Disability and Employment: To Establish a Framework for Inclusion in Workplace with a Vision of Creating Employment for People with Disabilities

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Abstract

This study reviews the importance of employment in life of people with disability and focuses on factors that contribute to successful inclusion in the work place. The study examines the attitudes of co-workers towards people with disability (PwD) and the role of variables such as type of disability, employer experience in the hiring of persons with disabilities, the attitude of co-workers towards people with disabilities and the ways in which employers evaluate work performance and social acceptability.

Data on persons with disabilities are hard to come by in almost every country. Specific data on their employment situation are even harder to find. Yet persons with disabilities face the same predicament everywhere. These data, culled from the media and from reports, provide an anecdotal picture of the current situation. While individuals with disabilities can make valuable contributions in community work places, they typically experience challenges in low rates of paid employments on being included in same social and ability parameters [1]. In developing countries, 80% to 90% of persons with disabilities of working age are unemployed, whereas in industrialized countries the figure is between 50% and 70%. People with disabilities can contribute, they need understanding, support and opportunities not charity or misplaced sense of compassion [2].

Keywords: Disabilities; Employment; Intervention; Employers

Background

Inclusion of people with disabilities (PwD) in the workplace has become a pressing issue in modern society. In developing countries, 80% to 90% of persons with disabilities of working age are unemployed, whereas in industrialized countries the figure is between 50% and 70% [3].

There are 370 million persons with disabilities, 238 million of them of working age. Their unemployment rate is usually double that of the general population and often as high as 80% or more. (*ANWESHAN: JOURNAL OF EDUCATION (A Bi-Annual Interdisciplinary Research Journal of Education)*, n.d.).

Among individuals with disability actually employed those with physical disability have a higher employment rate (16.3%) as compared with other types of disability [4]. Post Covid the situation has worsened, uncertainty in job market and rapid technological advances and fewer investments in human capital.

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Data reveals a sudden drop in hiring people with disabilities. According to the 2001 census, 21.9 million people or 2.13% of the country's population are persons with disabilities.

'The disabled trip up on Job Street', The Economic Times, 19 August 2005

74% of persons with physical disabilities and 94% of persons with mental retardation are unemployed.

International Disability Rights Monitor, 'Regional Report of Asia', 2005

Work is a crucial issue in everyone's lives including people with delayed development for personal identity, independence and improved quality of life. Despite various national and state policies promoting and supporting employment for adults with delayed development or intellectual disabilities, stigma still persists. It is frequently viewed that people with disabilities will not be able to perform and accommodations will be required which may not be viable economically for employers.

In this respect a brief model to describe and account for the factors that are predominant in workplace that influence environment and attitudes of employers and typical coworkers are listed.

Type of disability

Stone and Colella's model (1996) (*Nota 2013 (1)*, n.d.) suggested that the more visible the disability the more probability of the person not being desirable in the work environment. This was a critical factor characterizing employers' attitude. It was observed that people with intellectual disability experienced more discrimination while hiring as compared to those with sensory processing disorders [5]. Considerations for longer training time and on-the-job support are factors that influence hiring of people with disabilities.

Another intervening perception is the potential to be disruptive or dangerous and assumptions of people with disabilities will likely find it difficult to comply with regular norms, perform poorly and cause tension or unease and uncertainty in social interactions. (*Nota2013 (1)*, n.d.) Studies show that employers are more concerned with work performance and social behaviours of people with intellectual disability as compared with those with physical disability [6].

Type of presentation (focus on disability and not on strength)

Persons with disabilities are frequently not considered potential members of the workforce [7]. Perception, fear, myth and prejudice continue to limit understanding and acceptance of disability in workplaces everywhere [8]. Myths abound, including that persons with disabilities are unable to work and that accommodating a person with a disability in the workplace is expensive. Contrary to these notions, many companies have found that persons with disabilities are more than capable [9]. This sheet provides anecdotal examples of the reasons given for not employing persons with disabilities, and the benefits to companies that have.

Taken together these findings suggest that potential employers receiving information on applicants' strengths and abilities to perform specific functions and positive behaviours tend to show more welcoming attitudes towards these candidates (Nogueira and Sousa, 2021).

