

Workforce Diversity and Inclusiveness in Indian industrial Sector with Special Reference to Persons with Differential Ability: A public private comparison

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Abstract

Background: Employment and inclusion of persons with differential ability remain limited despite India's traditionally diverse workforce, with stereotypes and discrimination persisting in both public and private organizations. This study examined the awareness, attitudes and perceptions of abled employees toward differently abled colleagues, comparing public and private sector organizations in Hyderabad city. Methods: A cross-sectional study was conducted among 60 public and 60 private sector employees using a structured questionnaire covering employment practices, HR policies, awareness of inclusiveness, level of interaction, trust, performance scepticism and perceptions of workforce inclusion. Data were analysed using SPSS version 20, with the chi-square test used to assess statistical significance ($p < 0.05$). Results: A significantly higher proportion of public sector organizations had a special HR policy for persons with differential ability (83.3% vs 45.0%, $p < 0.001$) and reported orthopaedic disability as the most common type encountered ($p < 0.05$). Public sector employees reported significantly higher participation of differently abled colleagues in group goals, greater trust and scepticism about their performance, and a greater sense of disadvantage from their presence, compared to private sector employees. Both groups largely perceived persons with differential ability as a valid extension of workforce diversity and supported inclusive HR practices such as flexible working hours, assistive devices and reasonable accommodation. Conclusion: Workforce inclusion of persons with differential ability, and employee perceptions towards them, were comparatively better in public sector organizations than in private sector organizations in this study.

Keywords: Workforce diversity; Differential ability; Disability inclusion; Public sector; Private sector; India.

Introduction

Finding and sustaining the work is a challenge for the people with disabilities. Estimates shows that, only in three individuals with disabilities are employed compared to 76% of their counterparts without disabilities and this disparity appears to be increasing over time in United States of America.¹ The workforce diversity is often core of the Indian cultural fabric, one usually finds a naturally created diverse workforce in Indian organizations. Diversity in Indian organizations especially in public sector is mainly due to two approaches including traditional liberal approach and traditional radical approach.² They are often discussed as equal employment opportunities and affirmative actions respectively. But this has led to the emanation of number of allied alarming issues including prejudices, stereotypes and perceptions of discrimination in Indian working environment.³

The literature available had witnessed that, through subjective measures, the stereotypical outlook and discriminations concerning women, minorities, socially disadvantaged and disabled employees exist in both private and public organizations.³

This study was mainly undertaken to study the understanding and evaluating the attitudes of the people on the other side of differential ability i.e., abled people towards their differently abled colleagues and overall perception towards differential ability inclusion.

Material And Methods

A cross sectional study was undertaken in 60 private and 60 public employees in Hyderabad city. The private employees included finance organizations, Schools, garment factories and BPOs. The public organizations included banks and public sector schools. A questionnaire was designed to capture the data from the abled employees.

The questionnaire instrument included employment of persons with disability, special HR policy, awareness of inclusiveness, working with persons with differential ability, type of disability, capacity which they worked, level of interaction with the differentially abled persons, level of interaction, level of social interaction, consciousness about the disability, level of participation of differentially abled persons, level of trust, performance scepticism and feeling of being disadvantaged.

The perception section included valid extension of workforce diversity, reflection of an inclusive approach, HR policies perceived as inclusive, sense of inequality, capability to climb up in hierarchy and perceiving as indispensable employee in the organization.

The data thus collected was compiled using a Microsoft excel sheet and transferred and analysed using Statistical Package for social services (SPSS vs 20). Chi square test was used

as test of significance find out significant difference. A p value of less than 0.05 was considered as statistically significant.

