

Psychosocial Factors Influencing Supportive Work Environments for Differently-Abled Employees

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Abstract—This quantitative cross-sectional study investigates the psychosocial factors influencing supportive work environments for differently-abled employees and their impact on inclusion, job satisfaction, psychological well-being, and retention. Data were collected from 250 differently-abled employees across diverse organizational sectors in Coimbatore City using a structured questionnaire incorporating validated scales. Exploratory factor analysis identified four key psychosocial factors: workplace attitudes, perceived social support, stigma, and interpersonal dynamics, explaining 68.5% of the variance with high reliability (Cronbach's alpha > 0.85). Structural equation modeling revealed good model fit (CFI = 0.96, RMSEA = 0.07), demonstrating that positive workplace attitudes and perceived social support significantly enhance inclusion ($\beta = 0.45-0.52$), job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.36-0.48$), psychological well-being ($\beta = 0.40-0.50$), and retention intentions ($\beta = 0.35-0.46$), while stigma exerts a strong negative influence ($\beta = -0.37$ to -0.41). Interpersonal dynamics also positively contributed to outcomes. The findings underscore the need for organizational interventions targeting stigma reduction and support enhancement to foster inclusive environments. This research provides practical implications for HR policies and contributes to disability inclusion literature by highlighting actionable psychosocial levers in diverse workplace settings.

Index Terms—Differently-abled employees, Psychosocial factors, Supportive work environments, Inclusion, Job satisfaction

I. INTRODUCTION

The employment of differently-abled employees continues to be a pressing issue in organizational and societal contexts, as global initiatives strives to

advance inclusion and equity in workplaces. Approximately 15% of the world's population lives with some form of disability, yet these individuals often encounter significant barriers to meaningful employment, including lower participation rates and higher vulnerability to stigma and exclusion (World Health Organization & World Bank, 2011). Recent evidence underscores that supportive work environments, shaped by psychosocial elements such as attitudes, social support, stigma, and interpersonal dynamics, are crucial for mitigating these disparities and promoting retention (Bonaccio et al., 2020; Nelissen et al., 2024). Studies further indicate that positive workplace support enhances accommodation receipt and psychological well-being, while negative psychosocial factors like stigma contribute to reduced inclusion and higher turnover (Dong et al., 2023). Broader research on workplace dynamics highlights how factors such as emotional intelligence can alleviate job stress, potentially fostering more supportive environments (P & R, 2019), and leadership practices influence employee attrition rates (R, 2021).

Psychosocial factors exert a profound influence on the workplace experiences of differently-abled employees, directly affecting their sense of belonging, performance, and overall satisfaction. Key elements include perceived social support from colleagues and supervisors, which reduces isolation and stigma, alongside prevailing attitudes that can either empower or marginalize (Dong et al., 2023; Nelissen et al., 2024). Adverse dynamics, such as stigmatizing attitudes or lack of interpersonal understanding, are linked to discrimination, lower morale, and increased intentions to leave (Bonaccio

et al., 2020). Related investigations reveal that emotional intelligence mitigates stress impacts on performance (P & R, 2019), while supportive leadership reduces attrition, underscoring the interplay of psychosocial elements in cultivating inclusive settings (R, 2021). Engagement practices, though often explored in sustainability contexts, also suggest pathways to enhanced productivity and well-being through supportive structures (Santhi & Shankar, 2021).

Exploring these psychosocial influences is vital for informing strategies that build supportive work environments, thereby improving inclusion, job satisfaction, psychological well-being, and retention for differently-abled employees across organizational contexts. This study advances this understanding by delving into how factors like workplace attitudes, support, stigma, and dynamics operate, providing actionable insights for equitable employment practices.

II. PROBLEM DEFINED

Despite significant global and national efforts to promote inclusive employment, differently-abled employees continue to face substantial barriers in accessing and sustaining meaningful work. According to the World Health Organization, approximately 16% of the world's population lives with some form of disability, yet employment rates for this group remain markedly lower than for those without disabilities (World Health Organization & World Bank, 2011). Recent data indicate persistent disparities, with persons with disabilities experiencing higher unemployment, underemployment in low-skilled roles, and limited access to quality jobs (Nelissen et al., 2024). In many contexts, including low- and middle-income countries, these individuals encounter not only physical and structural obstacles but also profound psychosocial challenges that undermine supportive work environments. Key among these are stigmatizing attitudes, discrimination, lack of perceived social support, and negative interpersonal dynamics, which collectively contribute to exclusion, reduced psychological well-being, and higher turnover rates (Bonaccio et al., 2020; Dong et al., 2023). Such factors often lead to hesitation in disclosing disabilities, fear of accommodations being

denied, and overall marginalization, perpetuating cycles of inequality in organizational settings.

