

# Inclusion of PWD's at workplace

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## ***Abstract***

*The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Rules, 2017, have contributed to companies not only ensuring that at least 3% of their workforce is differently abled but also providing assistive technology, tailor-made training and support systems to ensure that PWDs learn and grow in their jobs. (Shekhar, 2018). It is important to understand the extent to which organisations are responsibly creating an inclusive work environment to welcome and improve the number of PWD's. It is also important to study the employee awareness on the Persons with Disabilities (PWD's). Study has found that organisations need to improve employee awareness about the PWD's and include them in the organisation. The study is an attempt to create an awareness on building an inclusive work culture.*

**Keywords:** *Diversity, Inclusion, Person with Disability (PWD's), culture*

## **Introduction to Disability Inclusion**

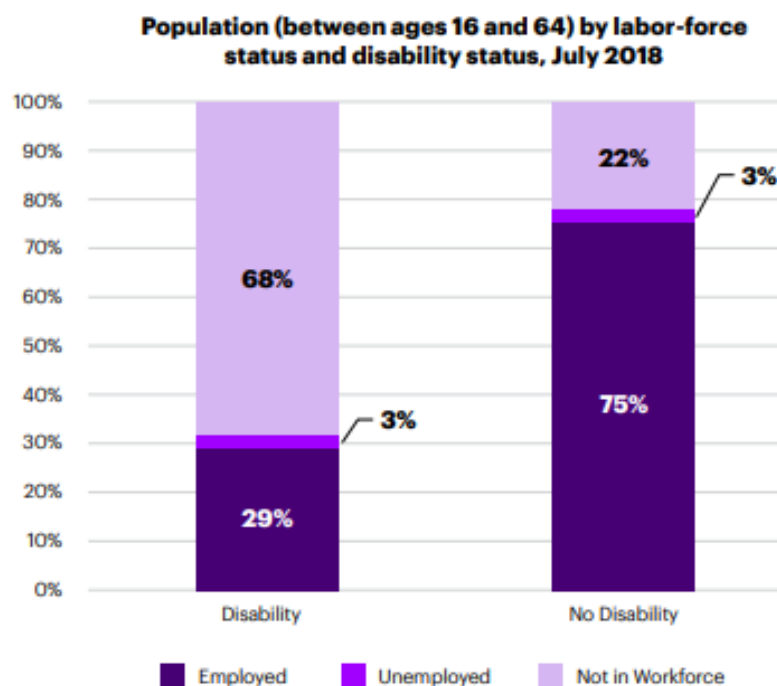
With a population of 1.3-billion and 450 million-plus workforce, the 2011 Census has stated that India has 2.68-crore people with some form of disability. As an estimate by the World Bank and the World Health Organisation (WHO), the figure moves upwards to 7 crore. Given the country's jobless economic growth and the fact that there are almost one million people that are added to the country's workforce every month, PWDs are most often denied or deprived of employment opportunities. At a basic level, they often do not even have access to basic educational infrastructure, recreational facilities and healthcare.

Including people with disabilities in everyday activities and encouraging them to have similar roles like their peers who do not have a disability is called as a *disability inclusion*. This just does not involve simply encouraging people; it also requires making sure that adequate policies and practices are in deployed in the organization. Inclusion should lead to increased participation in socially and functionally expected life roles and activities that the disabled person is doing at the workplace.

Socially and functionally expected activities may also include engaging in social activities, using public resources such as transportation and libraries, moving about within communities, receiving adequate health care, having relationships, performing work related tasks efficiently, helping out co-workers, engaging in various activities at work and enjoying other day-to-day activities.

