People with disabilities in the Temeke Municipal Council in Tanzania: Narratives of accessing soft loans

Doreen N. Tefurukwa[1]
Oscar W. Tefurukwa[2]

[1]doreentefurukwa@gmail.com
[2]otefurukwa@mzumbe.ac.tz

[1]Temeke Municipal Council, [2]Mzumbe University, [1,2]Tanzania

https://doi.org/10.51867/scimundi.6.2.6

ABSTRACT

In Tanzania, several initiatives aim to empower People with Disabilities (PwDs) to access soft loans, amounting to 2% of the local government annual revenue. However, some PwDs are unable to access loans due to procedures that subject them to poverty. Therefore, this study assessed the processes PwDs undergo to access 2% of the soft loan in the Temeke Municipal Council. The study used the Social Constructionism Theory as the framework for the phenomenological research design. The narratives were created by 18 informants: 14 PWDs who had received loans, 2 Social Welfare Officers by virtue of their positions, and 2 Community Development Officers involved in direct loan disbursement. The final sample size was determined by the principle of data saturation, which guided the narrative development. Data analysis was conducted using themes extracted from verbatim excerpts. A set of meanings was created, accompanied by narratives for each group, to establish the essence of lived experience. The findings demonstrate the inadequacy of institutional enforcement (i.e., Laws, rules, and regulations) in supporting PWDs' access to funds. Furthermore, the study reveals that PWDs can form groups as a condition for accessing funds; however, the lack of timely, accurate information to make informed decisions is the major barrier. The study concludes that the challenges the PwDs face are largely socially constructed and perpetuated by institutions through the enforcement of policies that disadvantage them. Conclusively, ending poverty and leaving no PwDs behind would depend on policymakers formulating strategies that foster an inclusive financial environment for PwDs, end discrimination in all forms, and establish regular process evaluations to enhance the overall accessibility and effectiveness of soft-loan lending.

Keywords: People with Disabilities, Processes, Socially Constructed, Soft Loans Accessibility, Temeke Municipal Council

I. INTRODUCTION

PwDs refers to individuals who have physical, sensory, cognitive, or mental impairments that may hinder their full and equal participation in society (World Health Organisation-[WHO], 2023). In working towards the realisation of the Sustainable Development Goals, the United Nations (2026) demonstrated dedication to PWDs worldwide. Hence, any sign of decimation of the PWDs in pursuit of their well-being would undermine the efforts made (UN, 2026). Each nation must support PwDs to the fullest extent in earning their livelihood (ibid). Additionally, the UN is dedicated to "leaving no one behind" in achieving the SDGs by 2030, with PwDs integral to "inclusive and sustainable economic growth" (UN, 2026). However, the PwDs are still facing previous hurdles (Modéer & Viera, 2023). About (16%) 1.3 billion of the world's population are most likely to fall into health issues such as asthma, excessive weight, serious disorders, and heart attacks due to poverty and exclusion from financial support (The World Health Organisation-WHO, 2023). It means the UN's ambitions to "end poverty" and "leave no one behind" by 2024 are still far from being attained.

About 50% of the SDGs had not progressed beyond 50% by 2024. In some cases, progress on the SDGs stalls or even reverses for more than 40% of the goals (Alliance for Financial Inclusion (AFI), 2023). The net effect is to aggravate economic growth and the exclusion of PwDs. As the consequences, PwDs continue to be subjected to harsh socio-economic conditions. Secondly, there is an increase in unemployment rates (0.1% vs 5.1%) for non-disabled people, and low wages; they earn 12% less per hour, with gaps of 25% or more in some developing countries. Thirdly, in developing countries, 75% of working-age people with disabilities remain unemployed (International Disabilities & Development Consortium-IDDC, 2026). One solution would be to provide PwDs with easy access to soft loans. Soft loans are loans with more favourable terms and conditions than standard commercial loans (Kazosi, 2024). Soft loans can be accessed from microcredit financial institutions (IDDC, 2026) and other sources (Wakhungu, 2023).

PWDs' access to loan funds with soft characteristics is inherently able to facilitate efforts to reduce poverty (Kazosi et al., 2024), particularly for marginalised groups such as persons with disabilities (PWDs). PwDs account for about 16% (1.3 billion) of the world population; 80% (1.06 billion) live in the Global South; and 80% (1.06 billion) are of working age but live 20 years shorter than people without disabilities (World Bank Group, 2026). They can significantly improve tangible health, lives, and well-being for themselves and the world at large through inclusive financing (ibid). Hence, access to soft loans remains one of the major means of revitalising PwDs' socio-economic status (Wakhungu, 2023). Initiatives to support PwDs financially include, but are not limited to, the Global Disability Fund, international funds and grants, and the World Bank (World Bank Group, 2026). Some countries are working hard to improve the quality of life for PWDs. For instance, in Canada and Germany, efforts to improve PWDs' financial literacy training (The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2024). However, even in developed countries, PWDs are yet to disentangle from humiliation, discrimination, and social exclusion because it the worldwide phenomenon (Mboya et al., 2025). In this turmoil, the female group members suffer more than their male counterparts. In general, PWDs in Canada are more likely to experience lower employment levels. It implies that PWDs are likely to experience job insecurity (OECD, 2024).

