

## Recruitment of Persons with Disabilities (PWD): a Systematic Literature Review

<sup>1</sup>Muhammad Ersan Pamungkas, <sup>2</sup>Mala Sondang Silitonga

<sup>1,2</sup> National Institute of Public Administration Jakarta, Indonesia

<sup>1</sup>ersanpamungkas83@gmail.com , <sup>2</sup>malasondang@stialan.ac.id

### ARTICLE INFORMATION

### ABSTRACT

*Article history :*

Submit:

01-09-2025

First Revision:

09-06-2026

Accepted:

26-06-2026

**Keywords:**

*disability; inclusive recruitment; Persons with Disability (PWD); systematic literature review*

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This study provides a systematic literature review examining the recruitment of persons with disabilities (PWD) across diverse national and organizational settings. It synthesizes theoretical developments from the medical, social, human rights, and capability models of disability, critically interrogating how these inform both policy and practice in recruitment and workplace inclusion. Drawing from recent empirical studies (2025), the review identifies persistent challenges, such as legal-practice gaps, attitudinal biases, inaccessible systems, and intersectional disadvantages experienced by PWD – while also highlighting emerging evidence-based strategies like inclusive recruitment frameworks, reasonable accommodations, and multi-level policy reforms that foster equitable labor market access. The article underscores that genuine inclusion demands coordinated action from policymakers and organizations, rigorous measurement of outcomes, and intersectional, context-driven approaches rooted in justice and human rights. Ultimately, it concludes that recruiting PWD is not only a legal and ethical imperative but also a strategy for organizational excellence, innovation, and sustainable, inclusive growth.

### A. INTRODUCTION

The objective of this article is to present a comprehensive and critical review of the recruitment of persons with disabilities (PWD). While the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion have gained increasing prominence within organizational research and practice (Shore et al., 2011), recruitment of individuals with disabilities remains comparatively underexplored and is often conceptualized in limited or reductive terms within the fields of organizational studies and human resource management (Kaye, Jans, & Jones, 2011). To that end, this review seeks to synthesize and critically interrogate the existing body of literature in order to advance a more nuanced understanding of the structural, procedural, and cultural dynamics that both constrain and enable recruitment of persons with disabilities. In doing so, it aims not only to illuminate prevailing gaps and challenges in current practice but also to offer insights into potential pathways for fostering equitable and inclusive recruitment strategies.

The review pursues several goals. *First*, it examines the extent to which recruitment policies, practices, and strategies have been designed, or, conversely, neglected, for candidates with disabilities across organizational contexts and sectors. *Second*, it highlights the barriers and challenges most

frequently documented in the literature, ranging from attitudinal biases and inaccessible recruitment systems to inadequate employer awareness and systemic gaps in labor market structures. *Third*, it identifies promising approaches, innovations, and policy frameworks that have demonstrated effectiveness in advancing inclusive recruitment and creating equal opportunities for PWD.

Through this synthesis, the study is expected to contribute in multiple ways: it offers practical guidance by identifying obstacles and successful strategies that can inform both practitioners and policymakers; it advances theoretical integration by bridging insights from disability studies, diversity management, and labor economics into a coherent framework; and it highlights research gaps that call for further empirical attention, particularly at the intersection of disability with gender, class, and digital recruitment systems. Overall, this study positions the recruitment of PWD as a critical site for both organizational practice and academic inquiry. By systematically reviewing and consolidating prior research, it not only deepens our understanding of persistent challenges but also illuminates emerging opportunities to shape fairer and more inclusive employment landscapes.

The concept of disability has experienced significant evolution over the past century, shifting from deficit-oriented frameworks toward more inclusive, justice-oriented understandings (Oliver, 1990). Historically, the medical model dominated, positioning disability as an individualized pathology in need of medical intervention, and framing impairment as the central issue, while minimizing the role of social or systemic barriers in shaping exclusion and participation (Shakespeare, 2006). This approach, prevalent in early 20th-century thinking, focused on diagnosing, treating, or rehabilitating people seen as 'abnormal,' effectively reducing disability to a biomedical problem and sidestepping the broader environmental and societal obstacles that restrict individuals' agency and access (Shakespeare, 2006).

