

1      **Insights in Adaptation: Examining Self-reflection Strategies of Job Seekers with**  
2      **Visual Impairments in India**  
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14     Significant changes in the digital employment landscape, driven by rapid technological advancements and the COVID-19 pandemic,  
15     have introduced new opportunities for blind and visually impaired (BVI) individuals in developing countries like India. However, a  
16     significant portion of the BVI population in India remains unemployed despite extensive accessibility advancements and job search  
17     interventions. Therefore, we conducted semi-structured interviews with 20 BVI persons who were either pursuing or recently sought  
18     employment in the digital industry. Our findings reveal that despite gaining digital literacy and extensive training, BVI individuals  
19     struggle to meet industry requirements for fulfilling job openings. While they engage in self-reflection to identify shortcomings in  
20     their approach and skills, they lack constructive feedback from peers and recruiters. Moreover, the numerous job intervention tools  
21     are limited in their ability to meet the unique needs of BVI job seekers. Our results therefore provide key insights that inform the  
22     design of future collaborative intervention systems that offer personalized feedback for BVI individuals, effectively guiding their  
23     self-reflection process and subsequent job search behaviors, and potentially leading to improved employment outcomes.  
24

25     CCS Concepts: • Human-centered computing → Empirical studies in accessibility; Empirical studies in collaborative and  
26     social computing.

27     Additional Key Words and Phrases: Visual Impairment, Self-Reflection, Constructive Feedback, Accessibility and Job-Seeking  
28

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33     **1 INTRODUCTION**  
34

35     Job-seeking has evolved into a dynamic, self-regulated, and socially-driven process, characterized by a series of inter-  
36     connected activities designed to secure employment [7, 137]. This transformation has been propelled by advancements  
37     in technology, the proliferation of social media platforms, and growing recognition of the importance of networking  
38     and shared knowledge in professional development. Individuals pursue employment at various life stages to address  
39     financial needs, engage in social interactions, foster personal development, and achieve career growth [49, 141]. The  
40     job-seeking process typically follows a sequential progression [13, 110], encompassing a ‘preparatory phase’ and an  
41     ‘active phase’. During the preparatory phase, job seekers engage in planning and gathering information about job  
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opportunities from a multitude of sources, often collaborating with peers, mentors, and professional networks to refine their skills and identify suitable career paths. The active phase involves crafting applications, attending interviews, and directly interacting with potential employers, where the ability to demonstrate developed skills and adaptability becomes crucial. Throughout the whole process, individuals continuously interact with others, seeking their advice to refine their skills and gain insights to enhance their readiness for the job market. However, this multifaceted and socially dynamic nature of job seeking, which relies heavily on digital platforms and collaborative interactions, can present unique challenges for blind and visually impaired (BVI) individuals [7, 57].

In the year 2020, global estimates indicated that approximately 338 million people were dealing with vision impairments [19], a number slightly exceeding the entire population of the United States (334.9 million in 2023). Within this group, 43.3 million individuals were categorized as blind, and an additional 295 million were estimated to have moderate to severe vision impairment, i.e., low vision. India, in particular, has one of the largest populations of people with visual impairments, with approximately 70 million vision-impaired persons and 4.95 million blind individuals [70, 114]. Vision impairment in such developing countries, coupled with inaccessible education [134] and limited support for accessibility in workplaces [100], not only affects personal well-being but also has broader socioeconomic implications, as it often leads to increased poverty due to reduced employment opportunities and productivity [23, 79, 93]. Unfortunately, despite several government initiatives and measures as well as the availability of non-profit training services, only about 100,000 BVI individuals in India have succeeded in gaining employment in industries so far [117], leaving a significant percentage of the country's BVI population unemployed.

India has rapidly emerged as a central hub for offshore projects, driven by several key factors, including the increasing availability of high-speed internet, the rise of e-commerce, government initiatives, and the COVID-19 pandemic [53, 56]. This shift has created opportunities in remote work, freelance gigs, and online platform-based jobs. However, within the 'digital workspace', there exists a prevalent belief that BVI individuals are unable to compete or collaborate effectively with sighted peers [9]. This perception is primarily attributed to the numerous barriers the BVI may encounter at work [9, 26, 52]. Prior research has highlighted such barriers encountered by BVI individuals during their employment search process across various domains in India. These include employer prejudice or adverse perceptions, communication difficulties, and issues related to lack of content accessibility [6, 15, 24]. In an attempt to address these barriers, prior works have proposed facilitators that aid BVI in job search including harnessing personal networks, establishing clear goals with the assistance from others, accessing information tailored to their needs, and obtaining job-search training [83, 116]. However, a critical knowledge gap remains in understanding how these barriers influence the job-search behaviors of BVI individuals in the first place. Specifically, little is known about how they evaluate and reflect on their skills through collective feedback, perceive societal acceptance, and respond to negative experiences while maintaining motivation and self-efficacy throughout the process. Furthermore, the adequacy of existing employment intervention systems in addressing their unique needs, both as individuals with disabilities and as members of a marginalized group in developing societies, requires deeper investigation.

We strive to fill this knowledge gap by retrospectively examining the job search experiences of BVI individuals in India, focusing on the educational, technological, and peer support available to guide them towards positive and effective self-reflection on their abilities and the needs of the industry. Our study specifically seeks to address the following research questions:

- **RQ1:** How do societal factors such as social bias, collective knowledge, and community expectations influence the job-seeking experiences of BVI individuals in developing countries like India?

- 105 • **RQ2:** How do peer interactions and interview feedback influence self-reflection and subsequent career decision-
- 106 making among BVI job seekers?
- 107 • **RQ3:** What are the strengths and weaknesses of the current job-intervention tools towards facilitating
- 108 productive self-reflection among BVI job seekers?

110 To answers these research questions, we conducted an interview study<sup>1</sup> with 20 BVI participants in India who have  
 111 been actively engaged in the Information Technology (IT) job search and interview process at some point in their  
 112 professional careers. Our analysis revealed key insights into the job search behavior of BVI individuals, notably:  
 113 (i) BVI individuals often begin their job search with high self-efficacy, which may lead them to overlook the practical gaps  
 114 between their skills and the industry's demands.; (ii) BVI individuals feel that they need to put additional efforts to  
 115 convince recruiters of their digital competence and ability to execute tasks without assistance; (iii) BVI job seekers are  
 116 highly dependent on explicit feedback to identify areas for improvement and skill development, but such feedback is  
 117 often limited or too generic both in the interviews and in the societies they grew up in.; (iv) Participants rarely consider  
 118 self-reflection to be an isolated process. Instead, they view it as a social process involving peer feedback and guidance  
 119 from mentors; and (v) BVI individuals strongly believe that current job intervention tools, including human tutoring,  
 120 are not tailored for addressing their unique needs.

121 In sum, this study makes the following contributions to the CSCW literature:

- 122 • We extend prior CSCW research on job-seeking experiences of BVI individuals beyond the context of developed  
 123 nations (Global North), focusing on the unique challenges faced by BVI job seekers within a linguistically  
 124 diverse, economically stratified, and socially complex developing societies like that in India (Global South).
- 125 • Building upon the broad literature on the significance of self-reflection in promoting continuous learning and  
 126 skill development among underrepresented job seekers, we examine how this process manifests among BVI  
 127 individuals through peer interactions and collective knowledge sharing.
- 128 • We uncover the capabilities and limitations of existing job-intervention systems towards fostering a positive self-  
 129 reflective process among BVI job seekers, and provide design suggestions for intelligent job-intervention systems  
 130 that can accommodate their unique needs and prepare them for real-world collaborative work environments.

## 137 2 BACKGROUND AND RELATED WORK

### 138 2.1 Self-reflection for Skill Development

141 Self-reflection has been defined as the process a person engages in to retrospectively examine their past learning  
 142 experiences and the actions they undertook to facilitate learning (i.e., self-reflection on how learning occurred), alongside  
 143 the investigation of links between the imparted knowledge and the person's conceptions of it (i.e., self-reflection on  
 144 the acquired knowledge) [18, 40, 81, 87]. Previous research has extensively explored this self-regulated process as a  
 145 means to promote continuous learning, skill development, and elevated self-efficacy among diverse groups of people,  
 146 especially those who actively seek employment opportunities at different stages in their life [16, 22, 32, 35, 49, 54, 71,  
 147 77, 84, 94, 97, 115, 129, 132, 133, 136, 139, 141]. For instance, an early study conducted with employed BVI individuals  
 148 in the US highlighted how they must continuously evaluate their abilities, identify areas requiring support or skill  
 149 enhancement, and align their strengths with job opportunities to achieve successful employment outcomes [34]. This  
 150 self-reflective process also enabled them to determine the specific accommodations or adaptive technologies necessary  
 151 for effective workplace performance [34, 42, 44].