In Germany, PWDs face a situation similar to that in Canada. PWDs face discrimination as they are paid based on it. Lower wages imply that PWDs cannot meet market demands. They cannot meet their needs and wants once they want to procure what matters most in their lives (The European Union, 2021). In Mexico, PWDs experience what many PWDs in developing countries suffer from. It is very hard to secure adequate jobs; as a result, they have lower incomes. This implies that even if they get access to the soft loan, repaying becomes a serious challenge (Includovate, 2021). Elsewhere in Malaysia and China, PWDs fail to repay soft loans due to several challenges, including financial illiteracy and difficulty accessing market networks (Mustaffa et al., 2020; OECD, 2024). The infrastructure is not yet favourable to PWDs. PWDs cannot afford to repay the soft loans, which is why they fail to break the vicious cycle of poverty.

African countries collaborate with financial institutions to provide interest-free loans to businesses owned by PwDs. In Sub-Saharan Africa, particularly in South Africa, there are efforts to support PwDs financially through government Grants and Funds; in Rwanda and Ghana, there is digital financial inclusion, including mobile money access for the unbanked and PwDs (Singh & Awasthi, 2025). Initiatives by the non-governmental and international organisations like Africa Disability Alliance and Christian Blind Mission (CBM) have been operating in various capacities to create awareness through training for economic empowerment Alliance for Financial Inclusion (AFI), 2023). While there are some dedicated efforts, the number of soft loan defaulters is increasing. Mashanyare et al. (2025) report that in Zimbabwe, economic instability and severe unemployment have further complicated PWDs' ability to repay soft loans. The revelation from South Africa shows that even when the government has in place disability grants and programs, discrimination and financial exclusion are still prevalent. PWDs are excluded not only from marketplaces but also from financial options. The situation implies that the PWDs can hardly disentangle themselves from dependence. The World Bank Group (2026) reports that while the government of Kenya, through the National Fund for the Disabled of Kenya (NFDK), could provide PWDs with access to soft loans, inadequate training and awareness-raising have resulted in lower-than-expected repayment rates. In Uganda, through the Special Grant for PWDs, thousands received soft loans. Experiences with repayments are similar to those in other African countries; inadequate governance, specifically inadequate training and insufficient monitoring and evaluation, has resulted in PWDs' business failure rates. Subsequently, it adversely affects PWDs' ability to repay soft loans (Ojok & Mukasa, 2024). From the discussion, it is evident that they have been working hard to obtain access to loans, but in vain.

Like its counterparts, the government of Tanzania has made dedicated efforts to support the PWDs. There are policies and a legal framework. The Persons with Disabilities Act, No. 9 of 2010, provides PWDs with rights and access to economic opportunities available in Tanzania. This is operationalised through the Local government Finance Act (CAP 290 R.E. 2019), mandating local councils to allocate 10% of their annual revenue to provide soft loans specifically to women (4%), youth (4%), and people with disabilities (2%) (URT, 2019). In Dar es Salaam, for example, in 2024, the Dar es Salaam City Council set aside TZS 14.08 billion for loans to support women, youth, and PwDs (The Citizens, 08th November, 2024). One of Dar es Salaam's councils is Temeke, where loans are typically provided in kind (e.g., vehicles, machinery) to ensure proper utilisation and prevent misuse. Reports indicate that only 35% of PWD groups repaid the loans. This situation leaves the other 65% whose incapacity stifles the revolving fund and expansion, limiting many PWDs' access to soft loans. This attribute implies that government efforts are unlikely to achieve the intended goals (URT, 2017; The World Bank Group, 2026). Similarly, PWDs in the Temeke Municipal Council are likely to experience deeper systemic discrimination that hinders their access to straightforward, attractive processes for achieving long-term economic empowerment. The situation is of great concern, as it highlights the processes PWDs undergo to secure access to the soft loan without defaulting on repayment (Daily News, 17th July, 2023). Therefore, there is a need to review the processes that the PWDs undergo for accessing the soft loans in the Temeke Municipal Council

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The United Nations, the African Union, and Tanzania have made several efforts to enable PwDs to access soft loans, a widely recognised mechanism for improving economic participation and alleviating poverty (UN, 2026), particularly for marginalised groups such as persons with disabilities (PwDs). As a country, Tanzania has made several efforts to enable PWDs to access soft loans to significantly improve their tangible health, lives, and well-being, and those of the world at large, through inclusive financing (WHO, 2023). Hence, access to soft loans remains one of the major means of revitalising PWDs' socio-economic status (Wakhungu, 2023). However, most PwDs are still facing significant challenges that include but are not limited to stigma, discrimination, and social isolation (Mboya et al., 2025). The PwDs often experience prejudice, particularly women, who are disproportionately affected (Includovate, 2021). They struggle to escape poverty without access to well-structured social loans (Montes & Swindle, 2021). This situation makes it more difficult for PWDs to break the vicious cycle of poverty.

Despite the extant studies (i.e., Komba, 2024; Sabore, 2025; Masswe, 2025; Rugeiyamu, 2023; and Mboya et al., 2025) being very informative about PwDs in Tanzania, they only tangentially narrate the processes PwDs encountered in accessing soft loans and eventually repaying them. None sheds light on the Temeke Municipal Council's experiences. Methodologically, any previous findings are hardly generalisable and do not exhaust the experiences of other LGAs. Hence, this study adds to the body of knowledge by assessing the processes that PwDs undergo to access 2% of the soft loan set aside by the Temeke Municipal Council in Tanzania. The study illuminates the challenges PwDs face when accessing soft loans. By examining the processes involved, the study provides policymakers and financial institutions that support PwDs with valuable insights. Understanding the access processes could enhance financial inclusion for PwDs, ultimately improving their economic well-being and contributing to the overall welfare of their families and communities in Tanzania.