Methodology

Participants

We recruited 10 employers working in a Not-for-Profit Organization in Dehradun (~150 employees) aged 18-25 years (mean age =; SD =). With respect to educational level, 34% employers had received a middle school diploma; 68% had obtained a high school diploma and 8% a university degree.

Tool used

The instrument used in this study was a questionnaire, 'Work for people with disability' ((*Nota2013 (1)*, n.d.)) which examines attitudes of employers towards people with disability. The questionnaire presents depiction of three candidates (hypothetical), the first was characterized by a SD; the second by intellectual disability; and PP for the third. Employers were first asked to indicate what job positions and tasks each candidate would be capable of carrying out in their companies. A Ten 7-point Likert scale items was followed, to examine the employers' attitudes towards disabled workers. Before the questionnaire was addressed the employers were asked the job description and tasks expected out of the candidates selected. This tool was coupled

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with a semi-structured interview where initially the interviewee was told to give their sociodemographic data (name, age, gender, qualifications, type of disability, and number of months/years of work experience). The questionnaire was filled in-person and to reduce social desirability bias the interviewee was told that there were no correct/incorrect answers and it was based only to survey views.

Quantitative Analysis of the questionnaire to PwD Co-worker. The result of the questionnaire to PwD co-workers regarding 4-dimension understudy.

General Perception of Hiring; Emotional Intelligence; Interpersonal Communication and Integration in workplace indicated that a vast majority of PwD Co-workers agreed with the items of the four dimensions. It thus suggested a positive score with the themes under study. In the section of General perception of hiring, the item, "hiring PwD contributes to the social responsibility of the company" was one that obtained the highest degree of agreement from almost all the participants (92.7 %) [10].
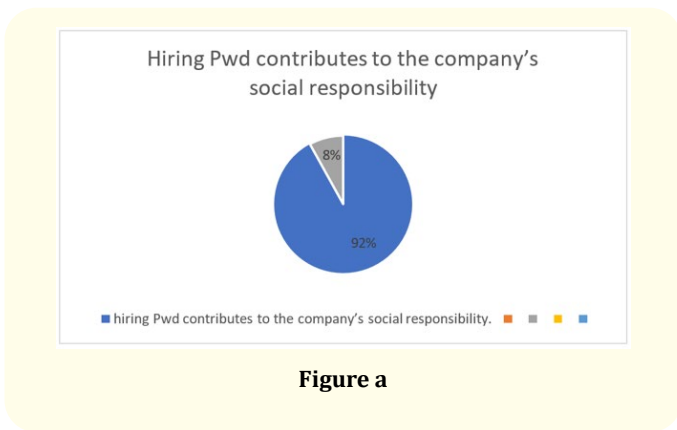

Figure a

In the following 2 items, PwD have more difficulty understanding or performing a task, (30%) agreed and PwD have less productivity, (23%) agreed.
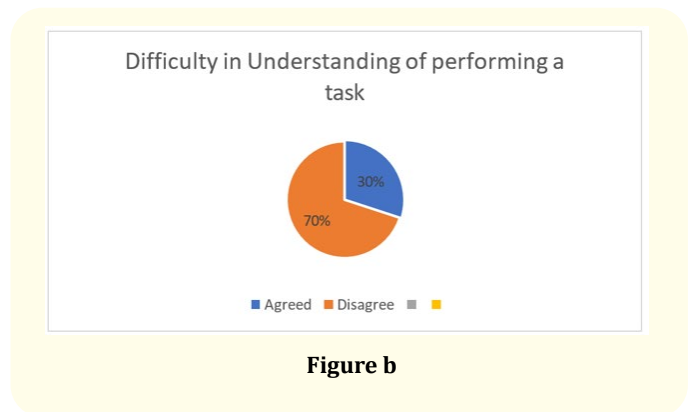