In deliberate contestation to this paradigm, the social model of disability emerged in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, most notably advanced by activists and scholars such as Michael Oliver (Oliver, 1990). The social model fundamentally reconceptualizes disability as a socially produced phenomenon, focusing on exclusion caused by inaccessible built environments, discriminatory social institutions, and stigmatizing attitudes, rather than on bodily impairments per se (Shakespeare, 2006). This shift catalyzed disability rights activism by spotlighting the need for structural reforms and for the removal of barriers—physical, attitudinal, and legislative—that impede full participation (Shakespeare, 2006). However, critical perspectives, such as those articulated by Shakespeare and Crow, highlight limitations of the social model, arguing that it may discount the lived realities of illness and pain; thereby prompting calls for frameworks that better integrate personal experiences of embodiment alongside social factors (Crow, 1996; Shakespeare, 2006).

Building on these insights, the human rights model has gained prominence, especially following the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD, 2006). This model reframes PWD as rights-bearers entitled to dignity, autonomy, and full community participation, situating disability firmly within discourses of equality, social justice, and universal human rights (UNCRPD, 2006). The human rights model emphasizes anti-discrimination, reasonable accommodation, and legal protections, marking a substantive departure from both medical and social models by grounding disability in the language of fundamental rights (UNCRPD, 2006).

Complementing the human rights perspective is the capabilities approach, advanced by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum, which highlights the substantive freedoms necessary for disabled persons to lead meaningful lives (Nussbaum, 2006; Sen, 1999). This approach calls attention to both the removal of barriers to participation and the cultivation of enabling environments that support agency, opportunity, and growth, making it necessary not only to address exclusion but also to foster conditions in which all individuals can flourish (Nussbaum, 2006).

Taken together, these frameworks emphasize that disability is not reducible to impairment and should be understood as an interactional, socio-political, and justice-oriented phenomenon—one that connects individual experiences of difference, illness, or pain with wider structural conditions, policies, and social expectations. By integrating both individual and collective dimensions, contemporary disability studies continue to challenge narrow definitions and advocate for transformative change grounded in rights, capabilities, and full societal participation (Oliver, 1990; Shakespeare, 2006; UNCRPD, 2006; Nussbaum, 2006; Sen, 1999).

Research on disability has increasingly emphasized the critical need for disability inclusion as a fundamental human right rather than a mere aspiration. International reports demonstrate that over

16% of the world's population lives with disability, facing systemic barriers and limitations in access to resources, services, and opportunities (Global Disability Inclusion Report, 2025). Current policy frameworks, such as the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), have been catalytic in shaping national legislation and guiding global efforts toward equitable inclusion. However, these advances remain inconsistent across sectors and regions, with persistent gaps in health, education, employment, and poverty reduction, especially in low- and middle-income contexts (Global Disability Inclusion Report, 2025).

Theoretical paradigms in disability research have evolved significantly, moving from a medical model focused on diagnosing and treating impairments to the social model, which regards disability as a result of societal barriers and structural discrimination (Oliver, 1998). The social model calls for research and policy reforms that engage disabled people as active stakeholders, recognizing subjective experience and intersectionality—how disability coexists with age, gender, and socioeconomic status (Oliver, 1998). Despite the increased visibility of social theory, positivist approaches remain dominant, often marginalizing lived experience in favor of quantitative objectivity (Oliver, 1998).

Empirical research continues to find that children and adults with disabilities encounter significant educational, economic, and social challenges. The Global Disability Inclusion Report (2025) underscores how exclusion imposes not only moral but also sizeable economic costs, such as underemployment reducing GDP by up to 7% in low- and middle-income countries. Effective inclusion strategies demand cross-sectoral coordination, comprehensive legislation, and dedicated participation from persons with disabilities and organizations representing them. These approaches must address intersectional needs, dismantle stigma and barriers, provide individualized support, and promote meaningful involvement in decision-making processes (Global Disability Inclusion Report, 2025; Oliver, 1998).

This reconceptualization of recruitment fundamentally transforms its role within organizations and brings substantial implications for human resources management. Rather than seeing recruitment as a mere administrative task, contemporary organizations now recognize it as a strategic function that communicates core values, shapes organizational culture, and conveys a long-term vision to both current and potential members of the workforce (Barney, 1991). The process of attracting talent is intricately linked to the organization's identity, serving as a public declaration of what the organization stands for and where it aims to go.