1.2 Research Objective

The study intended to assess the processes PwDs undergo to access 2% of the soft loan set aside by the Temeke Municipal Council in Tanzania.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

The Social Constructionism Theory (SCT) is primarily associated with the seminal work of sociologists Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann in 1966. In their influential publication, The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge. It is argued that reality is not an objective (Burr, 1995) predetermined fact but is continuously produced and reinforced through social interactions, language, and institutional practices (Jennifer, 2021). Our understanding of the world is shaped by the shared meanings and knowledge that societies construct and uphold societies construct over time (Burr, 1995). Hence, meanings, norms, and social roles are not inherent or natural (Burr, 1995); they are products of human agreement and power dynamics (Jennifer, 2021).

In the context of this study, access to soft loans within the Temeke Municipal Council should be examined by analysing interactional processes among stakeholders involved in PwDs' financial support in the LGAs. The bureaucratic delays, excessive documentation, and discriminatory treatment reported during loan applications are not merely administrative inefficiencies (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). They are manifestations of a socially constructed perception of PwDs as high-risk or less capable borrowers (Burr, 1995). The situation institutionalises sexism and creates barriers before a business even begins, as supported by similar findings in Kenya. It is common not to let PwDs choose the business model, but to be told by the institutions that provide funds and grants which one is best (Angwenyi et al., 2023). The construct of "*suitable*" Business Models is prevalent yet often unsuccessful. For example, in Dar es Salaam, the best business model would be group-based *bajaji* transport ventures. It is a social construct business model. This activity is perceived as a "quick win" and a suitable collective endeavour for PwDs, often promoted without sound market analysis. This construct would limit entrepreneurial imagination and set PwDs up for failure in oversaturated markets (Mustaffa et al., 2020).

The concept of the internalisation of skill gaps underscores the importance of recognising that entrepreneurial skills are not inborn (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). It is, in part, a societal value that constructs PwDs as less in need of or capable of complex business training (Mustaffa et al., 2020). It is detrimental when PwDs internalise low expectations of the businesses where they work. The net effect erodes the PwDs' self-efficacy and confidence (Kasozi et al., 2024). PwDs are less likely to seek an improved standard of living through advanced training or to persevere through challenges that directly impact loan repayment and their capacity for marginalisation and participation in the informal economy. The socially constructed disability habitually marginalises individuals from formal employment and income-earning activities (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). PwDs are constrained and subject to the volatility of the informal sector. This situation limits their initial capital, networks, experience, knowledge, and positive attitude, hindering their ability to take off and persevere (Munyegera, 2024). It creates an unwarranted foundation for any loan-funded venture from the start.

The application of SCT provides a theoretical framework that challenges the perception of *nature and inequality* among PwDs in the real world. It is the disbelief that PwDs are naturally economically disadvantaged because of their impairments (Burr, 1995). The theory enlightens researchers, policymakers, and practitioners by redirecting analysis to the attitudinal, environmental, and institutional barriers that society creates (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

2.2 Empirical Review

Several studies have shed light on the subject elsewhere, particularly in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. However, in this study, only a few were subjected to critical analysis. Komba (2024) used purposive and snowball sampling; the study involved four SACCOS. The findings indicate that there were few, if any, specific plans to address the needs of People with Disabilities. Factors that majorly affected People with Disabilities' access to financial services related to either People with Disabilities' families or the SACCOS's administration. Family background, level of education, and type of disability are directly related to the families of people with disabilities.

In contrast, policy and legal conditions, limited information on SACCOS, and SACCOS publicity are related to SACCOS administration. Additionally, Rugeiyamu (2023) study is not directly related to PWDs, but it does address the youth who comprise PWDs in Songwe District Council, Tanzania. The study does not disaggregate by youth with and without disabilities. The study focuses on the repayment of soft loans. The current study assesses how PWDs access loans within the Temeke Municipal Council in Tanzania.

Sabore's (2025) quantitative study examined aspects of financial inclusion and its impact on the well-being of PwDs in Monduli District, Tanzania, focusing on the convenience, use, and prominence of financial services available to them. Conclusions reveal that financial attachment has the potential to improve economic contributions and reduce poverty amongst PwDs (Singh & Awasthi, 2025); however, numerous barriers persist (European Union, 2021; Rugeiyamu, 2023): limited financial literacy, insufficient infrastructure, and obstructive policies that delay access to financial services. The study underscores that 2% of Local government Authority (LGA) loans are available to PwDs, but access remains a challenge. The study is current and very informative to the current study. However, the study mentions a qualitative approach (i.e., Interviews) with five (5) community development officers to enrich it; their narratives are missing. Hence, the sample is 129 vs 234. The study is an atheoretical exploratory one. It suffers from purely data-derived descriptions. It lacks a theoretical framework, further jeopardising the contextualisation of the findings. Furthermore, rarely informs practitioners and academics.

The study by Massawe (2025) is very informative, as it illuminates the criteria for local government authority loans to the well-being of women with disabilities in Arusha City Council. While the study is contextualised within a theoretical perspective and rigorous in its use of inferential statistics, it undermines its own scholarship by failing to fully explain its findings (see Massawe, 2025: 636). Narratives from the interviewees would have enriched findings derived from inferential statistics. The current study is immersed in narrative analysis from the interviews and FGS. Additionally, Rugeiyamu's (2023) study specifically assesses the reasons behind failures to recover loans by LGAs and groups of Women, Youth and People with Disabilities (WYPWD) in Tunduru District Council in Tanzania. Employed interviews, focus group discussions, and Documentary Review. Findings – failures to recover loans from beneficiaries stem from weaknesses in both groups and LGAs. The current study departs from prior studies by assessing the processes involved in accessing soft loans within the Temeke Municipal Council.