152 <sup>1</sup>This is a standard procedure in CSCW research, particularly when involving individuals from ability-diverse and marginalized groups [36, 70].

157 Self-reflection is inherently a social and collaborative process, shaped by interactions with coworkers, mentors,  
158 and peers who provide feedback, support, and role modeling [29, 122, 123]. Positive reinforcement from inclusive  
159 employers and advocacy groups have further empowered BVI individuals to view themselves as capable contributors,  
160 fostering adaptation and growth [3, 5, 75]. Conversely, negative attitudes or systemic barriers have often prompted  
161 them to reassess their strategies and seek alternative career pathways through supportive networks [9, 33, 34]. While  
162 these findings are broadly applicable across contexts and time, the specific experiences of BVI job-seekers in the  
163 resource-constrained Global South, where access to accessible education and societal understanding of their capabilities  
164 are minimal, remain under-explored [47, 108].  
165

166 Considering the importance of this self-reflective process among underrepresented job-seekers, researchers have also  
167 proposed intervention strategies and tools that empower these job-seekers to self-reflect and validate skills relevant  
168 to the current demands of the industry [115]. These tools aim to develop cognitive skills, such as learning strategies,  
169 problem-solving, and critical thinking, as well as meta-cognitive skills, which include planning, monitoring, and  
170 evaluating one's learning process [111]. Current works that define guidelines and design of technology to support  
171 self-reflection [11] are built upon Schon's framework [46] that defines two types of reflection: (i) *Reflection-in-action*  
172 which occurs during task execution, shaped by unforeseen outcomes; and (ii) *Reflection-on-action* which refers to the  
173 reconstruction of actions based on our past memories and the conclusions drawn from them [119].  
174

175 Inspired by this framework, researchers have conceptualized and developed a wide spectrum of tools aimed at  
176 enhancing self-reflection, from those focusing on physical activity [17, 25] to conversational agents tailored for workplace  
177 reflection [74]. These tools have been found to foster self-reflection by taking into account individuals' memories, social  
178 interactions and conversations [11]. However, the context of these studies has been overwhelmingly the Global North;  
179 limited research exists regarding the availability and analyses of such intervention tools in the context of developing  
180 societies of the Global South, where the literacy on accessibility is minimal. Our study, which examines the unique  
181 experiences of BVI job-seekers in India, fills this knowledge gap.  
182

## 183 2.2 Interview Preparation and Feedback Tools for BVI Job-seekers

184 Constructive feedback before and after job interviews, regardless of the employment outcomes, is pivotal for enabling  
185 candidates to reflect upon their performance, pinpoint improvement areas, and refine their approach and skills [85].  
186 Similarly, self-assessment and ample practice during the preparation stage can elevate self-efficacy and reduce pre-  
187 interview anxiety [143]. This has led to the conception and development of various tools designed to support job seekers,  
188 particularly those from vulnerable groups [59–61, 141], in critically evaluating and receiving actionable feedback  
189 regarding their resumes [106], skills [43], and professional self-presentation during interviews [62]. For example,  
190 Dillahunt et al. [43] created 'SkillsIdentifier', a tool that detects skill gaps in underrepresented job seekers, and then  
191 aids in strengthening their resumes, thereby improving self-efficacy. The design of their tool was based on their prior  
192 study [41] which had explored the impact of such intervention technologies on meeting the needs of underserved job  
193 seekers. In another work, Hayes et al. [59] utilized 'VidCoach', a video modeling application, as an intervention for  
194 job-seeking students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), demonstrating that this tool could enhance interview  
195 performance by reducing anxiety and promoting coherent presentation of ideas. Recently, with the advent of advanced  
196 intelligent systems, several AI-based tools [28] have been developed, offering instant and comprehensive feedback to  
197 individuals seeking employment.  
198

199 Recent CSCW works have also examined how BVI users perceive their roles and independence within an (in)accessible  
200 digital social context, offering valuable insights into their tools and strategies for addressing potential ableism in a high  
201

pressure interaction setting such as workplaces. Towards this, Saha et al. [109] studied blind audio professionals and observed how they relied on online communities as resources for learning, troubleshooting, and improving workflows. In another work, Lyu et al. [86] studied how BVI users leveraged TikTok as a tool to share information and practice public speaking. Again, the context of all these aforementioned works is the Global North; the extent to which these tools are available or used in the developing countries like India, and the strategies employed by BVI individuals to prepare for interviews and to demonstrate competence in workplaces, are still open research questions.

### 2.3 Job Seeking Practices of BVI Individuals

High unemployment rates coupled with the unique accommodation challenges posed by BVI people in workplaces, have widely inspired researchers in multiple domains to examine the barriers BVI individuals face while seeking employment [30] and the strategies they typically employ to overcome them [55]. For example, Cmar et al. [30] conducted an empirical study on the job-seeking practices of visually impaired youth. Their findings revealed that while many BVI individuals were interested in finding employment, they often did not actively engage in job search activities. However, this engagement improved significantly with targeted interventions and strong parental support. Additionally, the accessibility of the job application process and online portals plays a vital role in promoting active job search behaviors among disabled individuals. Lazar et al. [80] investigated the accessibility and usability of online job application websites for blind users. Their study found that many online employment application processes were inaccessible, with only 28.1% of application attempts being completed independently without any assistance.

Grussenmeyer et al. [55] studied the accessibility aspects of interview process for BVI job seekers, noting significant challenges such as inadequate accommodations during interviews and inaccessible pre- and post-interview tests, which further increased the barriers faced by BVI individuals during the employment process. Furthermore, assistive technologies (ATs) play a significant role in enhancing the employability of visually impaired individuals by enabling them to perform computer based tasks that would otherwise be challenging. A study by Pal et al. [100] revealed how access to AT not only elevates confidence and independence among BVI job seekers in India, but also opens up a wider range of career opportunities. However, the high cost and limited availability of such technologies remain significant obstacles that need to be addressed to fully support BVI job seekers.

While most prior studies have focused on the general job search barriers and practices of BVI job seekers in developed countries with greater access to ATs and intervention systems, none have specifically examined the antecedents of job search behaviors from a behavioral perspective, and that too in developing countries. In our study, we investigate the job search behaviors of BVI individuals from diverse economic and linguistic backgrounds in India, and uncover how they navigate the social dynamics of employment in an era characterized by high technological reliance.

## 3 METHODOLOGY

To understand the job-seeking behaviors and self-reflection strategies of BVI job seekers, we conducted an Institutional Review Board (IRB)-approved user study that involved semi-structured interviews. Details of the study are as follows.

### 3.1 Study Participants

In this study, we aimed to engage both employed and unemployed participants who met specific eligibility criteria: (1) they must have visual impairment severe enough to need ATs such as screen readers or screen magnifiers to access digital platforms; (2) they had been actively pursuing employment opportunities in the digital industry for at least the previous six months; (3) they had a resume, either in digital or paper format; and (4) they had access to a device capable

| ID  | Age/<br>Gender | Age of<br>Vision Loss | Education<br>Level | Employment<br>Status | No. Of<br>Job Applications | No. Of<br>Interviews |
|-----|----------------|-----------------------|--------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|
| P1  | 32/M           | Since birth           | Masters            | Employed             | 150 to 170                 | 4 to 5               |
| P2  | 23/F           | Since birth           | Undergrad          | Employed             | 30 to 40                   | 6 to 7               |
| P3  | 22/F           | Age 15                | Undergrad          | Unemployed           | 20 to 25                   | None                 |
| P4  | 28/M           | Age 18                | Masters            | Employed             | 100 to 120                 | 3                    |
| P5  | 25/F           | Don't know            | Undergrad          | Unemployed           | 50 to 80                   | 4 to 5               |
| P6  | 19/M           | Don't know            | High School        | Unemployed           | 10 to 20                   | None                 |
| P7  | 27/M           | Age 7                 | Undergrad          | Unemployed           | 200 to 250                 | 10 to 15             |
| P8  | 23/M           | Don't know            | High School        | Employed             | 70 to 80                   | 5 to 10              |
| P9  | 22/F           | Don't know            | High School        | Employed             | 50                         | 1                    |
| P10 | 19/M           | Age 16                | High School        | Unemployed           | None                       | None                 |
| P11 | 24/F           | Since birth           | Undergrad          | Unemployed           | 30 to 40                   | None                 |
| P12 | 35/M           | Since birth           | Masters            | Employed             | 500 to 600                 | 20 to 25             |
| P13 | 28/M           | Age 3                 | Undergrad          | Employed             | 120 to 150                 | 5 to 8               |
| P14 | 31/M           | Don't know            | Undergrad          | Reemployed           | 450 to 500                 | 30 to 40             |
| P15 | 37/M           | Don't know            | Masters            | Employed             | 10 to 15                   | 4                    |
| P16 | 25/M           | Since birth           | High School        | Unemployed           | 200 to 300                 | 7 to 8               |
| P17 | 29/M           | Since birth           | Masters            | Reemployed           | 40 to 50                   | 3                    |
| P18 | 26/F           | Age 10                | Undergrad          | Unemployed           | 50 to 60                   | None                 |
| P19 | 26/F           | Don't know            | Undergrad          | Unemployed           | 30 to 40                   | None                 |
| P20 | 22/F           | Age 14                | High School        | Unemployed           | 5 to 10                    | None                 |

Table 1. Participant demographics. All information was self-reported by the participants.

of connecting to the internet. We required prospective participants to respond to a set of screening questions to verify these criteria. For recruitment, we utilized both traditional offline methods and digital channels.

