclusion (Goertz et al., 2010; Gregorius, 2014; Shaw et al., 2007).

Similar to their counterparts in Oslo, many interviewees in Delhi stated the significance of reaching out to their familial, social and professional networks in securing their first employment. A few interviewees used social media to network, with a view to knowing more about available job vacancies and securing skills that were more valuable in the labour market. The networking experience of Interviewee 1 (blind, male, employed) is illuminating:

I used to get in touch with different people [...] I will drop him or her a message on LinkedIn, on Facebook or wherever I could find them. And talk to them, get to know how they work, establish my network [...] I reach out to them.

Traditional networks were also actively leveraged by many interviewees to map out a future career trajectory. As Interviewee 4 (blind, female, employed) stated: ‘So friends, teachers, your seniors who are visually impaired, they gave a lot of guidance as to what all can be achieved, what all can one do [...] that’s how I got into [my first job]’. YAVI who successfully leverage their informal networks, linked to family, kith and kin, are better able to circumscribe the future risk of unemployment in India (Singal, 2008; Singal & Jain, 2012; Singal et al., 2011).

To sum up, many interviewees in Oslo and Delhi reached out to their formal and informal networks to secure work and internship opportunities and get advice on job-related skills, making them more employable. By following this proactive approach, they were able to fend off the risk of future unemployment.

### *Transforming Capacity: Being Moral Agents*

Volunteering for disability organizations is positively correlated with future employment outcomes for YAVI (Angelocci, 2007; Lund & Cmar, 2019). In Norway, interviewees expressed the desire to positively influence the situation of people with visual impairments by undertaking volunteering activities with a prominent disability organization. They undertook collective action in the form of information awareness campaigns and rights advocacy efforts and volunteered to create a more inclusive labour market. The perspective of Interviewee 24 (low vision, male, employed part-time) is illuminating:

we arranged events for visually impaired people or visually impaired youth [...] we also tried to I guess change the world, try to make it better for visually impaired students, trying to make a change by talking to other people [or] politicians.

Many interviewees felt the need to volunteer for and work on issues affecting the visually impaired community, as it gave them a deeper sense of purpose. These perspectives corresponded well with previous research on disabled youth, who, through volunteering, were able to secure self-confidence, boost self-esteem, expand their social network and gain a greater sense of community, which could result into piecemeal social transformation (Gregorius, 2014; Halvorsen & Hvinden, 2018). Their efforts to undertake collective action foster social resilience and enhance the likelihood of better employment outcomes (King et al., 2003).

In a similar vein, many interviewees in Delhi undertook disability advocacy before securing gainful employment. They wanted to stay engaged with the visually impaired community. They volunteered for multiple disability organizations based in Delhi. The experience of Interviewee 1 (blind, male, employed) is insightful:

[...] I used to go as an assistive technology expert in various seminars to train persons with [visual] disabilities on the use of assistive technology [...]. I was deeply connected with an initiative [...] who bring persons [or] youth with disability in the mainstream to make them aware of their rights and to connect them with the advocacy field [so that] they should be able to facilitate and create a levelled playing field for themselves as well as persons like them [...]

When YAVI collaborate with each other and undertake collective action, they become agents of change, which not only affects their employment outcomes but also creates avenues for transforming the Indian labour market (Singal & Jain, 2012; Singal et al., 2011).

To sum up, the interviewees from both Oslo and Delhi wanted to be agents who volunteered to enhance social consciousness concerning visual impairment. Many of them wanted to volunteer for issues that affected them directly, as well as those that affected visually impaired youth in general. Research indicates that undertaking self-advocacy to educate the public is positively associated with overcoming employment barriers (Goertz et al., 2010; Gregorius, 2014; Shaw et al., 2007). Disabled youth, through their voluntary commitments, demonstrate active agency as they undertake self-reflection, critically observe the opportunities and constraints around them and take collective action to bring social transformative change (Bussi et al., 2019; Halvorsen & Hvinden, 2018).