Figure b

In emotional intelligence dimension, "I like to share my emotions with PwD", only a little more than half agreed with this fact (55.7%).
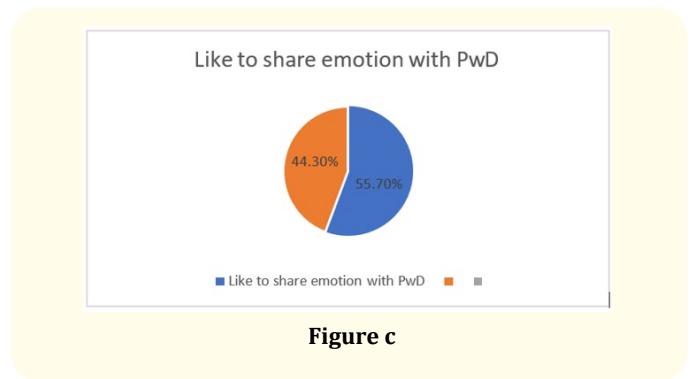

Figure c

In interpersonal communication, regarding, "The PwD does not adopt inappropriate attitudes/behaviours in organisation", about half the PwD co- workers disagreed with this fact, (51%), while 33.8% neither agreed nor disagreed. 15% decided not to answer.
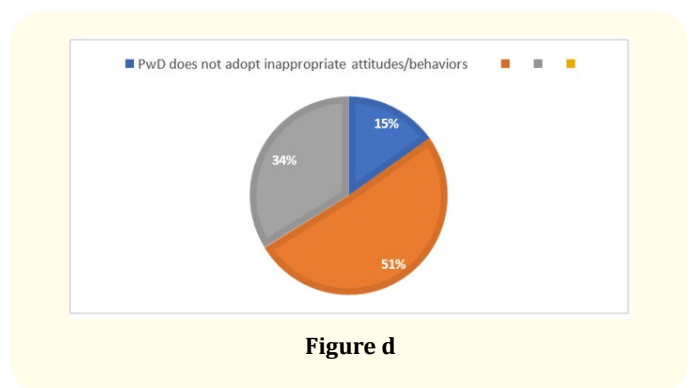

Figure d

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Living with PwD improves the organisational climate, part of the participants neither agreed nor disagreed with this fact (42%).
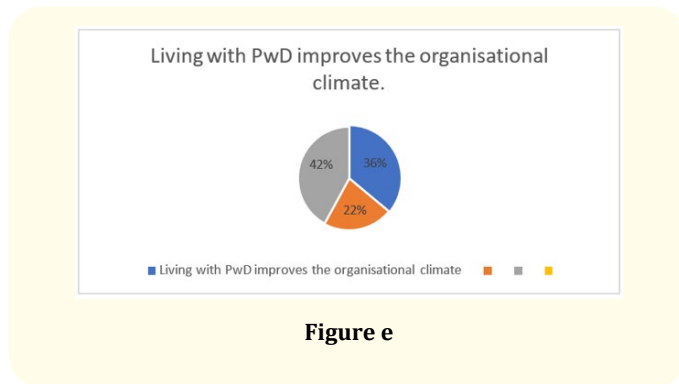

Figure e

Most of the co-workers agreed (92%) that hiring PwD contributes to the company's social responsibility and that everyone must ensure that this practice is fulfilled.

Only a small section of employees agreed (30%) that PwD have more difficulty understanding or performing a task. Studies have shown that PwD are equally capable of understanding and performing tasks provided they have the right working conditions [11]. Only a small proportion of PwD co-workers agreed (23%) that PwD have lower productivity.
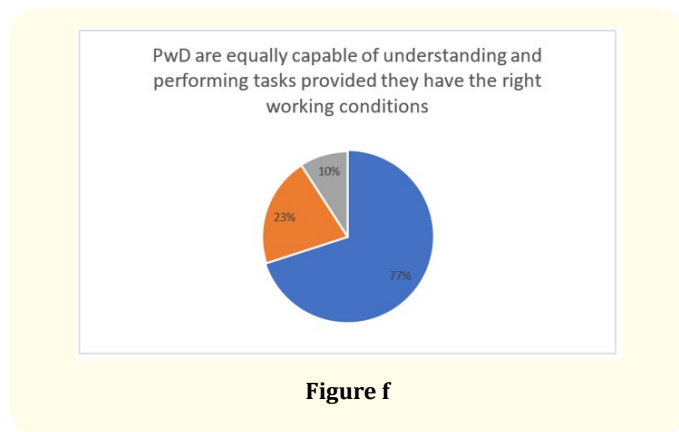