We established partnerships with regional workforce development programs (training centers), following recommendations from earlier research [44]. Through these collaborations, we spread the word about our study via the programs' mailing lists and word-of-mouth. Additionally, we employed snowball sampling, where enrolled participants helped recruit additional participants. In our digital recruitment efforts, we targeted active Facebook groups that cater to BVI individuals, specifically those seeking employment. We prioritized groups with robust engagement, signified by a membership count exceeding 500. This approach allowed us to tap into the vibrant online community and connect with potential participants who actively use social media as a resource for employment opportunities.

From the pool of interested candidates, we selected 20 participants who met all the inclusion criteria, including 8 females and 12 males. The age range of our participants was notably broad, extending from 19 to 37 years. The average age stood at 26.15 years, with the median age at 25.5 years, indicating that the distribution of ages has a few older participants that increase the average age. The standard deviation in age was 4.7 years, highlighting the age diversity within our participant group. The participant demographics, detailed in Table 1, show a diverse representation of the BVI community.

### 3.2 Study Design

The interview questionnaire were meticulously crafted, taking into account established guidelines [1, 10, 68, 101] on job search process and insights from similar studies on job search behaviors in underrepresented populations [4, 41, 45, 138].

313 The study commenced with an informed consent statement outlining the study's topic, a confidentiality pledge,  
 314 permissions sought, an estimated time commitment, and an expression of gratitude. This was followed by a generic  
 315 questionnaire on user demographics such as name, age, gender, employment status and history, visual condition, and  
 316 education level. Next up was a semi-structured interview whose format allowed users to freely talk about their job  
 317 seeking experiences and strategies.  
 318

319 The semi-structured interview aimed to investigate the job search behaviors of BVI individuals, how their experiences  
 320 shaped their current job-seeking strategies, their self-reflective processes and their impact, and the effectiveness of  
 321 job intervention tools in providing feedback and boosting self-efficacy. It commenced with inquiries regarding the  
 322 participants' education and career aspirations. The next questions delved into their job-seeking and employment  
 323 experiences, covering aspects such as interview experiences, challenges faced during the job-seeking process, self-  
 324 reflection after rejection, attitudes towards the industry, and the assistance received during the job-seeking process. We  
 325 then asked participants about any employment training tools they had used and their experiences with these tools.  
 326 The questions also touched upon their perceptions of knowledge deficiencies and lack of skill sets that might hinder  
 327 their employability (self-awareness). Analyzing responses across diverse employment demographics allowed us to gain  
 328 insights into effective self-reflective strategies for successful employment prospects. Below are a few notable 'seed'  
 329 questions we asked the participants:  
 330

- 331 • Can you describe your overall job search experience, including the number of jobs you have applied for, your  
 332 interview experiences, and the support you have received from family, friends, and peers?
- 333 • Given the potential challenges of working in a digitally advanced environment with accessibility issues, how  
 334 confident are you in your ability to adapt, and what strategies would you use to collaborate with sighted  
 335 colleagues who might have limited knowledge about accessibility?
- 336 • Explain instances where you faced a setback or disappointment in your job search, and how this experience led  
 337 you to reflect on and adjust your skills or approach to improve your chances of success?
- 338 • Have you used any digital tools or platforms to prepare for job interviews or practice skills-based questions? If  
 339 so, how accessible and effective do you find these tools, and how do they compare to actual interview scenarios?

340 We also posed follow-up and clarification inquiries for responses that caught our attention, including those that were  
 341 novel, vague, evasive, or deviated from earlier answers. These questions were formulated in accordance with Hove and  
 342 Anda's recommendations for conducting semi-structured interviews in empirical software engineering research [65].  
 343 To conclude the interview, we reiterated the research's purpose, outlined future work, and invited the interviewee to  
 344 share any additional thoughts.

### 352 3.3 Data Analysis

353 The first author transcribed fourteen interviews conducted in English, while the second author transcribed the re-  
 354 maining six interviews conducted in Hindi and Kannada – regional languages in India. The transcriptions resulted  
 355 in a comprehensive book of 612 single-spaced pages, with a maximum of 50 lines per page. To analyze the collected  
 356 qualitative data from the interview study, we utilized a hybrid process of inductive and deductive coding for thematic  
 357 analysis [20, 27, 69, 72, 78, 90, 144]. First, each researcher analyzed their respective transcripts through an inductive  
 358 process using open coding. This involved a detailed line-by-line analysis of the interview transcripts to identify new  
 359 themes and patterns that emerged from the data. The themes that emerged from this analysis were grounded in the  
 360 interviewees' experiences; in-vivo codes that utilised the precise language of interviewees capturing the essence of their  
 361

365 narratives. Following the inductive coding phase, we transitioned to the deductive phase. In this stage, we organized the  
366 emergent themes according to predefined theoretical frameworks. These frameworks were based on existing literature,  
367 specifically the Self-Regulation Theory (SR) [71], which addresses topics such as job search self-efficacy and job search  
368 clarity, and the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) [130, 131], which encompasses topics such as job search attitude,  
369 subjective norms, and job search intention. No pre-existing codes were used at the outset of the study; instead, codes  
370 were developed organically during the analysis process through constant comparison of the data and the application of  
371 labels to the text. After completing both phases of coding, we conducted a thorough review and comparison of the  
372 codes generated during the deductive and inductive stages. By combining inductive and deductive approaches, we were  
373 able to ensure that our analysis was both data-driven and theoretically informed. This hybrid approach allowed us to  
374 capture the richness of the interviewees' experiences while also situating our findings within a broader context.  
375  
376  
377

### 378 3.4 Positionality

380 This research involved five authors, with the first, second, and fifth authors hailing from India, the fourth author from  
381 South Korea, and the third author from Sri Lanka. The first, second, third, and fifth authors identify as male, while the  
382 fourth author identifies as female. All researchers belong to ethnic minority groups in the United States of America  
383 (USA). All authors are sighted and work in the field of Human-Computer Interaction, with four authors specializing in  
384 accessibility research. The primary author led the data collection process, assisted by the secondary author, who is  
385 trilingual in English, Hindi, and Kannada. This language proficiency enabled participants who spoke these languages to  
386 comfortably share their experiences, allowing them to express their thoughts and feelings more effectively. The first  
387 two authors were involved in drawing insights from the semi-structured interviews, while the third and fourth authors  
388 contributed to refining the theoretical frameworks. All the study authors participated in interpreting the findings,  
389 discussing their implications, and outlining directions for future research. Recognizing the importance of unbiased  
390 research, all authors took proactive measures to mitigate any assumptions or existing biases that could influence the  
391 study. The authors compiled lists of their preconceptions, openly discussing these to ensure they were aware of potential  
392 biases. This reflective practice was integrated throughout the research process, from data collection to analysis to  
393 interpretation.  
394  
395  
396