According to The Disabilities Act, 2016, The definition of a 'disabled person' is broadened under the 2016 Act: this act covers people with disability, people with benchmark disability, and persons with disability who have higher support needs. The definition is

inclusive and categorizes 21 types of disabilities as ‘specific disabilities’. The Act applies to government establishments as well as private establishments. Under the law, private establishments refer to a company, firm, cooperative or other society, associations, trust, agency, institution, organization, union, factory, or such other establishment specified by the government. It is required by the Act that all establishments must frame and publish an Equal Opportunities Policy. Every kind of discrimination against people with disabilities are prohibited, and unless it can be proved that such discrimination is legitimate and is for the purpose of the person in question.



In India there are about 8551 disabled employees (PWD), out of which 35.85% are women. The surprising fact is that there are only 10 companies that are sensitive to this issue and who are hiring these PWD's. Out of which 8 companies belong to public sector. The general perception about the PWD's is that they are unqualified and not productive, which causes a restriction for the Indian organizations to recruit more number of PWD's. Majority of the companies do not have written policies on PWD employment. (Spirit of HR, 2017)

Along with the interest that diversity has sparked off in the recent years, disability is another factor that is and should be receiving attention. Approximately 2.13% of India's population are in some way disabled. The primary categories of disability include loss of locomotor skills, vision, hearing speech, acid attack victims, Thalassemia, cerebral palsy, mental faculties to name a few. Handicaps associated with old age are also included in these statistics. The World Bank places this figure at 8%. This very large group has been marginalized for a very long time causing the country a huge loss in terms of productive work hours and employable workforce. Most people feel some level of discomfort around disabled employees as they are unsure about how they should treat the disabled person. In India disability is often regarded as some form of abnormality whereby all faculties are questioned.

The general population must be educated to understand that often disability is minor and such a person can perform other functions quite efficiently. This is possible why the term "differently abled" is being increasingly preferred among professionals. It prevents misconceptions and prejudices about a person's capability and is a more inclusive term.

Many differently abled people have sharp intellectual abilities and can be productive employees if they are placed in appropriate jobs with some support from the organization.

For that, the senior management and the HR departments of all organizations should actively work towards finding the most effective way of utilising this section of people. Organizations must create a sound policy and strategy to absorb people with disabilities that can be accommodated in the context of the organization's business.

To be able to do this effectively, some groundwork is required in preparing the organization in terms of infrastructure and helpful attitude of co-workers. (SHRM India, 2017)

The highest numbers of PWD employees are recruited by State Bank of India with 2692 employees. Among the private sector in India, TCS and Wipro are the biggest recruiters of such talents. Wipro has more than 500 PWD employees in many main stream roles such as consulting, testing, marketing, leadership and HR.

Some of the other prominent employers in private sector in India who hire PWD employees: Vindhya E Infomedia Pvt Ltd, Bengaluru, 95 % of the employees are from PWD category managing the data management, data entry, data processing, conversion jobs. Titan Industries has 4% PWD work force. Titan arranges for special competency mapping, training sessions to the supervisors as well as peer level staff to sensitize them about working with talent with disabilities. Lemon Tree Hotels has 400 PWD employees, comprising of 13% of its total manpower. The PWD employees consist of speech and hearing impairment, orthopedically handicapped and even with down symptoms. Infact one visually impaired employee is working in the corporate office as a part of the President and Executive Director's team. Employees are spread across the supervisory roles, management roles, semi-skilled in F&B Services and unskilled in Kitchen Services. Shakti Masala employ 200 physically and mentally challenged employees working at different levels. Devyani International (Largest Franchisee of Pizza Hut & KFC) have employed 200 PWD's with hearing impairment recruited in all departments starting from dough making, pizza making, delivery, cash handling and record keeping. ITC ltd., has 90 PWD's with orthopaedic impairment, hearing impairment, visual impairment and cerebral palsy for secretarial role, desk jobs, sales and reservations. These organizations feel that such talents are more engaged to their jobs, exhibit more sense of loyalty with low absenteeism and are good at their performance level. (Spirit of HR, 2017)

Being an equal opportunity employer, the company ensures that needs of PWDs (persons with disabilities) are taken into consideration at every stage from the recruitment stage onwards. The firm ensures that there is reasonable accommodation being made during the recruitment process and that PWDs are encouraged to apply for all available posts. The induction programme includes training which is directed towards the needs of PWDs. Therefore, facilities like audio visual tools, wheelchairs, video captioning, etc. are provided during and after the induction training.