Psychosocial factors play a central role in shaping the workplace experiences of differently-abled employees, often determining their integration, performance, and retention. Stigma and prejudicial attitudes from colleagues and supervisors foster environments of isolation and mistrust, while inadequate social support exacerbates feelings of vulnerability and stress (Nelissen et al., 2024). Studies reveal that negative interpersonal dynamics, including miscommunication and lack of awareness about disabilities, act as additional stressors, hindering the receipt of necessary accommodations and contributing to lower job satisfaction (Dong et al., 2023). Furthermore, broader workplace elements such as unsupportive leadership can amplify attrition intentions, whereas emotional intelligence and positive engagement practices may mitigate stress but are infrequently applied in contexts involving disability (P & R, 2019; R, 2021). These psychosocial barriers interact with individual vulnerabilities, resulting in diminished inclusion and well-being, particularly in diverse industries where understanding of diverse abilities remains limited (Santhi & Shankar, 2021).

The persistence of these psychosocial challenges underscores the urgent need for targeted research to identify influential factors and inform interventions. Without addressing attitudes, support systems, stigma, and dynamics, organizations risk perpetuating inequitable environments that limit the contributions of differently-abled employees. This study seeks to bridge this gap by examining how such elements shape supportive workplaces, ultimately aiming to enhance inclusion, satisfaction, well-being, and retention.

III. LITERATURE SAMPLES

The employment of differently-abled employees is hindered by persistent psychosocial barriers, despite global calls for inclusion. Approximately 16% of the global population lives with disabilities, yet employment gaps remain wide due to stigmatizing attitudes, discrimination, and inadequate support (World Health Organization & World Bank, 2011). Psychosocial factors such as workplace attitudes, stigma, perceived social support, and interpersonal

dynamics significantly shape supportive environments, influencing inclusion and retention (Bonaccio et al., 2020).

Recent studies emphasize that positive coworker and supervisor support fosters empowering social environments, reducing isolation and enhancing psychological well-being (Nelissen et al., 2024). Conversely, stigma and negative attitudes lead to exclusion, lower morale, and hesitation in requesting accommodations (Dong et al., 2023). Workplace support directly increases the likelihood of receiving accommodations, which in turn boosts job satisfaction (Dong et al., 2023). Broader research links supportive leadership to reduced attrition (R, 2021), while emotional intelligence mitigates stress impacts on performance (P & R, 2019). Engagement practices, including those in green HRM, highlight pathways to productivity through supportive structures (Santhi & Shankar, 2021).

These findings underscore the interplay of psychosocial elements in creating inclusive workplaces. Addressing attitudes, stigma, and support is crucial for improving job satisfaction, well-being, and retention among differently-abled employees.

IV. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To identify and examine the key psychosocial factors (such as workplace attitudes, perceived social support, stigma, and interpersonal dynamics) that contributes to the creation and maintenance of supportive work environments for differently-abled employees.
2. To assess how these psychosocial factors influence the levels of inclusion, job satisfaction, psychological well-being, and retention of differently-abled employees in diverse organizational settings.

V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a quantitative, cross-sectional research design to explore psychosocial factors influencing supportive work environments for differently-abled employees and their effects on inclusion, job satisfaction, psychological well-being, and retention. The design facilitates statistical examination of relationships among variables,

ensuring objectivity and broader applicability. Ethical protocols, including informed consent, anonymity, and accessible survey formats, will adhere to international guidelines.

The target population consists of differently-abled employees across corporate, non-profit, government, and educational sectors in Coimbatore city. With an estimated population of 714 (from regional disability employment data), the sample size of 250 is derived using Cochran's formula at 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error. Stratified random sampling will be applied, with strata based on disability type and organizational sector for proportional representation. Primary data will be gathered via a structured online questionnaire featuring validated scales (e.g., Perceived Organizational Support, WHO-5 Well-Being Index) on a 5-point Likert scale, distributed through digital platforms and disability networks after pilot testing.

VI. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

1. The cross-sectional nature of the study captures relationships at a single point in time and restricts causal interpretation. Longitudinal designs could better explain changes in psychosocial factors and outcomes over time.
2. The study is confined to differently-abled employees in Coimbatore City, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Workplace inclusion practices may differ across regions and cultural contexts.
3. Data were collected using self-reported questionnaires, which may be subject to social desirability and response bias. This could influence the accuracy of reported experiences related to stigma and support.
4. The study does not extensively analyze variations by disability type, industry, or organizational size. Such factors may uniquely shape psychosocial experiences and supportive work environments.

Objective 1: Identifying and Examining Key Psychosocial Factors

To address the first objective, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted on questionnaire items related to workplace attitudes, perceived social support, stigma, and interpersonal dynamics. The

analysis used principal component extraction with varimax rotation, based on the 250 responses. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure was 0.82 (adequate

sampling), and Bartlett's test was significant ($p < 0.001$). Four factors emerged, explaining 68.5% of variance.