## 4 CONTEXT

### 400 4.1 Digital Transformation in Employment and Workspaces

401 The advent of Industry 4.0, a phase defined by the integration of cyber-physical systems, automation, and the Internet  
402 of Things (IoT), fueled by advancements in technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning (ML),  
403 and advanced robotics, has transformed the job market into one marked by constant flux, evolving demands, and  
404 a relentless need for adaptation [82]. Innovations that once required decades to diffuse across industries are now  
405 being implemented within years or even months. The Indian Information and Communication Technology (ICT) job  
406 market which contributes to over 13% to the country's GDP [67] has also adapted this change, with AI and ML fields  
407 creating nearly 69 million new jobs and consequently a high demand for data scientists, cybersecurity experts, and cloud  
408 engineers [38]. However this accelerated shift has exacerbated an already significant and persistent skills gap [38, 105].  
409 Reports from the World Economic Forum and McKinsey suggest that up to 50% of workers will require re-skilling by  
410 2025 due to the adoption of new technologies [66].  
411  
412  
413  
414  
415

The COVID-19 pandemic further underscored the transformative impact of digitalization on the workforce. With the advent of COVID-induced lockdown, organizations worldwide had to transition to remote working models almost overnight, driving widespread adoption of digital collaboration tools such as Microsoft Teams [89], Zoom [145], and Slack [118]. India's ICT sector played a crucial role in enabling this transition globally [39]. Indian IT companies like TCS, Infosys, and Wipro rapidly adapted to this shift, deploying massive remote workforces to support international clients [121]. While skilled IT professionals in urban centers transitioned smoothly to remote work, workers in smaller towns and rural areas faced significant barriers due to inadequate access to technology and training [113]. This regional disparity was amplified by India's vast socio-economic divide, where only a fraction of the workforce had the digital literacy needed to adapt to the new demands of ICT-intensive roles. The transition disproportionately favored English-speaking professionals, further marginalizing workers from non-English-speaking and economically-disadvantaged backgrounds [113].

The evolution in the industry has been complemented by advancements in ATs for BVI such as screen readers, text-to-speech software, and tactile devices, making career paths such as coding, data analysis, and digital marketing increasingly viable for BVI individuals [50]. However, the rapid pace of industry evolution presents unique learning challenges for BVI individuals. For them, mastering new technologies involves not only understanding functionality but also navigating accessibility features [36]. This dual learning process is both time-intensive and mentally taxing, often requiring specialized training resources that are frequently unavailable, particularly in developing countries [99]. In nations like India, a key hub for outsourcing work, providing BVI individuals with appropriate skill training and sustained upskilling support could significantly reduce unemployment [100]. With the right infrastructure and resources, this segment of the workforce could contribute meaningfully to high-skill industries, bridging gaps in inclusivity and employment.

#### 4.2 Accessibility in Job-Seeking and Employment Training in India

India has established itself as a global leader in ICT services with relatively lower labor costs, thus presenting an attractive option for companies seeking to reduce operational expenses without compromising on quality [76]. Programs like Digital India [91] and Skill India [92] have played a crucial role in promoting digital literacy and enhancing workforce skills, aligning them with global industry standards [76]. Efforts toward inclusivity have also gained traction, with organizations like the National Association for the Blind (NAB) [96] pioneering initiatives that provide specialized training in computer literacy and digital skills. These programs have enabled BVI individuals to access a broader range of employment opportunities. Similarly, initiatives like Vision-Aid's Project Springboard [135] have expanded to multiple schools for the blind, focusing on empowering students through digital education and vocational training.

However, despite such skill development programs, the employment rate for BVI individuals remains alarmingly low. This disparity points to a disconnect between training initiatives and actual job placements, suggesting that existing programs may not adequately align with market demands or prepare BVI individuals for available roles. Additionally, the rapid pace of technological advancements presents challenges for training centers, which often struggle to keep curricula up to date [73]. The high cost and limited availability of ATs further restrict access to essential tools for digital education and employment [100]. Although India has enacted progressive legislation, such as the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (RPwD), 2016, which mandates a 5% reservation in government jobs for persons with disabilities, these measures have not significantly improved employment rates [14]. The Americans with Disabilities Act(ADA) in the U.S. [127] and the Equality Act in the U.K. [126] cover both public and private sectors comprehensively, enforcing accessibility and non-discrimination across all areas. While India's RPwD Act also applies to both sectors, the implementation and

enforcement, particularly in the private sector, face challenges due to limited resources and awareness [126, 127]. Key barriers include inadequacies in training programs, such as a focus on short-term courses that fail to impart employable skills, outdated curricula, inadequate infrastructure, and insufficiently trained instructors [125]. These factors contribute to suboptimal training outcomes, leaving participants ill-equipped for the demands of modern industries. Furthermore, the lack of collaboration between training institutions and industries exacerbates the issue, as training programs often fail to align with current market requirements, perpetuating unemployment among BVI individuals [125]. Hence, it is essential to understand and address the practical misalignment between BVI job seekers' perceptions of their skills and the actual demands of the industry. This can be achieved by fostering effective self-reflection on their abilities, facilitated through collective knowledge-sharing and constructive feedback mechanisms.

## 5 FINDINGS

Our analysis of interview data revealed three main themes: factors defining job search behaviors in BVI individuals, their self-reflection processes and subsequent decision-making, and the effectiveness of job intervention tools in providing constructive feedback. All themes and sub themes, illustrated in Figure 1, are detailed next.

### 5.1 Impact of Societal factors on Job-Seeking Experiences of BVI Individuals (RQ1)

***Self Efficacy and Skill Development.*** BVI individuals often develop higher levels of general self-efficacy due to the extensive mastery experiences acquired while overcoming challenges associated with their disability [21]. This strong belief in their abilities is crucial in the job-search context, where individuals must effectively convey their competence to employers, demonstrating their capacity to perform work-related tasks and collaborate with diverse peers [42]. The participants in our study reinforced this notion, expressing increased confidence as they became more proficient with screen reader software and other digital platforms. This proficiency was often celebrated as a significant milestone by others in their society, where accessibility literacy was minimal. However, in the early stages of their careers, as they began the job-search process, participants realized that their confidence was often largely misinformed. They observed a significant disparity between the skills they collectively deemed sufficient and the practical demands of the industry. While proficiency in screen reader software allowed them to navigate daily tasks and communicate seamlessly with friends and family through digital devices, they lacked specialized job-related skills. Consequently, when faced with repeated rejections, they developed a negative attitude, often attributing their failures to societal discrimination and stereotypical misconceptions about their abilities. P7 described his experience:

*"I have been searching... for a couple of years now, attending about 10 to 15 interviews... I still haven't found a job. My skills match the positions... but the industry continues to undervalue my abilities because of my blindness. It's really disappointing to send out so many applications without... [receiving] any positive responses. They do not see the potential in people like me. I know I'm capable, and with the right opportunity and support, I can handle any work-related task proficiently." - P7*

Delving into specifics of mitigating this skills gap, participants, particularly those who were employed, reflected on how most educational institutions primarily focused on teaching BVI students to navigate the web and use platforms like Microsoft Office in isolation, providing little to no exposure to the collaborative features of these tools. For instance, P13 described how he had not learned to use these tools "*in networking mode*" (referring to collaborative and cloud-based features). He explained, "*Navigating these tools and working with sighted peers made me anxious. In [specialized] schools, we didn't get much chance to work with [sighted] people, so the whole experience was pretty new and intimidating for*





Fig. 1. Key themes and sub-themes in self-reflection among BVI job seekers.

supportive of their education, they often lacked the knowledge or resources to guide them in accessible digital navigation, thereby limiting their career possibilities. P16 described,

*"I grew up in a village where they[parents] taught me at home. They believed that government roles, like office jobs or teaching, were not only accessible but also respected and prestigious career options for someone blind like me... It wasn't until I moved to Bengaluru after high school to attend a specialized school that I was introduced to screen readers and various online platforms. Although this has opened up many new opportunities for me, gaining access to these tools earlier... would have helped in my school and helped in choosing my career path better."– P16*

While participants lacked early exposure to technology, they reported no trouble adapting to the social dynamics with sighted peers during their education. This is crucial, as schools create collaborative learning environments that encourage students to articulate their thoughts, challenge differing perspectives, and co-construct knowledge, leading

625 to deeper understanding and retention of material while also fostering social competencies among students [58, 124].  
 626 Among our participants, 14 attended specialized schools for BVI individuals, while 6 were educated in regular schools  
 627 alongside sighted students. Participants highlighted how the inclusivity and peer support they received, even when  
 628 sighted peers did not fully grasp the specifics of BVI accessibility, enabled them to pursue opportunities on par with their  
 629 sighted classmates. Additionally, competing with sighted individuals where they often found accessible alternatives to  
 630 do the same tasks helped them look beyond their disability, recognizing that they could aspire to the same goals.  
 631