The purpose or the need of this study is to understand the importance of inclusion of disabled people at the workplace and how it impacts other co-workers and the work environment. Also, majorly the various stigmas and the acceptance of these disabled people also can be found out.

The role of HR in creating such a work environment fit for a disabled person also can be studied. There are various organisations that have proactively supported PWDs and have made sure the stigma behind hiring PWDs is removed. This study aims to understand their efforts and simultaneously check for the level of awareness present in the co-workers of PWDs.

### **Objective:**

- To study the inclusion of PWD's at workplace
- To understand employee awareness of PWD's at workplace.

### **Literature Review**

Myrtle M., Bell P. and Stringer D. (2004), in their study on Stigma and Acceptance of People with Disabilities, found that although the persons with disabilities compose a growing portion of workers, when compared with other aspects of diversity (e.g., race/ethnicity or gender), disability has received relatively little research attention the study evaluated the roles of disability type, stigma, and employee characteristics in acceptance of a co-worker with a disability. Stigma largely mediated the relationship between disability type and acceptance. Employee characteristics had direct effects on some aspects of acceptance. Exploratory factor analysis of stigma revealed six factors; however, only a "performance impact" factor was consistently related to acceptance, suggesting that perceived implications of the co-worker's disability for job performance are critical.

Collier D., (2016), suggested that though companies are focused on developing a diverse workforce, disability is an often forgotten minority group. While many companies are taking steps toward diversity, they often spend less time, energy, and resources on the inclusion piece. In many organizations, Human Resources set the Diversity and Inclusion strategy. There are several concrete, practical steps that HR leaders can take to enhance feelings of inclusion for people with disabilities in their workplace.

Singh A., Kiran U.V., (2017), focused on infrastructural facilities available for differently abled in banks and problems faced by them in bank. Person with disability often struggle with the complexity of built environment. There are many areas where person with disability face many difficulties.

Ball P., Monaco G., Schmeling J., Schartzk H. and Blanck P., (2005), investigated the inclusion of people with disabilities in the diversity policies of the most successful businesses in the United States, they examined the publicly available workforce and supplier diversity policies of the top 100 companies on Fortune Magazine's 2003 list of the 500 most profitable companies in the nation. The majority of these companies have extensive information about their diversity policies and practices available on their corporate website. The information was used to categorize the policies into those that include people with disabilities, do not define diversity, and enumerate what is meant by diversity (e.g. in terms of race or gender) but do not expressly mention disability.

Accenture's Report (2018), on Getting to Equal: The disability inclusion advantage revealed that companies that embrace best practices for employing and supporting more persons with disabilities in their workforce have outperformed their peers.

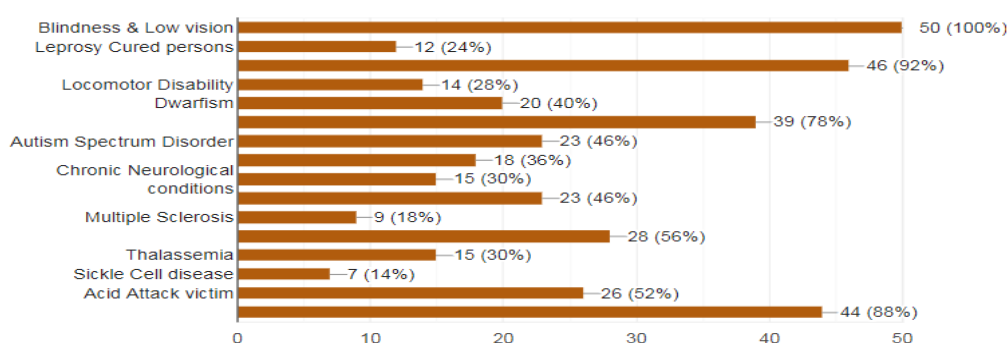
## Research Methodology

The study followed mixed method approach using both primary and secondary data collection methods.