The individual protective factors manifesting in the form of the coping, adaptive and transformative capacities of YAVI in Oslo and Delhi allowed them to overcome employment adversity and enhanced the likelihood of their labour market inclusion. However, these individual agential capacities were circumscribed by context-dependent institutions (Hvinden et al., 2019; Roberts, 2018), which operated differently in Oslo and Delhi (see Table 3 for individual factors fostering social resilience).

### *Structural Factors Fostering Social Resilience*

Resilience is influenced and mediated by structural factors, which are contingent on context (Bussi et al., 2019; Ungar, 2008). Understanding resilience through a broad framework (Keck & Sakdapolrak, 2013; Wright & Masten, 2015) enables the exploration of interlinkages between individual and structural protective factors, which could facilitate in overcoming employment adversity.

### *Disability Organizations*

Disability organizations work as significant protective factors. They allow disabled youth a wholesome ecosystem where they secure opportunities to enhance their skills, nourish a feeling of self-worth and empower themselves with a sense of community

**Table 3.** Individual Factors Associated with Social Resilience.

	Risks			Protective Factors		
	Oslo	Delhi	Oslo	Oslo	Delhi	Delhi
Capacities						
Coping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low levels of self-esteem</li> <li>• Lack in competence in the use of assistive technology</li> <li>• Poor mobility skills</li> <li>• High reliance on public employment agency for job search</li> <li>• Inordinate focus on visual impairment and external constraints</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low self-confidence and self-esteem</li> <li>• Limited competence in the use of assistive technology</li> <li>• Poor mobility skills</li> <li>• High dependence on family and disability organizations</li> <li>• High focus on one's impairment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive attitude: sending multiple job applications</li> <li>• Being solution-oriented, achieving mastery of assistive technology</li> <li>• Being determined, having a never-give-up outlook</li> <li>• Drive to be self-reliant, limited dependence on welfare state</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being patient and persistent during job search failure</li> <li>• Being solution-oriented, achieving mastery of assistive technology</li> <li>• Being a fighter; positive framing</li> <li>• Drive to become independent, not to be a family burden</li> </ul>		
Adaptive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor academic achievements, dropping out from school</li> <li>• Poor networking skills</li> <li>• Lack of job preparedness</li> <li>• Limited job experience, such as no work internships</li> <li>• Slow in incorporating new assistive technology</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not concluding school and failure to undertake higher education</li> <li>• Poor networking skills</li> <li>• Lack of job preparedness</li> <li>• Limited job experience, such as no work internships</li> <li>• Slow in incorporating new assistive technology</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertaking higher education</li> <li>• Active networking</li> <li>• Participating in work training programmes</li> <li>• Continually learning by adopting new assistive devices</li> <li>• Taking up work internships sponsored by public employment agency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertaking higher education</li> <li>• Active networking</li> <li>• Focus on getting paid or unpaid job experience</li> <li>• Willingness to adopt new assistive devices</li> <li>• No reliance on public employment agency, finding work through disability organizations</li> </ul>		
Transformative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not identifying with aims, values and methods of disability organizations</li> <li>• Limited interest in securing voluntary work experience</li> <li>• Accepting disability pension, due to poor health or repeated job search failure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited access to, and acceptance within, disability organizations</li> <li>• Limited opportunities in securing voluntary work experience</li> <li>• Fatalistic outlook and scepticism towards positive change through disability rights advocacy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mentoring and job search counselling young applicants with visual impairments</li> <li>• Undertaking disability rights advocacy, such as promoting universal design</li> <li>• Volunteering for disability and civil society organizations, for example organizing summer camps</li> <li>• Aversion to disability pension, desire to contribute to society</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offering training on the use of assistive technology, for instance screen readers</li> <li>• Conducting workshops on interpersonal skills and job preparedness</li> <li>• Participating in information awareness and disability rights campaigns</li> <li>• Contributing to the community, having no appetite for meagre disability pension</li> </ul>		

**Source:** Based on data collected from the field study and subsequently analyzed, by employing social resilience framework (Keck & Sakdapolrak, 2013).

belonging (Gregorius, 2014). On a practical level, disability organizations offers rehabilitation programmes and workshops encompassing a wide variety of services, such as using assistive technology, becoming independent in daily-living tasks, achieving transportation efficacy, job search counselling and career mentorship. All these programs and services cumulatively focus on the resources, capabilities and expertise that YAVI ought to possess in order to better cope with and adapt to employment risks (Cavanaugh & Giesen, 2012; Goertz et al., 2010; Shaw et al., 2007).