Results

Table 1. Responses of the respondents regarding details of differentially abled persons

Parameters	Responses	Public n (%)	Private n (%)	P value, Sig
Does your organization employ persons with differential ability in its workforce?	Yes	52 (86.7)	44 (73.3)	0.68, NS
	No	8 (13.3)	16 (26.7)	
Does your organization have any special policy in place with regards to Persons with Differential Ability?	Yes	50 (83.3)	27 (45.0)	0.000, Sig
	No	10 (16.7)	33 (55.0)	
Are you aware of the concept of ‘Inclusiveness’ in respect of Persons with Differential Ability?	Yes	37 (61.7)	28 (46.7)	0.099, NS
	No	23 (38.3)	32 (53.3)	
How often have you worked with Persons with differential ability?	Always	14 (23.3)	9 (15.0)	0.171, NS
	Often	17 (28.3)	14 (23.3)	
	Sometimes	23 (38.3)	22 (36.7)	
	Rarely	6 (10.0)	12 (20.0)	
	Never	0	3 (5.0)	
What type of disability did most of your differentially abled colleagues suffer from?	Visual	4 (6.7)	10 (16.7)	0.003, Sig
	Orthopaedic	30 (50.0)	28 (46.7)	
	Hearing	20 (33.3)	10 (16.7)	
	Mental	6 (10.0)	3 (5.0)	
	Others	0	9 (15.0)	

About 86.7% of the public and 73.3% of the private respondents expressed that their organizations employs the persons with differential ability in its workforce. About 83.3% of the public and 45.0% of the private respondents stated that their organization has a special policy with regards to persons with differential ability which was statistically significant. The

concept inclusiveness was known to 61.7% of the public and 46.7% of the private respondents. About 38.3% of the public and 36.7% of the private respondents sometimes worked with the persons with differential ability. About 50.0% of the public and 46.7% of the private respondents expressed that their differentially abled colleagues suffer from orthopaedic disabilities which was statistically significant between the public and private respondents.

Table 2. Responses of the respondents regarding attitude of employees towards differentially abled persons

Parameters	Responses	Public n (%)	Private n (%)	P value, Sig
In what capacity have you worked with persons with differential ability?	As superior	12 (20.0)	12 (20.0)	0.054, NS
	As a subordinate	15 (25.0)	5 (8.3)	
	As a fellow member	23 (38.3)	22 (36.7)	
	As co-worker	6 (10.0)	10 (16.7)	
	As an acquaintance	4 (6.7)	11 (18.3)	
	Next to interaction	7 (11.7)	3 (5.0)	0.213, NS

While working with persons with differential ability, what was your level of interaction with them?	Bare minimal interaction	15 (25.0)	13 (21.7)	
	Professional interaction	26 (43.3)	22 (36.7)	
	Somewhat personal interaction	8 (13.3)	11 (18.3)	
	Very close personal interaction	4 (6.7)	11 (18.3)	
What was your level of social interaction with your interaction with your differently abled colleagues?	Next to interaction	0	3 (5.0)	0.203, NS
	Bare minimal interaction	15 (25.0)	15 (25.0)	
	Professional interaction	21 (35.0)	27 (45.0)	
	Somewhat personal interaction	13 (21.7)	9 (15.0)	
	Very close personal interaction	11 (18.3)	6 (10.0)	
While interacting with them, how	Not at all conscious	7 (11.7)	4 (6.7)	0.179, NS