Qualitative approach to research deals with subjective assessments of attitudes, opinions and surveys. Reports and literature was studied along with data collection. Data was collected from 50 respondents who were currently employed in the various companies and diverse sectors. The questionnaire was designed to obtain the answers to the objectives and to understand the level of awareness of certain factors. As per the objectives mentioned above, the respondents were asked certain open-ended questions as well so as to know their opinions about certain factors and not be opinionated with regards to their answers. The research simply tries to study and understand the inclusion of people with disabilities at workplace.

## Data Analysis & Findings

Out of the total 50 respondents, 50% of the respondents belonged to the IT sector whereas 22% belong to the finance sector. The responses are heavily based on the inclusion of disability in the IT, finance and retail sectors, although some respondents also belong to other sectors as well.



To understand here is the employee awareness to the various disabilities present and how the companies can work to create such awareness.

It was found that employees were not aware about disabilities like Sickle Cell Disease, Locomotor Disability and Multiple. This limited awareness may result in different issues. In case of any medical problem the co-workers or the staff may not be able to help these employees. The HR also need to be aware of various disabilities to create inclusive policies.

The most eminent problems are that the employees are not aware of the policies or efforts that the organisation or the HR department makes towards these causes. According to the survey, 60% of the employees are aware of the organisation's efforts and the HR department's efforts towards the inclusion to a certain extent. 4% of the respondents have no idea about their organisation's efforts towards this cause. Only 36% are fully aware of the organisation's efforts and hence this shows the lack of awareness an employee has towards the inclusion of such a kind.

The employee's opinion as to how proactive they think their organisation is towards this sort of inclusion is very important. About 58% of employees think that their organisation is making a proactive effort but is still not doing its best. The HR department needs to create awareness

and various platforms for co-workers to establish a bond with the disabled employees. The employees also need to show continuous efforts along with the organisation in creating inclusive environment. PWD's once hired must feel welcomed into the organisation and that can be possible if every employee around their vicinity is trained to deal with the disabled employee.

When asked about various benefits and compensation that are particularly created for PWD's in their respective organisations, 74% responded to be fully aware of said policies where 14% were partially or less aware of such policies. There are about 12% who have no idea of such policies. The awareness of such policies is very essential for the disabled individuals who rely heavily on these compensations. The creation of compensation policies must encompass all the disabilities and must provide the correct insurances either medical or any other. The compensation policies will also help the organisation to deal with complicated legal difficulties as well.

when asked about PWD's related initiatives or activities conducted in organisations by the HR department, 62% responded by selecting that such said programs are conducted yearly. Whereas 24% said it is conducted half-yearly and around 14% said it is conducted quarterly. Continuous efforts and hard work are needed to create awareness about the PWD's related initiatives conducted in the organisation.

Inclusion of any kind is a huge culture change for the organisation. Before implementing such a change, organisations must identify the various barriers and resistances to change that could arise. Also, sensitivity training is a new way of creating an empathetic attitude among employees. the presence of a PWD's had made an impact on the overall culture of the organisation. 90% of the respondents have given a positive response by selecting yes and that goes to show the acceptance level of co-workers is high. The fact that the majority of respondents feel that the disability of a person will not cause problems but instead improve the culture of the organisation shows that the co-workers of disabled individuals are more accepting and are ready to adjust to this new culture change.

To understand the stigma and acceptance in employees, it was necessary to understand what they felt like working with a differently abled person. When asked an open ended question to describe working along with a differently abled person and how much of a difference it has made to their daily lives, a lot of respondents had positive answers. They responded by saying, that the differently abled individuals inspire them and make them want to work harder. Some said that they have great potential and that they are achieving growth at the same pace as every other employee. The response was relatively very positive and this shows that the way co-workers perceive somebody with disability is also in positive light. Making a proper and motivational platform to promote disability inclusion is necessary so that it creates an impact on the mind-set of the employees as well.