A prominent disability organization in Oslo offers work and rehabilitation training for YAVI to ease their entry into the labour market (Proba, 2012). Many interviewees in Oslo positively assessed the influence of these trainings. The perspective of Interviewee 21 (low vision, female, employed) is enlightening:

Without those workshops I definitely wouldn't have been able to write a good application or know what I should prepare for a job interview, so yeah definitely those kind of workshops both for me and other blind persons are really important for [job] preparation.

These employment and rehabilitation workshops instilled a sense of self-confidence by helping interviewees understand their strengths and weaknesses (Angelocci, 2007). Navigating the labour market was chaotic and stressful for many interviewees. However, the career mentorship programmes facilitated some of them to better cope with labour market failures. Interviewee 19 (blind, female, employed) opined that 'they have this mentor [program] [...] wherein I got some help to organise my own head'. Subsequently, this interviewee got an opportunity to work as a career mentor for other YAVI. In addition, disability organizations offered part-time paid-work positions to help YAVI gain work experience. Moreover, the multifaceted work and rehabilitation services of disability organizations offered many YAVI opportunities to partake in social activities and voluntary engagements (Proba, 2012). The coping, adaptive and transformative capacities of disabled youth seem to be positively influenced by the services offered by disability organizations (Bussi et al., 2019).

There exists a plethora of disability organizations in Delhi that offer work and rehabilitation services to YAVI. These disability organizations offer programmes linked to building competence in the use of assistive technology, enhancing orientation and mobility skills and developing training modules for independent living. The different workshops and rehabilitation trainings enabled many interviewees to become more self-assured, acquire job-relevant skills and subsequently better cope with employment risks. Moreover, these workshops were crucial precursors to enhancing their employability; as Interviewee 14 (blind, female, employed) stated: '...there I learned everything, from computers, daily living skills and mobility to everything, and he [organization leader] was starting up with a computer application course [...] I enrolled myself in that computer application course'. Disability organizations enrolled many interviewees into their work training programmes linked to the usage of assistive technology. Through these training programmes, some interviewees were able to demonstrate their technical competence and convince prospective employers attending job fairs to recruit them. The positive recruitment experience of Interviewee 14 (blind, female, employed) is illustrative: '...I was a trainee in that training program, and she [prospective employer] found me to be very good with the screen readers [...] so then and there she offered me the job'. Unlike those in Oslo, many disability organizations in Delhi play a peculiar role of being an intermediary

between a prospective employer and a qualified applicant with a visual impairment. They empower the YAVI to become employable through work training programmes and offer them job search assistants. In addition, disability organizations reach out to prospective employers with the resume of some of the qualified YAVI who have built competence by participating in their job-related training sessions, volunteering opportunities and work internships. Interviewee 11 (low vision, male, employed) summarizes this notion:

In Delhi you have already so many NGOs [...] people already help you in getting jobs. Big or small, they let you start from somewhere [...] You know already plenty of people working in this sector to let you get jobs. So you have to reach out to these people, contact them and make a social circle where you are interacting with these people.

Multiple disability organizations had a complex ecosystem in Delhi, wherein they held training programmes, acted as liaisons with prospective employers and even offered avenues for voluntary engagement and part-time paid internships. All these cumulatively assisted many interviewees either to secure employment straight away or indirectly forge a career trajectory, thereby partly overcoming the adversity of unemployment.

To sum up, access to and participation within disability organizations was valuable on multiple grounds. First, it boosted the interviewees' self-confidence, enhanced their self-worth and strengthened their sense of community belonging. Second, the interviewees acquired problem-solving abilities, social competence and job-related skills. Third, they gained valuable unpaid work experience, which in part enhanced their employability. Fourth, the interviewees engaged in self-advocacy by articulating their career aspirations and accommodation needs to formal institutions and informal networks. Fifth, they mobilized and undertook disability rights advocacy to raise social consciousness. All this directly or indirectly fostered YAVI's social resilience and strengthened their coping, adaptive and transformative capacities (Bussi et al., 2019; Gregorius, 2014; Halvorsen & Hvinden, 2018).