conscious were you of their disability?	Somewhat conscious	21 (35.0)	13 (21.7)	
	Conscious	15 (25.0)	18 (30.0)	
	Quite conscious	13 (21.7)	14 (23.3)	
	Extremely conscious	4 (6.7)	11 (18.3)	
What was the level of participation of your differently abled colleagues towards achievement of group goals?	Very high	10 (16.7)	17 (28.3)	0.002, Sig
	High	22 (36.7)	17 (28.3)	
	Moderate	8 (13.3)	19 (31.7)	
	Low	11 (18.3)	7 (11.7)	
	Very low	9 (15.0)	0	
What was the level of trust you had in the competency of your differently abled colleagues?	Very high	3 (5.0)	7 (11.7)	0.012, Sig
	High	13 (21.7)	15 (25.0)	
	Moderate	14 (23.3)	25 (41.7)	
	Low	24 (40.0)	8 (13.3)	
	Very low	6 (10.0)	5 (8.3)	
How sceptical were you about the performance of your differently abled colleagues?	Not at all sceptical	5 (8.3)	23 (38.3)	0.001, Sig
	Somewhat sceptical	13 (21.7)	12 (20.0)	
	Sceptical	20 (33.3)	8 (13.3)	
	Quite sceptical	12 (20.0)	11 (18.3)	
	Extremely sceptical	10 (16.7)	6 (10.0)	
Did you feel disadvantaged because of the presence of differentially abled colleague in your work team?	Not at all disadvantaged	11 (18.3)	14 (23.3)	0.193, NS
	Somewhat disadvantaged	28 (46.7)	16 (26.7)	
	Disadvantaged	14 (23.3)	22 (36.7)	
	Quite disadvantaged	5 (8.3)	7 (11.7)	
	Very disadvantaged	2 (3.3)	1 (1.7)	

About 38.3% of the public and 36.7% of the private respondents stated that, they worked as fellow member with persons with differential ability. This study had shown that, about 43.3% of the public and 36.7% of the private employees had professional interaction with the persons who were differentially abled. The social interaction was professional interaction in 35.0% of the public and 45.0% of the private employees. About 35.0% of the public employees were somewhat conscious and 30.0% of the private employees were conscious while interaction with the persons about their disability. The level of participation of differentially abled colleagues was high in 36.7% of the public employees and moderate in 31.7% of the private employees which was significantly different. About 33.3% of the public employees were sceptical and 38.3% of the private employees were not at all sceptical about the performance which was significantly different. About 46.7% of the public and 26.7% of the private employees were somewhat disadvantaged because of the presence of differentially abled colleagues in their work team.

Table 3. Responses of the respondents regarding perceptions of employees towards differentially abled persons

Parameters	Responses	Public n (%)	Private n (%)	P value, Sig
Do you perceive persons with differential ability to be valid extension of the definition of workforce diversity?	Yes, they are a natural part of diversity	48 (80.0)	50 (83.3)	0.637, NS
	No, as the workplace is a profitmaking organization	15 (20.0)	5 (16.7)	
According to you, what will reflect an inclusive approach towards persons with differential ability?	Adoption of inclusive HR policies	5 (8.3)	1 (1.7)	0.200, NS
	Accommodative and compassionate work environment	9 (15.0)	6 (10.0)	
	Recognizing their innate talent	8 (13.3)	10 (16.7)	
	Giving equal opportunities of career growth and advancement	4 (6.7)	10 (16.7)	
	Treating them with respect and dignity of a complete individual	11 (18.3)	15 (25.0)	

	All the above	23 (38.3)	18 (30.0)	
What HR policies do you perceive as inclusive for the differently abled?	Extra pay, leaves and allowances	41 (68.3)	39 (65.0)	0.699, NS
	Flexible working hours	42 (70.0)	39 (65.0)	0.559, NS
	Customized workplace and assistive devices	60 (100)	56 (93.3)	0.042, Sig
	Work from Home facility	52 (86.7)	56 (93.3)	0.224, NS
	Special Medical Insurance	34 (56.7)	19 (31.7)	0.006, Sig
	Different performance appraisal metrics and rating system	21 (35.0)	7 (11.7)	0.003, Sig
	Compassionate and reasonable accommodation on all work fronts	30 (50.0)	38 (63.3)	0.141, NS
Will you feel a sense of inequality if any of the above HR policies are adopted especially for the persons with differential ability?	Yes, absolutely	10 (16.7)	7 (11.7)	0.566, NS
	No, obviously not	43 (71.7)	46 (76.7)	
	Cannot say	1 (1.7)	3 (5.0)	
	Depends on the policy adopted	6 (10.0)	4 (6.7)	
Do you perceive persons with differential ability as indispensable employees in the organization?	Not at all indispensable	2 (3.3)	1 (1.7)	0.001, Sig
	Somewhat indispensable	27 (45.0)	9 (15.0)	
	Indispensable	21 (35.0)	20 (33.3)	
	Quite indispensable	6 (10.0)	17 (21.7)	
	Very indispensable	4 (6.7)	13 (21.7)	