Figure f

The results of Silva., *et al.* ((*Work and Employment*, n.d.)) showed that most managers (90%) despite considering this group as people with limitations also saw them as potential to perform a good job. Regarding the fact that PwD stand out for their dedication to work, most co-workers (59%) agreed with this fact. Miranda and Souza (Norstedt, 2019) concluded that inclusion of PwD in companies is

able to attract new types of consumers, besides promoting a social and psychological rehabilitation since the feeling of productivity improves the quality of work life. It also provides the company with a competitive edge through attracting diverse customers, customer loyalty and satisfaction and inclusive work culture.
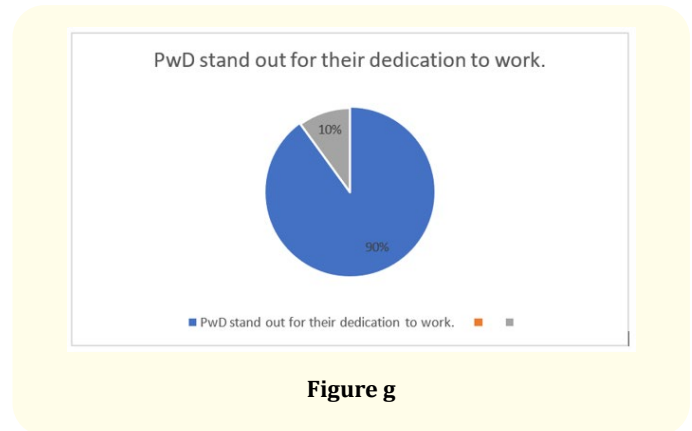

Figure g

Studies have concluded that inclusion of PwD in company is able to attract new types of customers besides promoting a social and psychological rehabilitation, since the feeling of productivity contributes to improve the quality of work life, customer loyalty and satisfaction and inclusive work culture [12].

Most PwD co-workers (72.3%) agreed that hiring people with autism or other type of disability improves the company's image which has a positive impact and promotes a culture of inclusion.
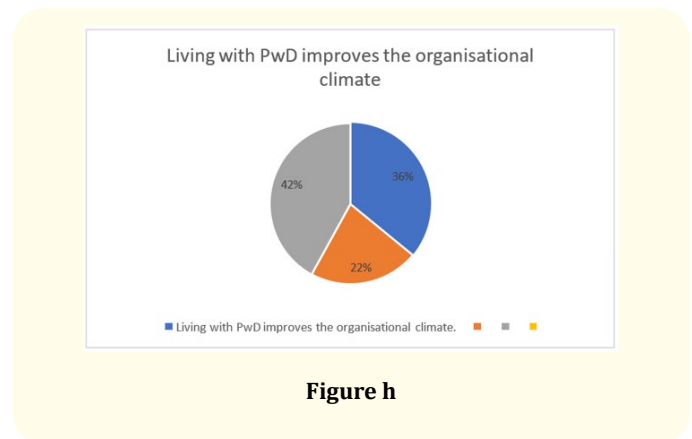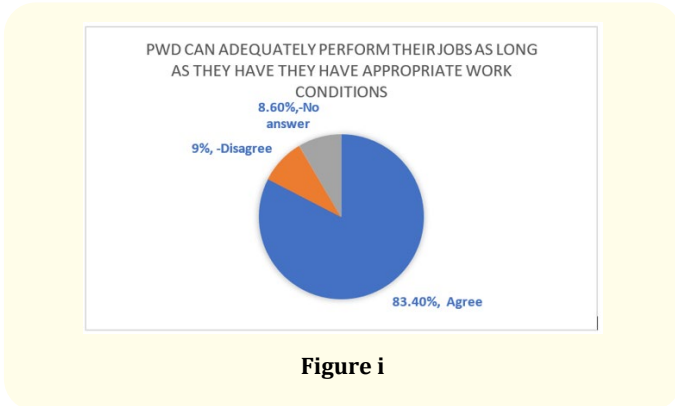

Figure h

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Co-workers also agreed (83.4%) that PwD can adequately perform their jobs as long as they have they have appropriate work conditions.