### *Public Employment Agency*

The support offered by public employment agencies is crucial in facilitating YAVI who encounter the adversity of employment precariousness to secure work internships and gainful employment (Cavanaugh & Giesen, 2012; Cmar, 2019). However, seeking paid internships is not contingent merely on YAVI's personal drive, such as high work motivation or active networking, as it is mediated by country-specific institutional arrangements (Hvinden et al., 2019). In Oslo, the public employment agency, NAV, facilitates disabled youth in securing paid work internships (Bussi et al., 2019; Halvorsen & Hvinden, 2018). These paid internships can facilitate the building of curriculum vitae (CV), enhance job preparedness and make them ready to compete with others for future jobs, face the evolving realities of the labour market and ultimately secure gainful employment (Berge, 2007).

Interviewees in Oslo positively assessed the access to paid work internships offered by NAV, as it created job tryout opportunities for them. They fended off the future risk of unemployment by building competence, securing references and demonstrating their skills through job-training opportunities. The value of



participating in work internships offered by NAV could be encapsulated by the experience of Interviewee 19 (blind, female, employed):

I am not sure if I would have gotten this job if I have not been in the work training before [...] I was sitting in the next office and I could talk to them and I got a really good reference [...] you learn about yourself and you learn a lot about how it is to be in work, so you learn very much and you have something to write on your CV and that is also really important to have something there because that is what they [prospective employers] look for when you apply for a job [...].

Many interviewees had a personal drive to enhance their skills and secure employment. However, it would have been harder for their individual efforts to materialize if they lacked the work training opportunities supported by NAV. The interviewees were afraid of going to a job interview with gaps in their resume and not being able to assuage the productivity concerns of their prospective employers. Therefore, they took the initiative to secure work internships supported by NAV, which in some cases translated into full-time employment whilst in other cases led to better pathways to future employment. This finding corresponds well with a previous research that states that YAVI who undertake work sponsored by NAV and build their CVs have a better likelihood for future employment (Berge, 2007). In addition, NAV readily offers disability pension to YAVI in Oslo (Opinion, 2018). Instead of relying on disability pension, the interviewees assessed that NAV should view them as capable individuals and focus more on offering paid work internship opportunities.

No interviewee from Delhi secured employment through any public employment agency. However, many of the interviewees actively tried to secure employment through internships and/or training by relying on the support and services offered by disability organizations. Like their counterparts in Oslo, the interviewees were particularly concerned about building a good CV. The perspective of Interviewee 11 (low vision, male, employed), who undertook an internship alongside higher education, is illustrative: '[...] get that [internship] on your CV, get that experience, get that feel of the environment and understand what you have to do to be successful in that [work] environment'. The support from public employment agencies in securing work internships or job training opportunities was immaterial. Nonetheless, the interviewees leaned on their social capital and the support of disability organizations to find future employment avenues.

The qualitative findings correspond with previous studies that state that in the absence of a well-funded welfare state with strong formal institutions dealing with public employment support, the role of informal networks, that is, familial and community support, is pivotal for disabled youth to cope with employment adversities and to adapt to future labour market demands (Gregorius, 2014; Singal & Jain, 2012). There is a dearth of formal institutional support, as the public employment agency is a peripheral factor in influencing the employment trajectory of disabled people (Chhabra, 2019). Therefore, disability organizations partially substituted the function of public employment agencies and offered work internship opportunities, which enabled many interviewees to secure employment-related skills and prepare for future employment.