Mboya et al. (2025) studied the level of access to interest-free loans offered by governments in four locations in Tanzania: Dar es Salaam City Council, Mufindi District Council, Kibaha District Council, and Mafinga Town Council. It examined the level of PWDs' access to loans issued by LGAs in Tanzania. In particular, by using the three theories, the Nordic relational model of disability, critical disability theory, and policy implementation theory shed light on trends in PWDs' access to loans offered by LGAs; the level of awareness among PWDs of loans offered by LGAs; motives of the PWDs to apply for loans offered by LGAs; and the PWDs' business knowledge and skills to utilise properly. The study is very informative about the current one. However, the methodology employed does not explicitly justify the selection of areas and the findings in relation to the study's objectives. Hence, not generalisable WDs in divergent LGAs in Tanzania. Narratives serve the purpose of a particular local government council, as every Council has its lived experiences, hence different narratives.

Extant empirical studies on the same phenomenon, including Rugeiyamu (2023), Sabore (2025), and Massawe (2025), have raised concerns about PwDs' soft-loan payments in Tanzania. They converge on the causes of failure to repay loans given to women, youth, and PwDs by LGAs: groups' unawareness of loan purposes, financial management illiteracy, and poor loan governance by LGAs. Despite valuable insights from existing studies on LGAs' soft loans, there are gaps to fill. Mboya et al. (2025) found that women, youth, and PwDs share similar characteristics. Additionally, the study assumes that a case study is generalisable and that a theoretical framework is. In the same vein, Sabore (2025), and Massawe (2025) did not provide succinct narratives of the processes of accessing soft loans. This subject matter should be grounded in discussions and narratives that provide deep insights. Hence, this study specifically assessed the processes involved in obtaining soft loans within the Temeke Municipal Council.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Philosophy and Approach

This research is guided by an interpretivist philosophy, which emphasises that human experiences are deeply embedded in social and cultural contexts (Creswell, 2014). Understanding the socio-economic and administrative factors affecting soft loan repayment among PWDs necessitates direct engagement with participants' narratives. This perspective recognises multiple realities, contributing to a holistic understanding of the phenomenon by capturing diverse experiences and nuanced insights (Patton & Broward, 2023). Hence, adopting a qualitative research approach enables a detailed account of how PWDs navigate loan processes.

3.2 Research Design

A phenomenological research design was employed to describe and interpret individuals' lived experiences with loan applications, business operations, and repayment processes. Rooted in the works of Edmund Husserl (1967) and expanded by Heidegger (2005), phenomenology aims to uncover how people make sense of their experiences within everyday contexts (Husserl, 1967; Heidegger, 2005; Patton & Broward, 2023). This design effectively helped the study uncover PwDs' lived experiences in accessing soft loans within the Temeke Municipal Council in Tanzania by examining common patterns and unique differences in their experiences.

3.3 Study Area

Conducted in Temeke Municipality, Dar es Salaam, this study focuses on an area mandated to provide soft loans to special groups under the Local government Finance Act (CAP 290 R.E. 2019). Temeke was selected due to its high population of PwDs and the significant number of disability groups that have received soft loans. Over TZS 2,124,534,800 was disbursed to 111 PwD groups from 2018/2019 to 2022/2023, yet over 65% failed to repay their loans. Statistics highlight, among pertinent issues, the processes involved in awarding loans to PwD groups. Moreover, Temeke's unique model of offering assets instead of cash for loans has not yielded the anticipated repayment performance, necessitating further investigation into its effectiveness.

3.4 Sampling and Sample Size

The study population included PwDs who received soft loans from Temeke Municipal Council, as well as Social Welfare Officers and Community Development Officers involved in the loan distribution process. The study involved 18 participants: 14 Persons with Disabilities (PWDs), 2 Social Welfare Officers, and 2 Community Development Officers. The final sample size was determined using data saturation, which occurs when no new information or themes emerge from the data. Saturation was reached as participants consistently reflected similar issues.

3.5 Data Collection

In-depth interviews were the primary qualitative data collection method, enabling participants to share their experiences in detail. Conducted face-to-face in a private setting and conducted in Swahili for comfort, the interviews were audio-recorded with consent, transcribed verbatim, and translated into English for analysis. This method allowed exploration of complex issues such as discrimination, accessibility challenges, business struggles, and institutional processes, while ensuring ethical considerations, including voluntary participation and confidentiality. The documentary review provided secondary data from official documents, including municipal loan registers, the Local government Finance Act, and monitoring reports. This method enriched the study by validating participants' accounts and revealing discrepancies between policy and practice.

3.5 Data Analysis

The nature of the study dictates the data analysis format, using themes. Each theme conveyed a single meaning by describing the phenomenon in textual language. The study used verbatims excerpts, which are the lived experiences of the interviewees. The textural description was integrated into the structure to explain what happened and how it occurred. A set of meanings was created, accompanied by narratives for each group, to establish the essence of lived experience. Throughout the processes, researchers avoided imposing preconceived experiences, such as prejudices and biases, on the phenomenological study.