Figure i

Employees agreed (66.5%) that they easily recognise the emotions of PwD through their facial expressions and behaviours. 89.2% stated that when PwD talk about important incidents in their life it helps them feel better and included. Most of the co-workers agreed (87%) to recognise and understand the PwD limitations and help them wherever they could.

Study by Heera and Devi ((Heera and Devi, 2016)) concluded that employers are usually concerned about the impact that the PwD low performance may have on other employees and their ability to comply with rules within the company may create problems in relationship between team mates [13]. About half (51%) disagreed that the PwD may adopt inappropriate attitudes/behaviours in the organisation [14].

Studies also show that about half of the PwD co-workers (55.4%) disagreed that they had received training/information that would prepare them to work with PwD. Findings in literature have shown that co-workers and managers of PwD have not received training to work with this population [15]. According to study by Rosa., *et al.* 2019 if awareness and training is not provided it can be a major hindrance to the inclusion of PwD in the work places colleagues may not be prepared to train or be unwilling to do so.

Figure j
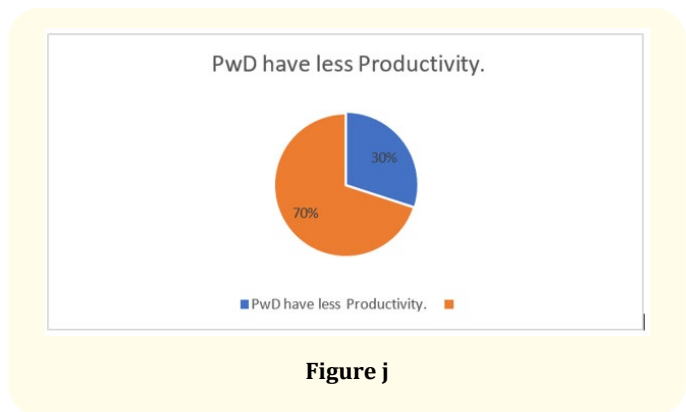
Some studies show that PwD's recognise their emotions when interacting with colleagues. On the one hand, despite knowing what generates an intense emotion, most interviews were not explicit in revealing their deeper emotions. On the other hand, participants for the most part did not find difficulty in communicating with colleagues and were aware of company's values and vision.

Over all this study also showed that colleagues have a positive perception of performance and work ethics of PwD's since they stated that they stand out for their loyalty and dedication to work. The interviewed colleagues see the positive side of having PwD in work place which means that the co-workers consider it an advantage for employers to hire PwD's. In addition, colleagues agree that hiring a PwD improves the organisations image with customers and employees alike.

Conclusion

Taking into consideration that this is a subject of limited knowledge and new for most people, it is possible to create an insight into the subject for PwD's themselves, also for managers and colleagues, since broadening knowledge will be beneficial for both.

This preliminary study is to support the business and practice shift from managing individual' behaviours within a limited scope to pragmatically collaborating with youth and businesses to support people with disabilities to sustain employment and be independent and successful.

What is important is for employers and companies to embrace and operationalize principles into practice and keep an open mind towards employment of people with ID and other developmental delays.

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This study does not have the capacity to verify the accuracy of each individuals reporting of their improvement activities and/or their outcome data. It is possible that greater strides in improvement have been made or that challenges have been experienced in individual cases or programs since reporting their improvements and/or their data to staff at LRF; what was reported in 2018 may no longer reflect current program practices or outcomes.

And, while there is still much work to be done to develop, implement and evaluate best practices, youth and families across state served by staff, families and community are experiencing improved outcomes when this work is done well.

Declarations

I hereby declare that the following study has received ethical approval and participants have given consent to participate. There are no competing interests in the current study. The datasets used and analysed during the study are available from the corresponding author on responsible request.

The Study acknowledges that such programs are complex to implement and requires a fine understanding of diverse needs of PwD across different contexts. India has made considerable progress in terms of putting in place a robust legal framework and a range of programs and schemes that have improved employability of people with disabilities [16]. Implementation can be improved through better provider training, positive feedback and monitoring mechanisms. Moreover, unless persisting structural challenges are addressed, implementation of regulations will not be effective [17-19]. Capacity building is the only way to achieve lasting progress for PwD.

Acknowledgements

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