In essence, structural enablers, such as support from disability organizations and the services offered by public employment agencies, differently mediated the



**Table 4.** Institutional Enablers Fostering Resilience.

Institutions	Risks			Protective Factors		
	Oslo	Delhi	Oslo	Oslo	Delhi	Delhi
Disability organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of access</li> <li>• Bureaucratic structure</li> <li>• Limited focus on employment training and workshops</li> <li>• Limited opportunities for summer internship and voluntary activities</li> <li>• Focus on offering welfare services</li> <li>• Viewing visual impairment as a medical condition</li> <li>• Relying on welfare state</li> <li>• Lack of focus on community building</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of access</li> <li>• Bureaucratic structure</li> <li>• Limited focus on employment training and workshops</li> <li>• Limited opportunities for summer internship and voluntary activities</li> <li>• Being unable to organize job fairs</li> <li>• Viewing visual impairment as a medical condition requiring society's charity</li> <li>• Competition with other disability organizations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to employment workshops</li> <li>• Opportunities to learn from mentors</li> <li>• Workshops on resume writing, interviews and assistive technology</li> <li>• Opportunities to volunteer in the youth section and secure work experience</li> <li>• Participating in social events and building network</li> <li>• Contributing to the vision-impaired community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to employment workshops</li> <li>• Participating in job fairs</li> <li>• Workshops on resume writing, interviews and assistive technology</li> <li>• Opportunities to secure temporary work and gain experience</li> <li>• Participating in social events and building network</li> <li>• Contributing to the vision-impaired community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to employment workshops</li> <li>• Participating in job fairs</li> <li>• Workshops on resume writing, interviews and assistive technology</li> <li>• Opportunities to secure temporary work and gain experience</li> <li>• Participating in social events and building network</li> <li>• Contributing to the vision-impaired community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to employment workshops</li> <li>• Participating in job fairs</li> <li>• Workshops on resume writing, interviews and assistive technology</li> <li>• Opportunities to secure temporary work and gain experience</li> <li>• Participating in social events and building network</li> <li>• Contributing to the vision-impaired community</li> </ul>
Public employment agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delays in offering assistive tools and technology</li> <li>• Offering less relevant work internships that do not enhance job skills or giving disability pensions</li> <li>• Limited access to and poor employability</li> <li>• Focus of labour market programmes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited opportunities to secure assistive tools and technology</li> <li>• Limited support services and relevance of public employment agencies</li> <li>• Limited or no opportunities to participate in labour market programmes</li> <li>• Lack of access to paid work internships</li> <li>• Bureaucratic structure and limited resource allocation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunities to secure assistive tools and technology, for example long cane, screen readers and magnifiers</li> <li>• Access to paid work internships through wage subsidies</li> <li>• Opportunities to participate in labour market programmes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunities to secure assistive tools and technology, for example long cane, screen readers and magnifiers</li> <li>• Access to paid work internships through wage subsidies</li> <li>• Opportunities to participate in labour market programmes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using disability organizations and familial and community support to secure assistive tools and technology</li> <li>• Securing paid or unpaid internships through familial and disability organization support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using disability organizations and familial and community support to secure assistive tools and technology</li> <li>• Securing paid or unpaid internships through familial and disability organization support</li> </ul>

**Source:** Based on data collected from the field study and subsequently analyzed.

employment opportunities for YAVI in Oslo and Delhi (see Table 4 for institutional enablers fostering social resilience). Indeed, formal institutions shape the labour market transition of youth by enabling or circumscribing their agency (Furlong et al., 2011; Roberts, 2018; Walther, 2006), and the significance of labour market transition for the youth population can hardly be overstated (Bigos et al., 2014; Brzinsky-Fay, 2007; Hvinden et al., 2019).

## Concluding Remarks

This article compares a few potential factors leading to employment inclusion among some qualified YAVI from Oslo and Delhi, employing the concept of social resilience. There seems to be a dynamic and multifaceted interplay between individual and structural protective factors, which facilitated identifying some surprising similarities and crucial differences concerning social resilience.