A significant shift in recent years has been the importance placed on inclusivity during recruitment. Inclusivity is defined as creating equitable opportunities for all individuals to participate fully within an organization, regardless of differences such as disability status, background, or personal circumstances. This development underscores the necessity for human resources to design recruitment strategies that move beyond traditional selection criteria and foster environments where everyone can thrive. As a result, the concept of inclusive recruitment has gained prominence, reflecting a conscious commitment to break down barriers for marginalized or underrepresented groups, including PWD. Inclusive recruitment aims to ensure that every individual has access to meaningful involvement in organizational activities and career advancement opportunities. By embracing inclusivity, recruitment acts not only as a gateway for talent acquisition but also as a mechanism for social impact, driving progress toward more diverse, equitable, and dynamic workplaces. This evolving perspective places human resources at the forefront of organizational change, reshaping the workforce landscape for a more just and forward-thinking future.

From the perspective of signaling theory, inclusive recruitment practices, inclusive job advertisements, accessible application systems, and demonstrable organizational commitment to diversity send powerful positive signals to candidates with disabilities (Spence, 1973). Conversely, inaccessible systems or exclusionary attitudes reinforce inequality by deterring qualified talent (Colella & Bruyère, 2011). From the lens of the resource-based view of the firm, inclusive recruitment strengthens organizations by expanding access to unique human capital and enhancing resilience, adaptability, and innovation (Barney, 2001). These approaches illustrate that disability inclusion is not merely a compliance issue or an act of corporate philanthropy but a pathway toward competitive advantage and long-term organizational sustainability (Lengnick-Hall, Gaunt, & Kulkarni, 2008). An intersectional perspective further complicates the picture by underscoring that disability does not

operate in isolation but in tandem with gender, race, class, and socioeconomic status (Hankivsky, 2012). For example, women with disabilities may face dual or compounded discrimination in hiring, while candidates in lower-income contexts experience exclusion compounded by poverty and structural inequities (Moodley & Graham, 2015). This reality cautions against one-size-fits-all approaches to inclusive recruitment and supports the need for tailored, context-sensitive strategies that address overlapping forms of disadvantage.

Taken together, the trajectory of disability models and contemporary human resource theories converge to highlight that inclusive recruitment is not only a legal or ethical obligation but a strategic imperative. The social model emphasizes the dismantling of systemic barriers (Oliver, 1990); the human rights model underscores equality and fairness (United Nations, 2006); and the capabilities approach calls attention to the enabling environments needed to realize individuals' full potential (Nussbaum, 2006; Sen, 1999). Together, these frameworks illuminate the ways in which recruitment can move beyond tokenistic inclusion to become a transformative practice of empowerment.

Recruiting PWD presents both substantial challenges and valuable opportunities for contemporary organizations. Structural barriers such as inaccessible physical environments, insufficient accommodation provisions, and outdated systems often hinder the hiring process for PWD. Attitudinal biases and persistent stereotypes about the abilities and productivity of individuals with disabilities continue to represent a significant obstacle, sometimes resulting from a lack of understanding or awareness within the workplace. Additionally, challenges such as difficulty in locating qualified candidates, gaps in disability-friendly human resources systems, and concerns about the operational costs of accommodations further complicate recruitment efforts.

Despite these ongoing hurdles, progressive policies, evolving inclusive practices, and integrative theoretical frameworks are paving the way for greater equity in organizational recruitment. Recent developments include barrier-free recruitment processes, enhanced workplace accessibility, sensitization training for employees and managers, and active participation in job fairs and partnerships with disability-focused organizations. These integrative approaches not only reduce prejudice but also establish a supportive corporate culture that encourages diversity, models leadership opportunities for PWD, and ultimately strengthens the organization as a whole. The true challenge for organizations, scholars, and policymakers now lies in aligning recruitment strategies with justice-oriented frameworks that recognize the inherent value, dignity, and unique potential of every individual with a disability. Embracing this shift is not just a legal or ethical requirement—it unlocks new forms of human capital, increases organizational adaptability, enhances creativity, and can significantly improve employee morale and company reputation. Ultimately, recruiting PWD should be perceived not as an act of accommodation, but as a core strategy for achieving organizational excellence and as a cornerstone in building genuinely inclusive societies.

