
A STUDY ON WORKPLACE ACCOMMODATIONS AND EMPLOYER PERCEPTIONS OF DISABILITY

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ABSTRACT

The present study examines workplace accommodations and employer perceptions of disability in organizational settings. The objective of this research was to understand the types of accommodations provided to employees with disabilities, employers' attitudes toward disability and the association between selected demographic variables and perceptions of workplace inclusion. A descriptive survey method was adopted and data were collected from 40 respondents, including employers, managers and human resource personnel from various organizations. A structured questionnaire was used to gather data related to physical, attitudinal, organizational and policy-related accommodation practices. Percentage analysis and chi-square tests were employed for data analysis. The findings indicate that while basic workplace accommodations are moderately available, attitudinal and policy-related barriers continue to influence inclusive employment practices. Employers who had prior training and experience with disability demonstrated significantly more positive perceptions toward inclusion. The study emphasizes the need for systematic employer training, awareness programs and strong organizational policies to promote disability-inclusive workplaces. The findings have implications for organizations, policymakers and disability advocates seeking to bridge the gap between policy mandates and workplace realities.

KEYWORDS: workplace accommodations, disability, employer perceptions, inclusion, employment.

INTRODUCTION

Employment is widely recognized as a key determinant of social inclusion, economic independence and overall quality of life. For persons with disabilities, access to meaningful employment is not merely an economic necessity but also a matter of dignity, self-worth and

participation in society. Despite international and national policy commitments to inclusive employment, persons with disabilities continue to experience disproportionate levels of unemployment and underemployment. According to global estimates, persons with disabilities are significantly less likely to be employed compared to persons without disabilities, reflecting persistent structural and attitudinal barriers in the labor market.

Internationally, disability-inclusive employment is supported by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), which emphasizes equality of opportunity, non-discrimination and reasonable accommodation in employment. In the Indian context, the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016 provides a comprehensive legal framework mandating equal opportunities, non-discrimination and reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities in both public and private sectors. The Act recognizes that denial of reasonable accommodation constitutes discrimination, thereby placing legal responsibility on employers to create accessible and inclusive workplaces.

Workplace accommodations refer to modifications or adjustments in the work environment that enable employees with disabilities to perform their job responsibilities effectively and on an equal basis with others. These accommodations may include physical modifications such as ramps, elevators and accessible restrooms; provision of assistive technologies; flexible work schedules; job restructuring; and supportive organizational policies. Research consistently shows that most accommodations are low-cost and yield substantial benefits in terms of employee productivity, retention and morale. However, the availability and effectiveness of workplace accommodations depend largely on employer perceptions and attitudes toward disability.

Employer perceptions play a critical role in shaping organizational practices related to recruitment, training, performance evaluation, promotion and retention. Positive employer perceptions can foster inclusive practices and encourage proactive accommodation, whereas negative attitudes may result in reluctance to hire or accommodate employees with disabilities. In many organizational contexts, disability continues to be viewed through a deficit-oriented or charity-based lens rather than as an aspect of human diversity. Such perceptions contribute to misconceptions regarding productivity, cost and workplace safety, thereby limiting employment opportunities for persons with disabilities.

The present study seeks to examine workplace accommodations and employer perceptions of disability by focusing on organizational decision-makers such as employers, managers and human resource professionals. By analyzing existing accommodation practices and attitudes, the study aims to identify barriers and facilitators to inclusive employment. Understanding these factors is essential for bridging the gap between legislative intent and workplace implementation and for promoting equitable employment opportunities for persons with disabilities.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its focus on employer perceptions and workplace accommodations, which are central to achieving disability-inclusive employment. Although legislative frameworks such as the RPwD Act, 2016 mandate reasonable accommodation, the actual implementation of these provisions remains uneven across organizations. Negative attitudes, lack of awareness and limited organizational commitment often undermine inclusive employment practices.

This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by providing empirical evidence on employer perceptions and accommodation practices. The findings can help organizations assess their current practices, identify gaps and develop strategies to enhance inclusion. From a policy perspective, the study offers insights into the challenges faced by employers in implementing accommodation measures, thereby informing the design of targeted training and support programs.

For disability advocates and practitioners, the study highlights the importance of addressing attitudinal barriers alongside physical and organizational constraints. Inclusive workplaces not only benefit employees with disabilities but also contribute to organizational diversity, innovation and social responsibility. By emphasizing the role of employer training and experience, the study underscores the need for sustained efforts to promote positive perceptions of disability in the workplace.

Review of Related Literature

A substantial body of literature highlights the importance of workplace accommodations in facilitating the employment and retention of persons with disabilities. Research indicates that reasonable accommodations enhance job performance, reduce turnover and improve

employee satisfaction (Austin & Trainor, 2014). Despite these benefits, studies consistently report gaps between accommodation needs and actual provision.

Employer attitudes have been identified as a key determinant of accommodation practices. Employers with prior experience working with persons with disabilities tend to hold more positive attitudes and demonstrate greater willingness to provide accommodations (Forlin et al., 2014). Training and awareness programs have been shown to reduce misconceptions and improve employer confidence in managing disability-related issues. Conversely, lack of knowledge regarding legal obligations and accommodation options often results in reluctance or resistance.