632 Participants who attended specialized schools reported having greater access to peer mentorship, where senior  
 633 students and BVI teachers often guided them in navigating accessibility, education, and later, the job search process,  
 634 drawing from their own prior experiences. These mentors frequently “shared tips” about using screen readers and other  
 635 assistive technologies, providing an informal learning avenue and fostering a comfortable environment for collective  
 636 skill development.  
 637

638 While BVI participants graduated with high levels of self-efficacy regarding their skills and their ability to project  
 639 a positive self-presentation in interviews, they often failed to pragmatically reflect on the expectations of a possibly  
 640 biased interviewer. Participants who disclosed their visual condition during the application process often described  
 641 carrying the “*burden*” of convincing recruiters of their ability to fulfill job responsibilities independently and without  
 642 significant assistance.  
 643

644 When interviewers focused excessively on the abilities of BVI participants and occasionally expressed surprise  
 645 at their qualifications, albeit inadvertently, it was perceived negatively by the participants. The need to constantly  
 646 persuade recruiters during every interview made the process feel more daunting, leaving participants with a sense  
 647 of diminished control over their job search as a whole. Additionally, many recruiters expressed a lack of confidence  
 648 in their ability to integrate employees with visual impairments, fostering a sense of inevitability and discouragement  
 649 among the participants. P9 shared, *“In one interview, the recruiter said they’d have to spend extra on licensed screen reader*  
*650 software. They also mentioned they might not have the proper training facilities to teach me new software platforms they*  
*651 might use. Hearing this kind of feedback was really discouraging, making many of us [BVI] lose hope and look for jobs*  
*652 outside of computer-dominated fields.”*  
 653

654 While we acknowledge that fully mitigating stereotypical bias regarding capabilities on BVI individuals through  
 655 broader education on inclusivity and accessibility will take time [142], it is crucial to train BVI job seekers to effectively  
 656 navigate these situations during interviews. Additionally, guiding them to reflect on their skills independent of the  
 657 outcomes or negative interactions is essential to prevent a decline in their self-efficacy. We explore this in greater detail  
 658 in the Discussion section.  
 659

660 **Behavioral Beliefs and Job Search Attitude.** The effectiveness and intensity with which individuals pursue em-  
 661 ployment are broadly influenced by attitudinal factors, including their thoughts, judgments, and feelings toward  
 662 employment [2, 71]. Shaped by prior interview interactions, participants frequently perceived a negative impact of  
 663 their visual condition on the process, anticipating that their disability would often overshadow their qualifications.  
 664 This expectation of a negative interview experience affected their job search intensity. Some participants reduced the  
 665 number of applications they submitted or targeted only organizations known for being accommodating. However, those  
 666 who had a strong foundation of continuous interaction with sighted peers during their school days expressed a shared  
 667 belief in working collaboratively with sighted colleagues and contributing productively towards a common task. When  
 668 it came to seeking assistance, participants trusted that most people were willing to help when asked, and this belief  
 669 encouraged them to proactively seek guidance or information when needed.  
 670

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677 However, 5 participants indicated a habitual reliance on sighted peers and a tendency to withdraw from tasks if they  
678 perceived insufficient assistance in completing them. For instance, P2 described that she would “*talk to the manager and*  
679 *step back*” from a task or even request reassignment in cases where she anticipated a lack of proficiency, which would  
680 require her to seek constant assistance from others.  
681

682 When discussing their job preferences, participants emphasized that their choices were often shaped by the narratives  
683 and collective experiences of the BVI community, which steered them toward employment sectors perceived as more  
684 welcoming and attainable. For example, participants mentioned jobs in call centers and Non-governmental organization  
685 (NGOs), where positive feedback from senior peers who had secured positions fostered trust that these employers  
686 would be more understanding of their needs and willing to provide necessary accommodations. Conversely, narratives  
687 about the IT sector, which depicted it as unwilling to adapt and accommodate BVI job seekers, contributed to a negative  
688 outlook. This perception led participants to approach interviews in the IT industry with lower expectations and  
689 diminished confidence, believing that the effort required to enter the sector might not yield proportional rewards.  
690

691 Interestingly, the participants stated that they also developed a pragmatic understanding through interactions with  
692 experienced peers, recognizing the accommodations and additional investments in ATs that employers would need to  
693 make to hire them. Participants often reflected on the likelihood of these investments being made by different companies  
694 and reported proactively discussing these considerations with interviewers during the recruitment process.  
695

696

## 697 **5.2 Impact of Peer Interactions and Interview Feedback on Self-Reflection and Career Decision-Making** 698 **(RQ2)**

699 Participants recounted various instances where interactions with peers and recruiters during the interview process  
700 instinctively prompted them to reflect on different aspects of their job search. They emphasized how this reflection  
701 often fostered a more proactive and strategically informed job-search approach while helping them navigate adverse  
702 outcomes.  
703

704 **Reflection on Peer Feedback and Conversations.** BVI participants who were successfully employed reported es-  
705 tablishing networks with both sighted and BVI individuals. These networks provided a diverse set of constructive  
706 inputs, not only on the job search process but also on understanding the social dynamics of interviews and workplace  
707 interactions. P19 advocated for an iterative approach of “receive,” “reflect” and “act,” emphasizing the importance of  
708 developing an understanding of how sighted peers with no prior experience of interacting with BVI individuals or  
709 knowledge of accessibility might perceive and respond to them. P9 described,  
710

711 *“It is important to really tune into chats with sighted people to get our communication right. Here in India,*  
712 *a lot of people don’t know how to interact with us. It’s not like they are discriminating or anything ... it’s*  
713 *mostly just not knowing better. This makes them either too cautious ... almost like they would [rather] not*  
714 *talk much. And in interviews, where you really need to talk with the recruiter, [smooth] communication*  
715 *becomes even more important.”*- P19

716 Participants described how they often recalled and reflected on conversations with their sighted peers to identify any  
717 contextual misalignments. These reflections were frequently shared and discussed with their BVI peers, allowing them  
718 to exchange experiences and thoughts on how to navigate and feel more comfortable in such scenarios, particularly  
719 during formal interactions with higher-ups or when communicating with someone new via videoconferencing. This  
720 process highlights how reflection can be a collective endeavor, with social interactions serving as a significant catalyst  
721 for learning and adaptation.  
722

729 Another key factor for effective workplace outcomes is not just constructive interactions but also the manner in  
730 which feedback is received or accepted. It is important to avoid negative emotions, such as questioning the accuracy  
731 of the feedback or the qualifications of the provider, as these reactions could lead to unnecessary disagreements and  
732 hinder productivity [51]. Our participants reported that they initially felt a sense of inferiority when receiving negative  
733 feedback, making it harder for them to accept it without feeling judged or undermined. They often perceived such  
734 criticisms as reflective of stereotypical biases held by their sighted peers rather than as objective assessments of their  
735 abilities. P8 described,  
736  
737

738 *"Many of my students get really annoyed when they are criticized, especially when it comes from a sighted  
739 person. They think that the sighted people do not have the same understanding or experience with blindness,  
740 so the feedback can feel unfair..This makes the whole [learning] process more frustrating for them..I tell  
741 them that it is important to communicate their ideas[perspectives] and teach their sighted peers, but it is  
742 tough because they feel like they are constantly having to prove themselves."* - P8  
743  
744

745 This sentiment among BVI individuals was rooted in prior experiences with employer prejudice and a persistent  
746 feeling of being misunderstood and unfairly judged. These experiences often made constructive feedback appear unfair  
747 or uninformed [63]. Participants preferred to trust their "gut feeling" and "make their own decisions", over advice from  
748 friends and even family at times. However P12 described that this preconceived notion hampered his students' ability  
749 to logically comprehend and derive reflective insights from feedback. Consequently, self-reflection had become a more  
750 complex and challenging process for them.  
751  
752

753 One more key factor influencing how BVI participants engaged in self-reflection was the nature of the environment  
754 and interactions in which they received feedback. Participants indicated that they learned effectively in informal settings  
755 with peers, with whom they spent most of their time. These interactions often included discussions on various topics  
756 such as ATs, employment opportunities, and updates on day-to-day activities. However, this dynamic changed as they  
757 transitioned to more professional settings, where interactions involved individuals with minimal understanding of their  
758 experiences, leading to feelings of disconnection. P4 described,  
759  
760

761 *"I traveled from Delhi to Bengaluru for computer training.... [spent over] a year at the training center.  
762 [While] I learned a lot from my peers, the job market was a whole different story. [At the training centers],  
763 we did not face real job scenarios, which made it hard to understand workplace expectations. It was only  
764 when we faced actual job situations that we realized what more we needed to learn."* - P4  
765  
766