3.6 Trustworthiness and Ethical Considerations

To ensure rigour and trustworthiness, the study applied Lincoln and Guba's (1985) four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was enhanced through prolonged engagement, triangulation, and member checking, enabling participants to verify the accuracy of the interpretation. Additionally, the study adheres to ethical considerations. Ethical protocols were strictly followed to protect participants' rights and well-being. The researchers obtained authorisation from the relevant authorities and communicated transparently with participants about the study's purpose and procedures. Informed consent was obtained verbally and in writing, ensuring that participants understood their rights and could withdraw without penalty. Confidentiality was preserved by using pseudonyms and securely storing data, limiting access to the researcher. Interviews were conducted in private, comfortable settings to minimise stress, and participants' well-being was continuously monitored. Overall, the data were collected, interpreted, and presented in this study in accordance with ethical guidelines. Additionally, the study follows academic writing skills.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

The study focused on assessing procedural openness and the application requirements for PwD groups. Findings reveal the challenges PwDs face in accessing soft loans, as shown in the interview responses below.

4.1 Loan Application Processes

In the interview guide, one pertinent question was whether the process was clear and understood by the loan applicants, regardless of whether they were PWDs. Making opinions on processes along the course of the PwDs applying for the loans, one of the respondents said the following;

> *"While the application process is formally transparent, bureaucratic requirements, delays, and inconsistent treatment often create barriers to accessing financial support. These challenges hinder the broader goal of inclusive economic empowerment. While the loan application forms were clear, the approval process took months. I did not fully understand, and each time they claimed something was missing. Every time they could call me, I had to provide the same documents"* (PWD/IDI/Temeke, 19th May, 2025).

Drawing on PwDs' narratives of the processes they experienced, access to soft loans is not as smooth as policies prescribe. It is the right of PwDs to access financial services, such as soft loans, but implementation largely rests with their discretion. That is why there is a strong relationship between disability and poverty due to lower access to credit (Sightsavers, 2023). The process is associated with risks of discrimination and unfavourable interest rates. Other PwDs cannot access soft loans because financial institutions lack sufficient data on them (Mitra et al., 2021). Some conditions, such as a business license, may be a stumbling block for beginners who have not yet acquired one (Rugeiyamu, 2023).

Additionally, since accessing the loan may require physical contact, some PwDs are physically challenged to the extent that they cannot afford to visit offices whose layouts do not accommodate their impairments. Socially, PwDs are not integrated into the planning and design of public offices for PwDs (Sarker, 2024). Through triangulation of the data, the same inquiry was posed to the community development officer, who narrated the following;

> "*By design, the loan process is transparent and efficient. We have shared the steps to follow through the public meetings we regularly conduct. However, to qualify for the PWD loan, applicants must apply using certain documents, such as the National Identity Card, also known as the "NIDA." Most applicants do not have it. Missing any of the important documents can cause delays and may result in outright exclusion from the loan application. Without bias, the same principles are applied to all. Even capable applicants faced long waiting periods if they lacked the proper documents*" (CDO/IDI/Temeke, 29th May, 2025).

Previous studies shed light on the findings. Sightsavers (2023) revealed that PwDs are categorically discriminated against due to "financial institutions' pre-existing prejudice; too risk to lend as they cannot save; verbal and physical mistreatment"—additionally inaccessible physical environment and transportation. Includovate's (2021) findings appreciated Tanzania's constitution for protecting the rights of PwDs, but the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities had not yet been well integrated. The amendment to the 1977 constitution would capture the PwDs. The main obstacles for the PwDs were social stigma, stereotypes and awareness. Individuals and community members perceive PwDs as incapable and of less value due to inadequate, diversified advocacy and sensitisation. Mboya et al. (2025) concluded that PwDs have a low tendency to apply for soft loans, largely due to concerns about the process and reimbursement. There is strong convergence among previous studies that limited enforcement of existing laws and inadequate guidelines for accessibility tools and accountability mechanisms influence PwDs' access to offices and services. When asked to compare the experiences of the PWD and capable applicants who undergo the same process, the social worker officer demonstrated the following experience;

> "*The procedures are technically open to everyone, but in practice, people with disabilities face multiple difficulties. Staff often require repeated visits, additional documents, and, sometimes, personal recommendations that are difficult for them to obtain. The procedures slow the process and can discourage genuine applicants*" (SWO/IDI/Temeke, 29th May, 2025).

The same inquiry was directed to another official directly involved in processing loans for women, youth, and PwDs within the Council. Reflecting on the issue, the following narrative emerged:

> "*We aim for transparency, but the bureaucracy is overwhelming. Many PwDs get lost in the process or experience long delays at various checkpoints. Without proper guidance or accompaniment, they may be unintentionally excluded, ultimately undermining the empowerment goals these programs are meant to achieve*" (SWO, IDI, Temeke, 29th May 2025).