## B. METHOD

The methodology adopted in this paper is a Systematic Literature Review (SLR), a rigorous research approach designed to identify, evaluate, and synthesize the findings of previously conducted studies within a specific field. This method provides a structured and transparent way to gather and present relevant scientific evidence, ensuring that the review process is both comprehensive and replicable.

An SLR is carried out by following a series of clearly defined steps. These begin with formulating a precise research question, followed by systematically searching for pertinent scholarly articles. Subsequently, studies are selected based on established inclusion and exclusion criteria. Relevant data from the chosen studies are then extracted and systematically synthesized to draw meaningful conclusions. The primary aim of an SLR is to develop a thorough and well-defined understanding of the research topic. Additionally, it seeks to identify existing gaps in the literature, thereby highlighting valuable directions for future research efforts.

Liberati (Liberati et al., 2009) provides guidelines for standardised reporting of systematic reviews and meta-analyses in health intervention research. In the meantime, PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) statement has been developed to improve transparency and quality of reporting in systematic reviews and meta-analyses (Moher et al., 2015).

The search process is conducted using the ProQuest database. The search strategy focuses on terms relevant to the recruitment of PWD, specifically targeting concepts that aligns with the operational requirements. To ensure comprehensive coverage, a variety of keywords are employed for each core concept. This approach maximizes the breadth of the search and increased the potential to identify pertinent literature. Boolean search techniques, including the use of operators such as AND, OR, and NOT, are applied to combine and refine search terms, allowing for more precise and relevant search results. The constructed search sequences were as follows:

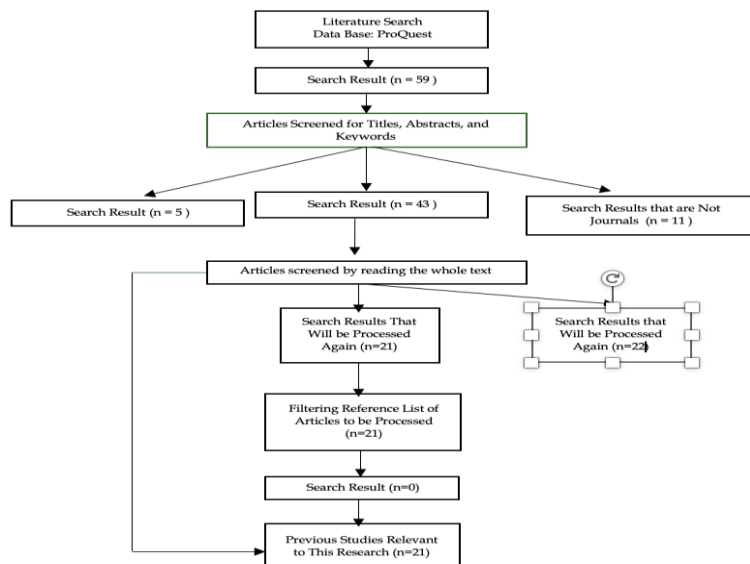
**Table 1. Search Terms**

Database	Search String
ProQuest	((“disabled recruitment” OR “recruitment of persons with disability” OR “recruitment of PWD” or “PWD recruitment” or “disability recruitment” or “Employment” or “Employment Opportunity”

A number of rigorous criteria shaped the identification and selection of studies in the ProQuest database for this article, beginning with the restriction to journal articles, the use of the English language, and a publication window between 2021 and 2024 to ensure scholarly relevance. Articles were further refined by targeting those directly addressing the recruitment of persons with disabilities or related concepts, with only those featuring conceptual analyses and practical frameworks aligned to current recruitment practices considered. Peer-reviewed status was mandatory, confirming methodological reliability and data integrity, and the review process favored journals with substantial impact factors and empirical findings, excluding non-empirical work and sources outside the defined time frame or language scope. The selection process unfolded in three stages: initial title screening against inclusion criteria, abstract review for focused eligibility, and comprehensive full-text examination of remaining publications. Each relevant article was systematically coded for author, year, journal, and title, followed by critical analysis of results and conclusions. The criteria guiding inclusion and exclusion were summarized in Table 2 as follows:

**Tabel 2. Selection Criteria**

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Time of publication	2021 - 2024	Before 2021