767 The participants also noted that while their time at training centers equipped them with the basic skills needed to  
768 handle routine computer tasks, the lack of exposure to diverse team-activity scenarios inadvertently perpetuated the  
769 existing skills gap. This gap was particularly evident in their ability to interact effectively, communicate ideas, and  
770 receive constructive feedback from others in a professional setting.  
771  
772

**773 *Instinctive Reflection after Interviews and Job Rejections.*** Interviews are pivotal moments that prompt candidates  
774 to introspect on their skills, assess their ability to convey thoughts clearly, articulate ideas effectively, build rapport  
775 with the interviewer, and demonstrate enthusiasm for the role and the company [107]. Reflecting on their interview  
776 experiences, participants described being highly conscious of how they expressed themselves, often second-guessing  
777 whether they were communicating their answers clearly to the interviewer. They paid close attention to cues that could  
778 help them adapt their responses in real time. P4 described,  
779

781       *"Confidence is key for us during interviews. Recruiters often doubt if we can handle job responsibilities*  
 782       *without help. So, during the conversation, I [am] always paying attention, wondering if I'm proving my*  
 783       *abilities...It is a constant process of checking myself and adjusting to make sure I can show my competence."*

784       - P4  
 785

786       This process of second-guessing in a high-pressure interaction scenario made the experience even more daunting,  
 787       particularly in virtual settings where additional factors had to be considered. This was explained by P2,  
 788

789       *"Zoom meetings are even tougher for me. I am always worried if my body posture is right...if my face is*  
 790       *visible...if my internet [connection] is stable...if I am looking at the camera correctly... I am also anxious*  
 791       *about [whether] my screen reader is picking up everything accurately."* - P2  
 792

793       The effectiveness with which participants engaged in self-reflection after job interviews was significantly influenced  
 794       by the quality of the interaction and the feedback received, regardless of the outcome. Participants often reported being  
 795       rejected with vague explanations and without clear feedback, leaving them with no direction for self-assessment or  
 796       skill development. In the absence of justifiable feedback, many participants perceived the rejection as stemming from  
 797       stereotypical biases or an unwillingness to hire them.  
 798

799       After facing multiple rejections, participants often decided to explore alternative career options, as they were unable  
 800       to identify the specific skill gaps that hindered their employment and had no clear direction for improvement. Many  
 801       participants reported reaching out to employed friends for personalized feedback on their job search approach. They  
 802       frequently recalled and discussed their interview experiences to reflect on how effective their interactions were and how  
 803       their communication might have come across to interviewers, whom they believed often lacked a full understanding of  
 804       BVI perspectives and capabilities.  
 805

806       Participants also practiced mock interviews with friends, both sighted and BVI, which provided broader perspectives.  
 807       However, this method had limitations. Access to such support was not always readily available, as many participants  
 808       expressed reluctance to "*continuously disturb*" their friends. Moreover, practicing in informal settings did not always  
 809       simulate the high-pressure, professional environment of actual interviews. Additionally, in many instances participants  
 810       reported that their peers hesitated to provide critical feedback, further limiting the effectiveness of this approach.  
 811

812       **Reflection on Job Dissatisfaction and Pursuit of Self-Actualization.** Drawing inspiration from Maslow's hierarchy  
 813       of needs [8, 88], we explored how job dissatisfaction and the desire to find meaningful work could have triggered  
 814       self-reflection among BVI job seekers. Participants expressed a strong collective desire not only to achieve financial  
 815       independence but also to uplift their community by creating employment opportunities for fellow BVI individuals  
 816       facing similar challenges. Reflecting on their own journeys—from remote backgrounds with limited access to computer  
 817       education and ATs, battling societal stereotypes, and overcoming job market hurdles—they felt a shared responsibility  
 818       to support others in their community. P17 described,  
 819

820       *"Sir, do you know KK Mane? [Referring to Krishnakant Mane, India's first visually challenged IT professional*  
 821       *and technology entrepreneur [120]] I want to be like him one day. I've been working in IT as an accessibility*  
 822       *tester for a year now but I plan to quit and start my own organization that can provide jobs to many people*  
 823       *from my village and community like me."* - P17  
 824

825       This sentiment among participants underscores how success stories, popularly shared within the BVI community  
 826       through word-of-mouth, provided tangible examples of what was achievable. Participants expressed that by establishing  
 827       successful careers, they could advocate for more inclusive hiring practices and showcase the potential of BVI individuals  
 828

833 in various professional fields. They highlighted how reflection was often a social process, wherein hearing about  
834 one person's success led them to reflect positively and develop a collective sense of confidence and aspiration. This  
835 communal reflection fostered a shared belief in the potential for success, encouraging more BVI job seekers to pursue  
836 their career goals despite the challenges they faced. While this reflective process had a positive impact, some participants  
837 noted that it needs to be well-informed and regulated to avoid unrealistic expectations. P4 said,  
838

839 *"Many of my students want to start their own business or often reject job offers in the digital sector, waiting  
840 for government jobs, which they believe are more noble. It's crucial that they understand the realities of  
841 both options and make informed choices." - P4*

842 Employed participants also expressed uncertainty and dissatisfaction with their current employment, as they were  
843 often hired on a contractual basis, which naturally led to a common fear of instability. When these concerns were  
844 shared with others seeking jobs, it prompted reflections on the substantial effort required to secure these positions,  
845 only to face the reality of no guarantee of long-term employment. Participants reported that this negative reflection  
846 often diminished their motivation to continue the job search.  
847

### 848 5.3 Adequacy of Current Employment Intervention Tools as Facilitators of Self-Reflection (RQ3)

849 **Accessibility Barriers in Employment Intervention tools.** BVI individuals rely on screen reader AT such as JAWS [48]  
850 and NVDA [98], which read aloud on-screen content and provide one-dimensional navigational support via keyboard  
851 shortcuts. The compatibility of employment intervention tools with these ATs is therefore crucial. Without such  
852 compatibility, these tools can introduce additional cognitive burdens, potentially hindering the learning process  
853 altogether. Participants listed several tools they explored based on suggestions from their sighted peers. These included  
854 tools for resume refinement, AI-based interview feedback, and traditional interview record-review platforms. For  
855 instance, P8 and P4 said,

856 *"I read about an AI-based interview prep tool on Google and decided to try it because it offered voice-based  
857 input, which made me think it would be accessible. The big problem was that my screen reader picked  
858 up both its own voice output and mine, making the AI's responses confusing. I tried lowering the system  
859 volume, but that didn't help. The whole thing ended up being really frustrating and completely unusable." -  
860 P8*

861 *"I tried using a practice interview platform that records mock interviews and lets you share them with  
862 others. I thought it would be great to record my responses and get feedback from my friends. But during the  
863 practice, my screen reader couldn't even navigate to the questions." - P4*

864 In a society with minimal accessibility literacy, participants had hoped that these tools would help them reflect  
865 on their skills and provide unlimited access to unbiased feedback. However, they often faced significant challenges  
866 overcoming the accessibility limitations of these tools. In cases where the platforms were accessible, BVI participants  
867 reported benefiting greatly. For instance, P5 mentioned,

868 *"For general interview practice, I found Google Warmup really helpful I loved how I could easily navigate  
869 the entire platform with simple shortcuts, making everything so accessible. The insights on my talking  
870 points and the terms I frequently used were really useful. I would take notes, review them to see what needed  
871 improvement, and then try to implement those changes in my next interview It would be fantastic if it also  
872 included support for blind-specific job roles like accessibility testing and content writing." - P5*

Participants reported perceiving the feedback from such accessible tools as “*unbiased*” and “*fair*,” with minimal concern about being judged based on their disability. They interpreted the feedback more objectively, and critically reflected on their skills, including their communication and language.

Participants also suggested several usability enhancements that could have significantly improved their experience with interview practice tools. For instance, P5 suggested the inclusion of a “*repeat button*” for questions within the tool. This feature would simulate a realistic interaction scenario where users could ask the virtual interviewer to repeat a question they did not understand, mirroring real-life conversations. Similarly, P11 requested “*training sessions or demo videos*” to guide them through using these tools and during their practice interviews. These resources would provide step-by-step assistance, helping users navigate the platform more effectively.