Table 1: Psychosocial Factors

Factor	Items (Examples)	Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	Eigenvalue	% Variance Explained
Workplace Attitudes	Positive colleague perceptions; Acceptance of accommodations	0.78–0.85	0.89	4.2	28.4%
Perceived Social Support	Supervisor encouragement; Peer assistance	0.75–0.82	0.87	3.1	20.7%
Stigma	Discriminatory remarks; Stereotyping	0.72–0.80 (negative loadings)	0.85	2.5	16.8%
Interpersonal Dynamics	Team collaboration; Conflict resolution	0.74–0.81	0.88	1.9	12.6%

The EFA confirms four distinct psychosocial factors, with high reliability (alphas > 0.85). Workplace attitudes and social support emerged as dominant positive contributors to supportive environments, while stigma acts as a barrier (negative loadings). This infers that organizations should prioritize attitude training and support networks to maintain inclusive settings, aligning with the objective by highlighting actionable factors.

Assessing Influences on Outcomes

For the second objective, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) tested a hypothesized model where

psychosocial factors predict inclusion, job satisfaction, psychological well-being, and retention. Fit indices: CFI = 0.96, RMSEA = 0.07 (good fit). Multiple regression supplemented for robustness. Hypotheses were formulated as follows:

- H1: Workplace attitudes positively influence inclusion, satisfaction, well-being, and retention.
- H2: Perceived social support positively influences outcomes.
- H3: Stigma negatively influences outcomes.
- H4: Interpersonal dynamics positively influence outcomes.

Table 2: SEM Results

Predictor (Psychosocial Factor)	Outcome Variable	Standardized Coefficient (β)	p-value	R ² (from Regression)	Hypothesis Support
Workplace Attitudes	Inclusion	0.45	<0.001	0.32	H1 Supported
Workplace Attitudes	Job Satisfaction	0.38	<0.001	0.28	H1 Supported
Workplace Attitudes	Psychological Well-Being	0.42	<0.001	0.30	H1 Supported
Workplace Attitudes	Retention	0.35	<0.01	0.25	H1 Supported
Perceived Social Support	Inclusion	0.52	<0.001	0.35	H2 Supported
Perceived Social Support	Job Satisfaction	0.48	<0.001	0.33	H2 Supported
Perceived Social Support	Psychological Well-Being	0.50	<0.001	0.34	H2 Supported
Perceived Social Support	Retention	0.46	<0.001	0.31	H2 Supported

Stigma	Inclusion	-0.40	<0.001	0.29	H3 Supported
Stigma	Job Satisfaction	-0.37	<0.001	0.27	H3 Supported
Stigma	Psychological Well-Being	-0.41	<0.001	0.30	H3 Supported
Stigma	Retention	-0.39	<0.001	0.28	H3 Supported
Interpersonal Dynamics	Inclusion	0.39	<0.01	0.26	H4 Supported
Interpersonal Dynamics	Job Satisfaction	0.36	<0.01	0.24	H4 Supported
Interpersonal Dynamics	Psychological Well-Being	0.40	<0.001	0.27	H4 Supported
Interpersonal Dynamics	Retention	0.37	<0.01	0.25	H4 Supported

SEM results show strong positive paths from attitudes, support, and dynamics to outcomes ($\beta > 0.35, p < 0.01$), while stigma exerts negative effects ($\beta < -0.37, p < 0.001$). Regression R^2 values (0.24–0.35) indicate moderate explanatory power, controlling for demographics. All hypotheses are supported, inferring that enhancing positive psychosocial factors could boost inclusion by up to 52% via support, while reducing stigma might prevent 39% retention loss. This suggests targeted interventions like anti-stigma programs in diverse settings to improve employee outcomes.

VII. CONCLUSION

This study on psychosocial factors influencing supportive work environments for differently-abled employees reveals that workplace attitudes, perceived social support, interpersonal dynamics, and stigma are critical determinants of inclusion and employee outcomes. Through exploratory factor analysis, four distinct factors were identified, with workplace attitudes and social support emerging as the strongest positive contributors, while stigma exerted a significant negative influence. Structural equation modeling and regression analyses confirmed that positive psychosocial factors substantially enhance levels of inclusion, job satisfaction, psychological well-being, and retention intentions, explaining 24–35% of variance in these outcomes. Notably, perceived social support demonstrated the strongest predictive power, underscoring its role in fostering empowerment and reducing isolation among differently-abled employees.

The findings highlight the urgent need for organizations to address stigmatizing attitudes and cultivate supportive interpersonal environments through targeted interventions, such as awareness training, inclusive leadership development, and robust support systems. By mitigating stigma and strengthening social support, workplaces can significantly improve retention and overall well-being, enabling differently-abled employees to contribute more effectively. This study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on disability inclusion, offering practical implications for policymakers, HR professionals, and organizational leaders in diverse settings. Future research should explore longitudinal effects and comparative analyses across cultural contexts to further refine these insights.

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