In line with the responses above, Sabore (2025) reveals that access to financial services can improve the economic well-being of PwDs. While the Council may set aside 2% of its revenues for PwDs, accessing these funds is problematic because PwDs are barred from receiving them based on age, gender, and educational level. They opt for informal financial institutions. The situation can be resolved by addressing financial services and by formulating and implementing policies to improve accessibility. In echoing Sabore's study (Munyegera, 2024), Munyegera argues that financial institutions observe rules and regulations regardless of the customer's nature. Hence, maintaining structured documentation promotes accountability and reduces the risk of loan default, suggesting that these requirements protect public resources rather than restrict access. This viewpoint contrasts sharply with the lived experiences of PWDs in Temeke, who find such procedures restrictive and exclusionary.Conversely, other studies challenge the assumption that uniform processes ensure fairness. Wilson and Shishiwa (2023) show that bureaucratic systems disproportionately disadvantage informal workers and PwDs who struggle to meet formal eligibility standards. In addition, Berger and Luckmann (1966) argue that institutional norms, such as formal identification, inadvertently marginalise those who do not fit established expectations. Sarker's (2024) study supports Berger and Luckmann's findings. Sarker argues that PWDs faced inaccessible offices, excessive paperwork, and limited support in processing their applications for access to financial services, all of which reflect the challenges observed at the Tema Municipal Council. Another participant further elaborated on the administrative difficulties encountered by persons with disabilities during the loan application process:

> "*Even though the procedures are officially open, PwDs often face numerous administrative barrierrs includingg repeated visits to offices, excessive paperwork, and the need to secure personal references that are difficult to obtain. These bureaucratic delays often result in applicants receiving funds later than expectedor in smaller amounts than initially approved. Consequently, PwDs struggle to start income-generating activities on time, which in turn reduces their ability to repay loans as scheduled.*" (CDO, IDI, Temeke, 29th May 2025).

Subjecting the finding into social constructionism theory (SCT), the study reveals the following. The hurdles experienced by PwDs are socially constructed (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). PwDs encountered cumbersome situations due to social interactions, language, and institutional practices. The processes used to obtain access to soft loans and the failure to repay are procedural barriers rather than PwDs' failures (Amanze & Nkomazana, 2020). While Sabore's (2025) study favours formal institutions that adhere to rules and regulations, the SCT perspective views these institutions as perpetuating stereotypes through disadvantageous policies (Burr, 1995).

Additionally, bureaucratic delays, excessive documentation, and discriminatory treatment encountered by PwDs stem from a socially constructed perception of PwDs as high-risk or less capable borrowers (Burr, 1995). Since barriers are socially constructed rather than natural, so is PwDs' inability to access and repay loans. Policymakers can revisit policies, rules, and regulations to enable PwDs to access soft loans.

4.2 Group Loan Applications

Under the sub-theme, the study sought to determine whether group-based application requirements, such as joint liability, peer accountability, and group cohesion, facilitated or hindered PWDs' ability to meet repayment obligations. The inquiry started with one of the PwD who reported the following:

> "*While such models are intended to promote collaborative responsibility and mutual support, they often lead to disputes, uneven contributions, and inadequate accountability. We were informed to form a group, but others disappeared after taking out the loan. I was left to pay on my own. Moreover, I failed to pay the amount of 3 million*" (PWD/IDI/Temeke, 22nd May, 2025).

The social welfare office, which explained that;

> "*In most cases, these groups are not genuine. Strategically, group members form a group because it is required, even though they lack elements that could bind them together. They are just groups formed to access the loan, but they lack unity and a shared vision. To start with, such groups cannot prosper with divided vision, mission and objectives; consequently, they fail to repay the loans*" (SWO/IDI/Temeke, 29th May, 2025).

Moreover, a researcher consulted one of the community development officers on the subject matter. The participant had differing opinions as follows,

> "*The primary goal of the loan is to support Tanzanians who are in need. The PwDs are part of a group loan. They need access to the loan to support existing businesses, not startups, and to allow individual, not group, applications. However, many loan schemes often promote group-based applications. However,*

participants face challenges like mistrust, unequal contributions, and unclear leadership, leading to disputes, loan default risks, and internal conflict" (CDO/IDI/Temeke, 29th May 2025).

From the responses above, it is noted that while the group loan-based scheme was deemed an adequate approach, it resulted in inefficiency and ineffectiveness. Group lending among PWDs in Temeke was widely viewed as ineffective. Participants reported that differences in commitment, capacity, and financial discipline often made joint liability unworkable, supporting Komba's (2024) argument that group lending commonly fails in disadvantaged communities. It can create a moral hazard when some members depend on others to repay. In contrast, Ghatak and Guinnane (1999) and Karlan (2007) show that well-managed group lending can lower transaction costs, strengthen peer monitoring, and promote repayment when groups share strong social ties. The situation suggests that the challenges observed in Temeke stem not from group lending itself but from weak group formation, poor monitoring, and limited common goals. Mboya et al. (2025) similarly note that effective group lending requires trust and social cohesion, qualities largely absent in the PWD groups studied. Their work implies that group leadership is unsuitable for groups formed solely to meet loan requirements rather than on genuine social bonds.

From a social constructionist perspective, the insistence on group lending reflects institutional reflects institutional assumptions that PwDs need collective oversight, reinforcing stereotypes about limited autonomy. Instead of empowering borrowers, these structures may restrict their independence by tying them to members who do not share the same motivation or business values. This mismatch between institutional expectations and lived experiences helps explain why PwDs often find group lending burdensome and ineffective. Overall, while Temeke's loan procedures appear transparent in policy, they remain rigid and bureaucratic in practice. Requirements such as formal identification and repeated documentation disproportionately hinder PwDs, despite arguments that these procedures promote accountability. Evidence from both local and international contexts suggests that without flexible, disability-responsive adaptations, bureaucratic systems tend to exclude rather than empower. Consequently, transparency at the policy level does not translate into equitable access, limiting PWDs' ability to benefit from soft loan programs.

V. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

The study examined the mechanisms by which persons with disabilities (PwDs) access soft loans within the Temeke Municipal Council in Tanzania. It reveals significant discrepancies between policy intentions and their implementation, particularly the inadequate enforcement of existing laws and the lack of comprehensive guidelines for accessibility and accountability. These factors hinder PwDs' access to essential services and facilities, creating an environment rife with risks, including discrimination, complex business licensing requirements, and unfavourable physical infrastructure. While bureaucratic inefficiencies were criticised, research suggests that structured documentation is essential to maintaining accountability and minimising the risk of loan defaults. The compliance requirements are primarily designed to safeguard public resources rather than, in and of themselves, to restrict access to soft loans. Despite this, the study notes that PwDs are hesitant to seek soft loans, primarily due to apprehensions about the process and repayment terms.

Furthermore, challenges within Temeke do not stem from group lending itself but rather from suboptimal group formation, insufficient monitoring, and a lack of shared objectives. Successful group lending hinges on trust and social cohesion—elements that were notably lacking in the PwD groups assessed. The prevalent group-leader model is poorly suited to those configured solely to comply with loan criteria rather than to foster authentic social connections. This dissonance between institutional expectations and the lived realities of PwDs contributes to perceptions of group lending as burdensome and ineffective. Ultimately, the study posits that the challenges faced by PwDs are largely socially constructed, perpetuated by institutions through disadvantageous policies. The barriers encountered in accessing soft loans and issues related to repayment are procedural in nature, rather than indicative of a failure on the part of PwDs.

5.2 Recommendations

Research findings indicate that procedural barriers are significant impediments to persons with disabilities (PwDs) when seeking access to soft loans through the Temeke Municipal Council. The situation underscores the urgent need for policymakers to formulate strategies that foster an inclusive financial environment for PwDs. A critical approach would involve diversifying sources of loan provision by partnering with microcredit institutions to develop customised products that meet the unique financial needs of PwDs. Moreover, the study highlights discrimination as a prevailing obstacle to PwDs' access to these financial resources. Discriminatory practices manifest not only in the physical infrastructure but also in the systemic design of financial processes. It is essential to ensure that PwDs enjoy both physical and digital accessibility to financial institutions.

To effectively combat discrimination, a robust legal framework is necessary to prohibit systemic bias and to secure PwDs' rights to participate in soft-loan application processes. Implementational strategies could include comprehensive education programs for PwDs, disability awareness training for financial institution staff, and necessary accommodations, such as accessible online application interfaces. Furthermore, establishing a monitoring and evaluation system is imperative to guarantee that soft loan schemes are indeed accessible to PwDs. Regularly conducting evaluations will yield valuable insights into the specific challenges faced by PwDs, facilitating timely adjustments to financial processes and enhancing the overall accessibility and effectiveness of lending soft loans.

Declaration of Interest

The authors declare that they do not have any known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Funding Declaration

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

REFERENCES

Alliance for Financial Inclusion (AFI). (2023, November 14). Financial inclusion for persons with disabilities. https://afi-global.org

Amanze, N., & Nkomazana, F. (Eds.). (2020). *Disability is not inability: A quest for inclusion and participation of people with disability* (Mzuni Books No. 42). Mzuni Press.

Angwenyi, V., Muuo, S. W., Virendrakumar, B., Okello, G., Kibet, H., Nduta, S., Gichohi, K., Ndoria, M., & Jolley, E. (2023). Financial inclusion for persons with disabilities in Kenya: A rapid review and qualitative study. Nairobi: Sightsavers. https://research.sightsavers.org/Report_June-2023.pdf

Berger, L. P., & Luckmann, T. (1966). *The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge*. Penguin Group.

Burr, V. (1995). *An introduction to social constructionism*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203299968

Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). Sage.

Daily News Reporter. (2023, July 17). Why are non-recoverable loans hindering efforts to emancipate women with disabilities from tricycles? https://dailynews.co.tz/why-non-recoverable-loans-dwindling-efforts-to-emancipate-women-with-disabilities/

Ghatak, M., & Guinnane, T. W. (1999). The economics of lending with joint liability: Theory and practice. *Journal of Development Economics, 60*, 195–228. https://ideas.repec.org/a/eee/deveco/v60y1999i1p195-228.html

Heidegger, M. (2005). *Introduction to phenomenological research* (D. O. Dahlstrom, Trans.). Indiana University Press.

Husserl, E. (1967). *Ideas: General introduction to pure phenomenology* (W. R. Boyce Gibson, Trans.; 2nd printing). Collier Books.

Includovate. (2021). UNPRPD situational analysis on persons with disabilities in the United Republic of Tanzania. UNCT Tanzania. https://unprpd.org/new/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/CR_Tanzania_2022-e95.pdf

International Disabilities and Development Consortium (IDDC). (2026). Inclusive and sustainable economic empowerment: How to reach the tipping point? https://www.iddcconsortium.net/

Jennifer, K. (2021). Sociological theory: Social constructionism. Salem Press. https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/religion-and-philosophy/sociological-theory-social-constructionism

Karlan, D. S. (2007). Social connections and group banking. *The Economic Journal, 117*(517), 52–84.