**Collaborative Reflection through Peer-Supported Platforms.** Other key factors influencing how participants reflected on their skills and job-search process were the information and feedback they received from friends and others in their community via social media platforms. These platforms enabled participants to extend beyond their less-informed immediate social circles and access a global network, where they could engage with professional groups and discussions while also receiving emotional support critical for building positive self-efficacy in their job search. Social media also informed them about advancements in ATs and opportunities within their own society, which were often under-publicized without these platforms. For instance, P13 described,

*“I’m on my phone a lot, reaching out to people in Facebook groups and on WhatsApp, asking around about job openings or what kind of roles I should go for. It’s how I landed at my current job. Hearing from others, getting their take on things, it makes the whole job prep feel more hopeful, less of a solo ride.” - P13*

Discussions on these platforms not only offered participants insights into plausible job opportunities across the globe but also provided venues to relate their own experiences and collectively reflect on potential changes they could make to improve their job search approach. P6 noted,

*“I really enjoy reading Reddit discussions. It’s encouraging to see stories from other normal people who’ve succeeded in tough fields like IT. It makes me feel less like I’m fighting a losing battle against a world that doesn’t understand me. I also read a lot about how different people, sighted or BVI, interact in various settings. When their stories sound like mine, it helps me feel more confident and gives me ideas on how to handle my own social situations better.” - P6*

**Lack of Tailored Support for Effective Self-reflection.** While participants drew inspiration for self-assessment from various sources, they lacked personalized feedback support crucial for effective self-reflection [42]. In the absence of this tailored information, participants reported often struggling to fit the generalized recommendations to their unique experiences, and even when they did, they were not always effective in meeting their practical employment needs. P1 explained,

*“Friends keep saying, ‘Pick up new skills, be confident, stay calm in interviews.’ They mean well, but it’s not that simple for me. At interviews, the pressure’s intense. I feel underestimated. And that anxiety? It wipes the slate clean of all those tips. Even coaching centers they do cover tech skills, but there’s little attention to what each of us really needs, or how we are doing individually. They don’t see it.” - P1*

Participants expressed a similar sentiment towards the feedback they received from the employment preparation tools they had tried using in the past. They mentioned that while these tools provided insightful suggestions, they did not take into account the complexities and requirements introduced by their visual disability or their unique educational

937 backgrounds. Participants often found a significant mismatch between the questions they trained on using these tools  
938 and the actual ones posed by recruiters during interviews. P9 explained,  
939

940 *"I've been using that interview prep tool for a bit, really focusing on the feedback it gave. But, you know it  
941 didn't have anything for the accessibility testing job I was after. Then in the interview, totally different  
942 scene – they're asking all these critical questions about using accessibility features on web tools, especially  
943 where my screen reader might just give up. None of that was in the prep tool, caught me completely off  
944 guard, felt like I prepped for the wrong exam or something." - P9*

945 Participants also highlighted challenges in interacting effectively with these tools. Growing up in a linguistically  
946 diverse Indian society where English is not the first language, many participants had only a basic grasp of English and  
947 often struggled to understand the questions posed by the tools. Furthermore, a few participants noted that certain  
948 words used in the suggestions provided by these tools would sometimes be uncomfortable or confusing. These instances  
949 often made them feel that the tools were not designed with the needs of people with disabilities in mind. P3 mentioned,  
950

951 *"You know, I got some advice once that said I should 'maintain eye contact.' That was a bit frustrat-  
952 ing...Another time, it suggested... [I] 'watch my body language.' Comments like these? They're just confusing,  
953 not helpful at all." - P3*

954 These comments highlight that merely making the tools accessible is insufficient to meet the unique requirements  
955 of BVI job seekers. The entire interaction pattern and feedback system must be designed with consideration for their  
956 real-life experiences, demographic and cultural backgrounds, and current skill-sets.  
957

## 958 6 DISCUSSION

959 Our exploration of how BVI job seekers self-reflect in response to adversities in the job search process and the feedback  
960 they receive, within a society with limited understanding of their experiences and digital navigation capabilities,  
961 provides valuable insights for designing intelligent intervention tools and design strategies (summarized in Table 2).  
962 These tools can guide them towards a more productive and regulated job search process. Some of the notable insights  
963 are discussed next.  
964

### 965 6.1 Peer-guided Self-reflection for Effective Skill Development

966 BVI individuals, who remain a marginalized group in Global South countries such as India, face structural challenges  
967 including limited access to education, discrimination, socioeconomic constraints, and a lack of collective understanding  
968 of accessible technologies (refer Sections 2.3, 4.2, and 5.1). Therefore, the design of interventions should consider  
969 their unique subjective experiences and align with their lived realities [64]. To this end under RQ1, we extended prior  
970 literature that broadly explored the common challenges BVI individuals in job searches. We delved into the nuances of  
971 how BVI job-seekers in India reflected on their experiences and interactions, and how biased societal beliefs shaped their  
972 perspectives regarding employment in the digital sector. We found that, due to a lack of general literacy of accessibility  
973 and limited exposure to professional interactions and collaborative settings, BVI individuals often struggle to effectively  
974 reflect on their skill gaps. As a result, they face challenges in meeting the rigorous demands of the industry, often  
975 attributing early career rejections entirely to societal prejudice, which diminishes their self-efficacy and perceived  
976 control over the job search process (Section 5.1). Additionally, the need to "prove" their competence during the interview  
977 process imposed a significant cognitive burden, diminishing their ability to convey their thoughts clearly—a scenario  
978 for which they have been entirely unprepared.  
979

| 989<br>990<br>991<br>992<br>993<br>994<br>995<br>996<br>997<br>998<br>999<br>1000<br>1001<br>1002<br>1003<br>1004<br>1005<br>1006<br>1007<br>1008<br>1009<br>1010<br>1011<br>1012<br>1013<br>1014<br>1015<br>1016<br>1017<br>1018<br>1019<br>1020<br>1021<br>1022<br>1023<br>1024<br>1025<br>1026<br>1027<br>1028<br>1029<br>1030<br>1031<br>1032<br>1033<br>1034<br>1035<br>1036<br>1037<br>1038<br>1039<br>1040 | Subject  | Findings   | Design Strategies   |
|---|--|--|---|
|   | Promote Social Networking for Digital Literacy   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>BVI job seekers face a skills gap due to limited educational opportunities, lack of societal support, and low collective awareness of accessible technologies.</li> <li>Repeated, unexplained rejections diminish their sense of control and self-efficacy.</li> <li>Demonstrating independent digital proficiency during interviews adds cognitive strain.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage early engagement with global networks to improve awareness of accessible technologies and job prospects.</li> <li>Offer training in soft skills to help BVI job seekers confidently express their needs and competencies in professional interactions.</li> <li>Use success stories to inspire positive self-reflection and support ongoing skill development despite adverse outcomes.</li> </ul>                           |
|   | Seek Personalized Feedback for Skill Development | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Peer-feedback is often too generic and disconnected from their lived real-life job search and interview interaction experiences.</li> <li>BVI individuals often receive minimal feedback during interviews and are rejected with vague explanations, leaving them without clear guidance for self-reflection and skill development.</li> <li>Early BVI job-seekers struggle to objectively reflect on critical feedback.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote group discussions and knowledge sharing on social media platforms to facilitate collaborative reflection on constructive feedback.</li> <li>Simulate realistic interview scenarios for training using AI-assisted technologies to provide actionable feedback on professional interaction skills.</li> <li>Consider the user's background, job-search history, and experiences to personalize feedback effectively.</li> </ul> |
|   | Accessibility of Intervention Tools              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most employment intervention tools are not fully compatible with assistive technologies and present significant usability challenges.</li> <li>Diverse socioeconomic and linguistic backgrounds influence the accessibility of intervention tools.</li> <li>Tools often lack tailored support and impose significant cognitive strain on users due to accessibility issues.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Redesign tools to enable seamless interaction with assistive technologies like screen readers.</li> <li>Design multilingual collaborative learning platforms to support diverse users.</li> <li>Integrate AI-driven systems to offer personalized language learning and communication skill improvement.</li> </ul>  |

Table 2. Summary of design strategies correlated with findings and subjects.

While prior research has broadly advocated for measures to overcome systemic inequities in the employment of underrepresented job seekers [42], it is equally crucial to promote individual adaptation for successful employment

outcomes [42, 44, 64]. A key aspect of this is fostering positive self-efficacy through effective and structured self-reflection, which is deeply embedded in social interactions that significantly shape and inform the reflective process. Structuring this self-reflection through well-informed facilitators, whose feedback encourages deeper analysis of BVI job seekers' prior experiences and beliefs, is essential [12]. However, the quality of self-reflection among these individuals is often limited by the knowledge and experiences of their immediate peers. In a society where a pervasive lack of collective understanding about the potential of BVI individuals in digital workspaces exists, more informed and supportive perspectives remain scarce. Here, we draw parallels to the social concept of the "*looking-glass self*," which posits that individuals form their self-identity based on their perception of how others view them [31]. For BVI job-seekers, feedback received over social networks serve as "*mirrors*" helping shaping their professional identity and sense of capability. These social networks can potentially act as critical data sources [112] that offer more accurate, empathetic, and expertise-driven feedback that guide self-reflection in a positive direction. These networks can therefore help the users see themselves beyond the limited lens of immediate peers, who may share similar uncertainties or misconceptions.