Article Type	Journal (Empirical Data)	Conference paper, book chapter, short survey, book and conference review
Language	English	Non-English languages

**Figure 1. Prisma Flowchart**

Below is table presenting an inclusion of the research results:

**Table 3. Inclusion of Research Result**

No	Name of Authors	Title	Year	Number of Citation	Name of Journal
1	Kaja Larsen Østerud	Leading the Way? State Employer's Engagement with A Disability Employment Policy	2021	163	Nordic Journal of Working Life Studies
2	Hege Gjertsen, Stefan Hardonk, Jens Ineland	Work Inclusion for People with Intellectual Disabilities in Three Nordic Countries: The Current Policy and Challenges	2021	36	Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research
3	Shikha Mahadeo, Gupta, Sukhai, Walter Wittich	Employment Outcomes and Experiences of People With Seeing Disability in Canada: An Analysis of the Canadian Survey on Disability 2017	2021	44	PLOS One
4	Atiqah Siregar, Amanda Faizal Rahmanto Moesi, Wildan Al Kautsar Ankyk	Assessing Indonesia's Inclusive Employment Opportunities for People with Disability in the COVID-19 Era	2021	7	Journal of Institute for Research on Economics and Society
5	Refilwe E. Morwane, Shakila Dada, Juan Bornman	Barriers to and Facilitators of Employment of Persons with Disabilities in Low and Middle Income Countries: A Scoping Review	2021	88	AOSIS
6	Wojciech Figiel	Disability and (Dis) Empowering Technologies: The Case of Blind Translators	2022	1	eJournals, Arts and Cultural Studies Review
7	Arif Jetha, Kay Nasir, Dwayne Van Eerd, Monique A M Gignac,	Inclusion of Young People with Disabilities in the	2022	12	BMJ Open

	Kathleen A Martis Ginis, Emile Tompa	Future of Work: Forecasting Workplace, Labor Market and Community-Based Strategies through an Online and Accessible Delphi Survey Protocol				
8	Vasanthi Surehs, Lata Dyaram	Job Matching for Persons with Disabilities: an Exploratory Study	2022	9	Employee Responsibilities and Rights Journal	
9	Warren P Charles, Liiza Gie, Rhodrick N Musakuro	Barriers to the Employability of People with Disabilities in the South African Public Service	2023	13	AOSIS	
10	Pierre Boutros, Ali Fakih	The Disability Employment Paradox in Developing Countries: Recent Evidence from Lebanon	2023	11	Development Studies Research	
11	Jan Jochmaring, Jana York	Inclusion Opportunities of Work 4.0? Employment Realities of People with Disabilities in Germany	2023	14	Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research	
12	ABG Safuan Adenan, MD Mizanur Rahman, Sharifa Ezat Wan Puteh, Razitasham Safii, Rosalia Saimon, Chen Yoke Yong, Ting Chuong Hock	Employment Opportunities and Benefits for People with Down Syndrome in Malaysia: A Qualitative Research	2024	2	Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research	
13	Zimkitha Mahlunghulu	Gendering Facilitators of the Employment of Women with Disabilities during the COVID-19 Pandemic	2024	n/a	African Journal of Development Studies (AJDS)	
14	Natasha Maclean, Martha Geiger, Lieketseng Ned	Employment Equity Targets: How a State- Owned Enterprise Recruits People with Disabilities	2024	4	AOSIS	
15	Hadeel Al-Zu'bi, Ghofran HAilal	Access to Public Employment for Persons with Disabilities in Jordan:	2024	1	Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research	