The role of HR is a very vital ingredient in creating and implementing such an inclusion. Any diversity inclusion will require the full involvement of HR. Coming up with ideas for promoting inclusion to ensuring there are no conflicts and every employee is satisfied is one of the roles of the HR. It is of great importance that the HR team makes a continuous effort towards the inclusion of multi-diversity in the workplace. A diverse workforce will reap great benefits for the organisation. Around 44% employees rated this as most important to create a culture of inclusion. The HR has to proactively ensure that the policies and facilities in the

organisation are conducive to include a person with disability in it. To be able to create a positive impact on the business as well as the social standing of the organisation, inclusion of such sorts is also important.

## Conclusions

The objective of this study was to study the inclusion of disabled people at the workplace and how much it overall affects the culture of the workplace. As per the findings of the study, of the respondents, some of the respondents had no experience working with somebody with a disability but the other respondents answered the questions and the answers were very helpful in understanding their organisation's efforts and their own level of awareness of such a cause. On the basis of the study we can propose that the organisations need to put much emphasis on awareness of policies and facilities for people with disability not just for the co-workers but also for the differently abled people.

The most important factor is there is still a lot of stigma associated with hiring and training people with disabilities. That needs to be eliminated by creating an environment which accepts diversity of every kind. This can be possible by conducting various engagements and training activities. But currently, the organisations that the respondents are from have not made such efforts.

The inclusion of people with disabilities should be more than just a corporate social responsibility for the organisations. People with disabilities can bring a better perspective for the organisation and they can have a motivational and creative impact on the employees at the work place. They have a different perspective to work and they can open a wide variety of opportunities for the company. People with disabilities are said to be untapped potentials, and that is true. They have the eagerness and sincerity for work and will ensure they work hard to show how good they are. Another advantage is that they are loyal to their employers and hence the turnover rate is very low when it comes to disable employees.

Lower absenteeism rates and tax incentives from the government for the disabled individuals are some of the important factors to consider while hiring a PWD.

All or almost every company tries making sure that they retain talent and train their employees to be the best. But what if they simply have not yet tapped into a pool of employees who have tremendous potential only to be misguided into thinking that having someone with a disability is a hassle on its workers and the organisation.

Some of the PWD proactive companies have successfully deployed such an inclusion and have seen many benefits. Studies show that the overall organisation turnover and shareholder rates have improved after the inclusion of people with disabilities.

Since the misconceptions and biases are barriers to the employment of differently abled persons but the most common problem is that the companies feel they are not equipped and ready to hire somebody with disability. This perception leads to disabled individuals not being hired. There are so many differently abled individuals who have tremendous talent and knowledge which can help the organisation in many ways. The bias continues when the said disabled individuals have to be promoted. Here again certain level of bias is observed. This is what the organisation and the HR department need to identify and eliminate.

An organisation which is highly diverse and accepting of every type of individual is respected and becomes one of the most sought after organisations to work in. Companies like Deloitte and Accenture have conducted several research studies to understand such an inclusion. This is a very good step towards creating a disability inclusion within the organisation. A branch of the company Eureka Forbes has the entire unit only for disabled individuals specifically. It is not just providing the individuals with jobs as a community service but also how the organisation increases its value in the market.

What a differently abled person brings to the table is something entirely different and with the right amount of motivation and training they can achieve success and in return be invaluable to their organisation. Given a chance to show potential, a differently abled person will contribute and outshine their co-workers which again is a major advantage to the employers as well.

According to the survey, many respondents were fairly accepting and thought highly of their differently abled colleagues. This shows the attitude of co-workers towards acceptance of the disabled co-workers. If this attitude is used positively by the HR department by conducting training and various engagement sessions, it will create a good platform for this inclusion.

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