Attitudinal barriers commonly reported in the literature include assumptions about reduced productivity, higher absenteeism, increased supervision needs and safety concerns. Empirical evidence, however, contradicts these assumptions, showing that employees with disabilities perform comparably to their non-disabled peers when appropriate accommodations are provided. Organizational culture and leadership commitment have also been identified as critical factors influencing inclusive practices.

Studies further emphasize the role of organizational policies and procedures in supporting accommodation. Clear guidelines, formalized accommodation processes and access to resources facilitate timely and effective responses to employee needs. In contrast, the absence of structured policies often places the burden on individual employees to negotiate accommodations, leading to inconsistent outcomes.

While international literature provides extensive insights into workplace accommodations and employer perceptions, empirical research in the Indian context remains limited. Existing studies tend to focus on employment outcomes rather than organizational attitudes and practices. The present study addresses this gap by examining employer perceptions and accommodation practices through a survey-based approach.

Research Gap

Despite the presence of comprehensive disability legislation, there is limited empirical evidence examining how employers perceive disability and implement workplace accommodations in practice. Few studies focus specifically on employers, managers and human resource professionals, who play a central role in organizational decision-making. Additionally, there is a lack of research analyzing the relationship between demographic

variables such as age, gender, work experience and prior training and employer perceptions of disability. This study seeks to address these gaps by providing systematic data on workplace accommodations and employer attitudes.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were:

1. To examine the types of workplace accommodations provided to employees with disabilities.
2. To study employer perceptions toward disability in the workplace.
3. To analyze the association between selected demographic variables and employer perceptions of disability.
4. To identify major barriers to effective workplace accommodation.

Hypotheses

H01: There is no significant association between age and employer perceptions of disability.

H02: There is no significant association between gender and employer perceptions of disability.

H03: There is no significant association between work experience and employer perceptions of disability.

H04: There is no significant association between prior training on disability and employer perceptions of disability.

METHOD

Research Design

The study employed a descriptive survey research design.

Participants

The sample consisted of 40 respondents, including employers, managers and human resource professionals from various organizations. A convenience sampling technique was used to select participants. The respondents represented diverse organizational sectors, ensuring variability in perspectives.

Instrument

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed based on existing literature and disability inclusion guidelines. The instrument comprised two sections. The first section

collected demographic information such as age, gender, work experience and prior training related to disability. The second section included statements related to workplace accommodations and employer perceptions, measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The questionnaire was pilot tested to establish reliability.

Procedure

Data collection was conducted through online and in-person modes after obtaining informed consent from participants. Respondents were assured of confidentiality and anonymity participation was voluntary.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequency and percentage analysis. Chi-square tests were employed to examine associations between demographic variables and employer perceptions of disability. Statistical significance was determined at the .05 level.

RESULTS

The demographic profile revealed that 55% of respondents were male and 45% were female. In terms of age, 45% were below 35 years, 35% were between 36 and 45 years 20% were above 45 years. Regarding work experience, 40% had less than five years of experience, 35% had six to ten years 25% had more than ten years of experience. Approximately 57.5% of respondents reported having received prior training related to disability inclusion.

With respect to workplace accommodations, 65% of respondents reported the availability of physical accessibility features such as ramps and accessible restrooms. Flexible work arrangements were reported by 55% of respondents, while assistive technologies were available in 45% of organizations. Formal organizational policies supporting accommodations were reported by 50% of respondents.

Chi-square analysis indicated significant associations between employer perceptions and age, work experience prior training on disability ($p < .05$). Employers who had received prior training demonstrated more positive perceptions toward disability and workplace accommodations. Gender did not show a statistically significant association with employer perceptions.

DISCUSSION

The findings of the study indicate that while employers generally acknowledge the importance of workplace accommodations, several barriers continue to impede inclusive employment practices. Attitudinal barriers, particularly lack of awareness and uncertainty regarding accommodation implementation, were prominent among respondents without prior training. These findings align with existing literature emphasizing the role of employer education and experience in shaping positive perceptions of disability.

The significant association between prior training and positive employer perceptions underscores the importance of structured awareness and capacity-building initiatives. Employers who are knowledgeable about disability rights and accommodation strategies are more likely to adopt inclusive practices. Similarly, work experience appears to influence perceptions, suggesting that exposure to diverse workforces contributes to attitudinal change. The findings also highlight the need for clear organizational policies and systematic accommodation processes. While physical accommodations were relatively more common, policy-level support and assistive technologies were less consistently available. This suggests that organizations may prioritize visible modifications while neglecting broader structural and procedural aspects of inclusion.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that workplace accommodations and employer perceptions of disability are closely interconnected. Although basic accommodations are available in many organizations, comprehensive and systematic approaches to inclusion remain limited. Attitudinal and policy-related barriers continue to influence the employment experiences of persons with disabilities.

Positive employer perceptions, supported by training, awareness organizational commitment, are essential for fostering inclusive workplaces. The study recommends regular disability inclusion training programs for employers and managers, development of formal accommodation policies continuous monitoring of inclusive practices. By addressing both attitudinal and structural barriers, organizations can move toward equitable and accessible employment environments for persons with disabilities.

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