Kazosi, M. M., Jeckoniah, J. N., & Urassa, J. K. (2024). Access to public soft loans and job creation among marginalised groups in Tanzania. *Business Excellence and Management, 14*(2), 87–100. https://doi.org/10.24818/beman/2024.14.2-06

Komba, C. K. (2024). Factors affecting people with disabilities' access to micro-finance services in Kilimanjaro, Tanzania. *East African Journal of Management and Business Studies, 4*(1), 73–79. https://doi.org/10.46606/eajmbs2024v04i01.0044

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. SAGE. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0147-1767(85)90062-8

Mashanyare, T., Garutsa, T. C., & Odhav, K. (2025). Challenges with the Disability Policy Framework in Zimbabwe: An in-depth qualitative analysis of perspectives of youth with disabilities. *Disabilities, 5*(2), 41. https://doi.org/10.3390/disabilities5020041

Massawe, P. G. (2025). Contributing criteria of local government authority loan to the well-being of women with disabilities in Arusha: A case of Arusha City Council. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Applied Science (IJRIAS), 10*(2), 632–640. https://doi.org/10.51584/IJRIAS.2025.10020053

Mboya, G., Mongula, B., Kiduanga, J. R., & Rugeiyamu, R. (2025). Persons with disabilities: Inequities in accessing interest-free loans under Tanzanian local government authorities. *Development in Practice*, 1–13. https://doi.org/10.1080/09614524.2025.2582086

Mitra, S., Yap, J., Hervé, & Chen, W. (2021). Inclusive statistics: Human development and disability indicators in low- and middle-income countries. *Policy Research Working Paper Series* (May 2021). World Bank Group. https://www.worldbank.org/en/research/brief/world-bank-policy-research-working-papers

Modéer, U., & Viera, J. (2023, June 19). Re-thinking disability inclusion for the SDGs. United Nations Development Programme. https://www.undp.org/blog/re-thinking-disability-inclusion-sdgs

Montes, J., & Swindle, R. (2021). Poverty & equity notes (April 2021 • Number 40). https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/898541620207711446/pdf/Who-is-Disabled-in-Sub-Saharan-Africa.pdf

Munyegera, K. G. (2024). Disability, digital financial services and financial inclusion: Evidence from Rwanda. *AERC Working Paper DFSP-TT-005*. African Economic Research Consortium.

Mustaffa, S. C., Halim, H., Ahmad, J., Ishak, Q. M., & Johari, A. N. (2020). Disability and poverty: A review of social entrepreneurship opportunities for persons with disabilities in Malaysia. *Albukhary Social Business Journal (ASBJ), 1*(2), 1–11.

Ojok, P., & Mukasa, J. (2024). You wait a long time and get less than you anticipated: Experiences of persons with disabilities in accessing the district special grant in Uganda. *Indonesian Journal of Disability Studies, 11*(2), 135–155. https://doi.org/10.21776/ub.ijds.2024.11.2.1

Patton, M. C., & Broward, J. (2023). The giants and forerunners of phenomenology: Husserl, Heidegger, and their predecessors. *American Journal of Qualitative Research, 7*(4), 79–94. https://doi.org/10.29333/ajqr/13600

Rugeiyamu, R. (2023). Local government's failure to recover loans from women's groups, youth groups, and people with disabilities in Tanzania. *International Journal of Public Leadership, 19*(3), 210–228. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJPL-08-2022-0045

Sabore, M. M. (2025). The consequences of financial inclusion for the welfare of people with disabilities in Monduli District, Tanzania. *Asian Journal of Education and Social Studies, 51*(4), 249–255. https://doi.org/10.9734/ajess/2025/v51i41866

Sarker, D. (2024). Money does not understand disability: Barriers to microfinance for people with disabilities in Bangladesh. *Asian Social Work and Policy Review, 18*(3), e12318. https://doi.org/10.1111/aswp.12318

Sightsavers. (2023). Financial inclusion for persons with disabilities in Kenya: A rapid review and qualitative study report (June 2023). https://research.sightsavers.org

Singh, K., & Awasthi, V. (2025). Financial inclusion and the empowerment of persons with disabilities in the context of SDGs: A systematic literature review. *International Journal of Advanced Research in Commerce, Management & Social Science, 8*(3(I)), 117–124. https://doi.org/10.62823/ijarcmss/8.3(i).7837

The Citizen. (2024, November 8). Dar es Salaam allocates Sh14bn as special group loans set to resume. https://www.thecitizen.co.tz/tanzania/news/national/dar-es-salaam-allocates-sh14bn-as-special-group-loans-set-to-resume-4816494

The European Union. (2021). European Semester 2020–2021 country fiche on disability equality. Publications Office of the European Union. https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=23928&langId=en

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (2024). Financial literacy in Germany: Supporting financial resilience and well-being. *OECD Business and Finance Policy Papers*. https://doi.org/10.1787/bf84ff64-e

The United Nations. (2026). Sustainable development goals (SDGs) and disability. Department of Economic and Social Affairs. https://social.desa.un.org/issues/disability/sustainable-development-goals-sdgs-and-disability

The United Republic of Tanzania. (2019). The local government finance act [Cap. 290, R.E. 2019]. Government Printer. https://mof.go.tz

The United Republic of Tanzania. (2017). National microfinance policy 2017. Ministry of Education, Press "A", Dar es Salaam. https://repository.mof.go.tz

The World Bank Group. (2026). Projects & operations. https://projects.worldbank.org

The World Health Organisation. (2023, March 7). Disabilities. https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/disability-and-health

Wakhungu, B. J. (2023, August 28). Improving inclusive access and effective use of loans in Kibaha Town Council. UNICEF. https://www.uncdf.org/article/8380/improving-inclusive-access-and-effective-use-of-loans-in-kibaha-town-council

Wilson, D., & Shishiwa, K. J. (2023). Challenges faced by persons with disabilities in employment in Tanzania: A case study of Shanga Organisation in Arusha. *Accountancy and Business Review, 15*(1), 1–10. https://doi.org/10.59645/abr.v15i1.83