16	Antoni Gianfranco Damri	Tsaputra, Giuntoli,	Legal Framework, Policy, and Barriers Indonesia's Disability Policy Reform Under the Jokowi's Government: Progressive Legal Framework versus Half-Hearted Inclusion	2024	n/a	International Quarterly for Asian Studies
17	S.L. Ashalatha, Kumar, B.R. Santosh, B.K. Ravindra	Satish	Navigating UNCRPD Concluding Observations on Article 27: Policy Exploration on Disability Inclusive Employment	2024	3	Cogent Social Sciences
18	Nguyen Thi Mo		Factors Influencing Employment Opportunities with Salary for People with Disabilities	2024	n/a	International Review of Management and Marketing
19	Kelao Uiras, Nisha A. Paulse, Murangi, Clifford K. Hlatywayo	Annelisa	Employment Challenges for Persons with Visual Impairment in Windhoek, Namibia	2024	3	AOSIS
20	Mohaned G. Lowai, G. Abed, K. Shackelford	Abed, Todd	A Qualitative, Small-Sample Study of Employment Challenges for People with Disabilities in Saudi Arabia	2024	15	MDPI
21	Rafael Arizcuren, Oliván-Blázquez	Sánchez-Esperanza, Bárbara	Indicators to Evaluate the Labor Insertion of People with Disabilities in Conventional Companies in Spain: A Delphi Study	2025	n/a	PLOS One

This multi-layered approach reaffirmed the reliability and academic foundation of the selected studies, culminating in a well-grounded framework for understanding the recruitment of PWD. The study selection process was structured in three distinct stages to ensure thorough and unbiased inclusion of relevant articles. Initially, all retrieved article titles were screened using the predetermined inclusion criteria to discard ineligible studies. Next, the abstracts of the articles that passed the title screening were reviewed, applying consistent criteria to identify those most relevant to the research focus. In the final stage, full texts of the remaining articles were examined in detail; each pertinent article was systematically coded by author name, year of publication, journal, and title, and then analyzed for key findings and conclusions, ensuring data extraction was comprehensive and methodical throughout the review process.

### C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The employment and workplace inclusion of PWD, including those with intellectual and seeing disabilities, remains a persistent global challenge despite notable progress in policy and legislative

frameworks. Across both advanced and developing economies—such as Norway, Sweden, Iceland, Canada, and Indonesia—there exists a clear tension between official commitments to human rights and normalization, and the realities of everyday labor market participation for PWD. For instance, in the Nordic context, while policy discourse has progressively embraced full citizenship and participation ideals, entrenched systemic practices continue to center on segregated workplaces and “train-then-place” models, particularly for those with intellectual disabilities. This results in alarmingly low employment rates and limited transitions to integrated labor markets, such as evidenced by Norway’s 24.5% employment rate for adults with intellectual disabilities, most of whom are confined to segregated employment settings (Østerud, 2021; Gjertsen, Hardonk, & Ineland, 2021). Similar patterns are observed in high-income countries like Canada, where only 54% of working-age adults with seeing disabilities are employed, a situation compounded by persistent structural barriers—ranging from insufficient workplace accommodations and negative attitudes to the growing importance of digital skills (Gupta, Sukhai, & Wittich, 2021).

Scholarly reviews highlight that the recruitment and employment of PWD are shaped by complex, multi-level barriers embedded in social, organizational, and cultural contexts. A systematic literature review demonstrates that attitudinal biases, inaccessible recruitment systems, and inadequate employer engagement remain pervasive, alongside gaps in awareness and persistent ableist assumptions which privilege a narrow definition of the “productive worker” (Kaye, Jans, & Jones, 2011; Shier, Graham, & Jones, 2009). Furthermore, systemic reliance on segregated pathways and a disconnect between anti-discrimination law and practical enforcement contributes to ongoing exclusion. Even exemplary legal frameworks, such as Indonesia’s 2016 disability rights law, are often undermined by underfunding, fragmented regulations, insufficient enforcement, and a lack of accountability, resulting in what is described as “symbolic compliance” rather than substantive change (Tsaputra, Giuntoli, & Damri, 2024; Siregar, Moeis, & Anky, 2021).

The concept of disability itself has evolved from deficit-based medical models toward more nuanced frameworks, including the social model (which identifies exclusion as a product of inaccessible environments and institutional discrimination), the human rights model (which asserts the equal dignity and participation rights of PWD), and the capabilities approach (which stresses substantive freedoms and opportunities) (Oliver, 1990; United Nations, 2006; Sen, 1999; Nussbaum, 2006). This theoretical reorientation has profound implications for human resource management, transforming recruitment from an administrative function to a strategic practice of embodying and communicating organizational values. Inclusive recruitment is now seen as a cornerstone for not only acquiring diverse talent but also for signaling a genuine commitment to equity and justice, with organizational benefits that extend to creativity, resilience, public reputation, and employee morale (Barney, 1991; Lengnick-Hall, Gaunt, & Kulkarni, 2008).