About 80.0% of the employees in public sector and 83.3% in private sector expressed that they perceive persons with differential ability to be valid extension of the definition of workforce diversity. Adoption, accommodation, recognition, equal opportunities and respect and dignity of the differentially abled was expressed by 38.3% of the public and 30.0% of the private employees. The HR policies including extra pay, leaves and allowances, flexible working hours, customized workplace and assistive devices, work from home facility, special medical insurance, different performance appraisal metrics and compassionate and reasonable

accommodation on all work fronts was agreed by majority of the employees in both public and private sector. The sense of inequality in HR policies adopted for differentially abled persons was felt by majority of the employee in public and private sectors. About 35.0% of the public sector employees perceived somewhat indispensable and 33.3% of the private employees felt indispensable employees in the organization which was significantly different.

Discussion

This study was mainly undertaken to study the awareness and perceptions about inclusiveness of differentially abled persons in public and private sectors. Majority of the public and private sector employees felt that, their organization employs the persons with differential ability. This study had shown significant difference between the special policy by the organizations with regards to persons with differential ability. The concept of inclusiveness of differentially abled persons was significantly higher for public employees. Orthopaedic related disabilities were common in both public and private companies. The literature available had shown that, the public sector organizations are in the forefront for the valuing the diversity.^{4, 5} The attitudes and perceptions of diverse employees about organizations efforts to promote diversity is still unanswered.⁶ A study by Gummaraes et al reported that the inclusion of persons with differential ability in a company is part of corporate social responsibility.⁷ while another study by Opoku – Boadi had shown that the employers opine that the persons with disabilities are more truthful and loyal people compared to people without disabilities.⁸ A study by Reuda et al found that, many employers have a preference for employers with sensory impairment to perform typing tasks.⁹

This study had shown that, the employees in this study had worked with the persons with differential ability in both public and private companies and also had professional and social interaction. The employees of the public sector were somewhat conscious and private sector were conscious about the disability of the differentially abled persons. The level of participation of differentially abled employees was significantly higher in public than the private companies. The scepticism was significantly different with the public sector employees than private employees. Majority of public employees felt that they are significantly disadvantaged than in the private sector. A study by Nogueira et al reported that, the participants were sensitive for the feelings and emotions of persons with disability.¹⁰ Another study by Mik Meyer et al had shown that, one of the main behaviours of colleagues with PwD were overprotective and helpful since they were careful and delicate in dealing with these people on daily basis.¹¹ A study by Hanao et al had reported that, a small

proportion of the participants of the study felt some discomfort while working with PwD since had shown certain behavioural problems.¹²

The persons with differential ability were perceived as valid extension of definition of workforce diversity. Most of the employees in public sector felt that, adoption, accommodation, recognition, equal opportunities and respect and dignity must be extended to persons who are differentially abled. The HR policies including extra pay, leaves and allowances, flexible working hours, customized workplace and assistive devices, work from home facility, special medical insurance, different performance appraisal metrics and compassionate and reasonable accommodation on all work fronts was agreed by majority of the employees in both public and private sector in this study. Majority of the employees in both public and private sector not felt any sense of inequality for the special provisions of differentially abled persons. They perceived it indispensable. A study by Nogueira et al reported similar findings.¹¹ Another study by Silva et al also reported similar findings.¹³

Conclusion

This study had shown the workforce inclusion of persons with differential ability is better in public sector organizations. The perception of employees about the persons with differential ability was also better in both the places.

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