First, the significant overlapping individual factors entailed proficiency in the usage of assistive technology, which boosted YAVI's self-confidence and strengthened their coping capacities. Moreover, YAVI successfully employed their interpersonal skills to secure work internships, which enhanced their adaptive capacity and improved their likelihood for future employment. Finally, through undertaking volunteering engagements, they perceived themselves as moral actors having transformative capacity who actively contributed back to the vision-impaired community, as they undertook disability rights advocacy. The findings of this article correspond with previous research that suggests that the factors such as greater competency in the usage of computers with assistive technology (Zhou et al., 2013) and undertaking of paid internships (Cmar, 2019; Connors et al., 2014) are in part positively associated with better employment outcomes for YAVI. Moreover, volunteering in disability organizations seems to open novel pathways to employment for YAVI (Cavanaugh & Giesen, 2012; Lund & Cmar 2019). However, this contradicts the findings concerning voluntary engagements and employment inclusion reported by Bussi et al. (2019). YAVI's transformative capacity grounded in self-advocacy efforts partly mirrors the capability of youth within the labour market, who are not only navigators and negotiators (Hvinden et al., 2019; Walther, 2006) but also agents of change who undertake self-organization and collective action against growing labour market precariousness, thereby challenging the individualization trend (Furlong et al., 2011; Roberts, 2018).

Second, there was a coinciding structural factor that fostered social resilience among YAVI and mediated their employment opportunities. These entailed participation in job-related training programmes, social engagements and volunteering opportunities offered by disability organizations (Berge, 2007). These support systems boosted their self-confidence and facilitated their building of social skills and job preparedness. YAVI's participation in the social, rehabilitation and volunteering activities of disability organizations facilitated their human capital accumulation, which in turn enhanced their employability.

Third, alongside these overlapping protective factors, there were some stark differences that uniquely influenced the employment outcomes for interviewees in Oslo and Delhi. A case in point is the significance of acquiring English-language skills as a pivotal individual factor for securing gainful employment in Delhi.

However, the employment opportunities for interviewees in Oslo were not at all impacted by their English-language proficiency.

Fourth, the one significant diverging structural factor was the services and benefit support offered by public employment agencies. These agencies offered paid work internships wherein employers could secure wage subsidies support to temporarily recruit disabled youth in Oslo (Bussi et al., 2019; Halvorsen & Hvinden, 2018). It was apparent that their personal protective factors, such as computer competence and securing work internship opportunities, were in part shaped by the formal institutional support system. This finding is congruent with previous research that found that public employment agencies significantly influence employment outcomes for disabled youth in Oslo (Bussi et al., 2019) and that their support is pivotal for YAVI (Berge, 2007; Opinion, 2018). Furthermore, within the Nordic region, the youth labour market transitions are influenced by the plethora of active labour market policies organized by public employment agencies (Bigos et al., 2014). However, interviewees in Delhi did not have the opportunity to rely on any such formal labour market institution or activation policies, as there is no centralized, well-funded, national-level public employment agency (Chhabra, 2019). Disability organizations partly substituted the role of public employment agency in Delhi, as they organized job fairs and worked as mediators between prospective employers and qualified YAVI. They had relatively more prominence in Delhi, and the public employment agency clearly had a more significant role in Oslo. The employment support offered by formal institutions differed, which disparately shaped interviewees' labour market opportunities.

In essence, YAVI in Oslo and Delhi have varying capabilities, which are conditioned by distinctive external factors that influence their employment inclusion. Nonetheless, the fundamental commonalities associated with the coping, adaptive and transformative actions employed by YAVI from Oslo and Delhi are empirically intriguing. Therefore, this article generates a 'working hypothesis' to offer analytic generalization (Yin, 2012, p. 20) by speculating that some protective factors could be positively associated with employment outcomes for YAVI which coincide, in spite of significant personal and contextual differences. Furthermore, the article deliberately moves beyond discussing the banality of big differences, which are intuitively understood for YAVI who are seeking employment in the highly differentiated labour markets prevailing in Oslo and Delhi. Rather, this comparative article surfaces a few commonalities to secure a more nuanced understanding of the protective factors that foster social resilience and enable YAVI in overcoming employment adversity. It invites a much-needed interdisciplinary Global North-South dialogue within youth studies and disability research to view YAVI not as passive actors but as active agents who are capable of not only individually coping with and adapting to employment risks but also collectively transforming their labour market reality.

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