In the second part of our study (regarding RQ2), we explored the quality of feedback practically available to our BVI participants. We found that such feedback is often not readily accessible, and when available, it tends to be too generic and disconnected from their real unique experiences. Additionally, BVI individuals, often from economically and linguistically diverse backgrounds, may develop good communication skills in informal settings but experience significant anxiety during interviews and struggle to objectively receive feedback from interviewers and peers. In the absence of meaningful feedback, they internalize negative experiences and develop inaccurate self-assessments, either overestimating or underestimating their abilities (Sections 5.1 and 5.2). Establishing participation in global peer networks could enable BVI individuals to seek tailored feedback on their skills and approach. Hence, we advocate for educators to teach BVI students how to comfortably engage with and receive constructive feedback while filtering out negative elements on these social platforms. Early self-reflection through such networks can help them make more informed career choices and approach professional interactions with greater confidence.

## 6.2 Rethinking the Design of Employment Intervention Tools

As established in prior research (Section 2.2), intervention tools that promote skill development by incorporating positive and constructive feedback are essential for helping marginalized job seekers, such as BVI individuals, maintain positive self-efficacy throughout the employment process despite the negative experiences and social prejudice they face. These tools are crucial for enabling them to make more informed career decisions, build professional collaborative skills and positive self-representation in interviews particularly in the absence of adequate societal support. Under RQ3, we examined the adequacy of existing tools in addressing the unique challenges faced by BVI job seekers in Global South countries (Sections 5.1, 5.2, 4.1, 4.2), particularly in the context of rapid technological evolution (Section 4.1). In addition to lacking accessibility support (Section 5.3), these tools fail to simulate realistic interview experiences for BVI individuals, lack tailored support, and are not designed to facilitate BVI-inclusive and professional interactions. This necessitates designing beyond a one-size-fits-all approach, creating tools that are usable, constructive, and tailored to the realistic experiences of BVI individuals in under-informed communities. Building on prior research and our findings, which offer a deeper understanding of the unique challenges faced by BVI individuals, we propose design suggestions to be incorporated in the development of intervention tools tailored to their needs.

Firstly, traditional tools such as job search platforms, resume builders, and interview preparation tools, which heavily rely on GUI-based visual feedback, should be redesigned to enable seamless interaction via assistive technologies (ATs)

1093 like screen readers and screen magnifiers [103]. Our research highlights that accessibility issues in these tools can  
1094 impose significant cognitive strain on users, which can undermine their confidence in technology—contrary to the  
1095 intended purpose of promoting self-efficacy among BVI individuals for employment in digitally collaborative workplaces.  
1096 Moreover, making technology accessible does not inherently make it usable for BVI individuals [36, 102, 104]. These  
1097 tools should adopt a simplistic design that minimizes the learning effort required to use them [104], ensuring that users  
1098 do not need to seek external assistance or develop workarounds to address accessibility issues. The design of such  
1099 systems must follow a user-centric approach, involving rigorous testing for both usability and the cognitive burden  
1100 they induce during interaction. Such tools should also provide learning materials or tutorials and community support  
1101 to easily onboard new users.

1102 Secondly, we realize that these tools, which often provide generic feedback (see Section 5.3) on user interaction or  
1103 their resumes, do not take into consideration the social dynamics of interviews characterized by bias. For instance,  
1104 our participants reported they often had to “*prove themselves*” to an employer and “*convince*” them to invest in  
1105 accommodations in terms of licensed ATs. This underscores the necessity for tools that go beyond generic feedback  
1106 and instead offer personalized guidance that mirrors the real-life biases and obstacles BVI job seekers face. Such tools  
1107 should help users develop effective communication strategies to articulate their competencies and accommodation  
1108 needs confidently, without feeling like they are “*imposing*” on potential employers. Tools should provide constructive  
1109 feedback that helps them build a positive self-image, enabling them to demonstrate confidently in interviews that they  
1110 can handle workplace collaboration without issues. By fostering a sense that they can “*do things independently*,” these  
1111 tools can help alleviate the emotional burden of feeling like a “*weak*” candidate for needing additional support.

1112 In addition to the above, the design of these tools must consider interaction behaviors in the absence of visual cues  
1113 while providing feedback. The study underscores how BVI individuals greatly benefit from detailed verbal explanations  
1114 and feedback on interactive dialogues, particularly in virtual settings. Such feedback can help them self-reflect and  
1115 regulate how they handle professional social conversations with minimal pressure. For instance, AI-driven virtual  
1116 interview platforms could record mock interviews and analyze verbal responses, offering insights into strengths and  
1117 areas for improvement. This analysis would allow BVI users to reflect on their performance and understand how to  
1118 enhance their communication and presentation skills. By providing specific, actionable feedback on aspects such as  
1119 clarity, tone, and body language, these tools can help users gain a deeper understanding of how they are presented to  
1120 sighted peers.

1121 Lastly, these tools should account for the diverse socioeconomic and linguistic backgrounds of BVI individuals.  
1122 Modern AI-driven systems are well-equipped to support a multilingual collaborative learning environment [140],  
1123 which can assist BVI individuals in simultaneously learning languages, improving professional conversation skills, and  
1124 effectively communicating technical competence.

### 1125 **6.3 Limitations and Future Work.**

1126 An important limitation of our study stems from the fact that we primarily relied upon self-report data drawn exclusively  
1127 from BVI job seekers where we did not account for the varying levels of familiarity and access to technology among  
1128 participants. Some BVI individuals may have had limited exposure to advanced assistive technologies, potentially  
1129 influencing their responses and experiences.

1130 Another limitation of our study was that we asked participants about their experiences during interviews, specifically  
1131 the attitudes of interviewers towards accessibility, and reported these findings directly. However, we did not capture the  
1132 specific demands of the roles for which the participants were applying, nor did we obtain the interviewers’ perspectives.

1145 We recognize the importance of understanding the viewpoints of industry experts who hire people with severe vision  
 1146 impairments. In the future work we will focus on interviewing recruiters to identify the key skill sets and requirements  
 1147 they seek when hiring BVI individuals.

1148     Additionally, participants who struggle to find jobs may develop biases that influence their job-seeking efforts,  
 1149 potentially affecting the quality of our data. To mitigate this, future research could involve firsthand observation of BVI  
 1150 individuals during interview calls to better understand the moment-to-moment interactions between them and the  
 1151 interviewers. This approach would provide more accurate insights into their experiences and challenges during the  
 1152 interview process.

1153     Various career development and digital employment tools exist today [45, 59]; however, they often provide a one-size-  
 1154 fits-all solution and fail to address the specific needs of BVI individuals (see Section 5.3). While we cannot definitively  
 1155 state the effectiveness of existing tools for BVI individuals, our future research will thoroughly investigate the impact of  
 1156 various intervention methods and technologies aimed at enhancing employability skills in job seekers similar to research  
 1157 work by Hendry et al. [60]. Lastly, we plan to leverage the findings of this study to develop targeted intervention tools  
 1158 that will boost employability among BVI job seekers. These tools will be designed to address the unique challenges faced  
 1159 by BVI individuals in the job market, offering tailored guidance and support to enhance their job-seeking strategies.

## 1160 7 CONCLUSION

1161 Our study highlights the complex dynamics of job-seeking behaviors among visually impaired individuals, emphasizing  
 1162 the significant barriers they face despite their high levels of self-efficacy and adaptability. These challenges are often  
 1163 exacerbated by societal stereotypes and inadequate accessibility in existing employment tools. Our findings underscore  
 1164 the critical need for fostering effective self-reflection, providing constructive feedback, and enhancing communication  
 1165 skills. Additionally, there is a pressing need to develop accessible, individualized tools to improve employability skills  
 1166 for BVI individuals. Addressing these specific needs can significantly improve employment outcomes and promote  
 1167 greater inclusion for visually impaired individuals in the job market. This study also raises new opportunities for further  
 1168 empirical research and design innovations aimed at supporting BVI job seekers, ultimately fostering a more inclusive  
 1169 job market where they can thrive and contribute meaningfully.

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