Yet, challenges are deepened by the intersectional nature of disability, with further exclusion often experienced by women with disabilities, people living in poverty, ethnic minorities, and other marginalized groups (Mizunoya & Mitra, 2013; Moodley & Graham, 2015; Lindsay et al., 2019). Inaccessible physical environments, lack of digital literacy, inadequate accommodations, compounded by social stigma, form a multifaceted web of barriers that require context-sensitive and adaptive interventions (Boutros & Fakhri, 2023; Abed, Abed, & Shackelford, 2024). The COVID-19 pandemic further amplified these disparities, especially among already vulnerable groups such as women with disabilities in Africa (Mahlungulu & Mudau, 2024).

Despite these enduring obstacles, there are emerging, evidence-based strategies and facilitators of inclusion. Holistic and multi-layered organizational efforts—such as barrier-free recruitment processes, disability awareness training, active partnerships with organizations representing PWD, job matching, and flexible accommodations—are increasingly recognized for their positive impact on both hiring outcomes and organizational culture (Maclean, Geiger, & Ned, 2024; Suresh & Dyaram, 2022). Inclusive employment not only supports individual autonomy and well-being for PWD but also enhances workplace loyalty, creativity, and societal acceptance (Gjertsen, Hardonk, & Ineland, 2021; Adenan et al., 2024). Notably, international frameworks like the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the ILO's Decent Work Agenda provide normative and practical guidance for states and organizations to advance meaningful inclusion (United Nations, 2006; ILO, 2019).

Effective measurement and sustainability of disability inclusion are critical, demanding multi-dimensional evaluative frameworks that assess not just quantitative hiring data, but also social, organizational, and managerial impacts (Sánchez-Arizcuren, García-Uceda, & Oliván-Blázquez, 2025;

Neely, Gregory, & Platts, 1995). Organizational evaluation must be embedded in supportive policy infrastructures, and supported by continued advocacy, digital upskilling, and capacity-building efforts (Jetha et al., 2022; Boutros & Fakih, 2023).

Achieving genuine work inclusion for PWD requires coordinated, intersectional, and multi-level strategies – ranging from consistent legal enforcement and resource allocation at the policy level, to accessible recruiting practices, ongoing disability awareness, comprehensive organizational supports, and rigorous monitoring at the workplace level. Inclusive recruitment and employment should be understood not as an act of charity or mere regulatory compliance, but as a strategic imperative for organizational excellence, innovation, and social equity. Closing the gap between policy aspirations and lived experiences remains an urgent priority, demanding the sustained commitment of policymakers, organizations, and society as a whole.

### 1. Legal Frameworks and Policy-Practice Gaps

Despite the proliferation of progressive legislation intended to promote labor market inclusion for PWD, the gap between normative commitments and lived realities remains striking. Indonesia's 2016 disability rights law, frequently heralded as comprehensive, illustrates this paradox: while it promised cross-sectoral inclusion, its implementation has been undermined by chronic underfunding, fragmented regulations, and the near absence of enforcement capacity (Tsaputra, Giuntoli, & Damri, 2024; Siregar, Moeis, & Anky, 2021). These failures are not merely technical shortcomings but reflect a deeper structural neglect, where formal legal recognition coexists with entrenched inequalities in education, health, and employment. The legislation risks serving as symbolic compliance – progressive in form yet ineffective in practice.

Similar contradictions emerge in other jurisdictions. In Jordan and Germany, anti-discrimination policies and quota systems signal robust legal commitments, but these instruments are frequently hollowed out by weak enforcement, regulatory ambiguity, and self-reinforcing exclusionary practices. Germany is emblematic: despite its reputation for strong social protections, PWD remain disproportionately segregated into sheltered workshops, which operate less as pathways to inclusion and more as institutional mechanisms of containment. Moreover, technological transformations such as automation threaten to deepen labor market marginalization, with policy frameworks showing little capacity to preempt such risks (Jochmaring & York, 2023; Al-Zu'bi & Hilal, 2024). Thus, rather than dismantling structural barriers, legal reforms often reproduce them under the guise of progressive change.

Cross-national research reinforces this critical perspective, pointing to recurring patterns across both advanced and emerging economies: legislative gaps, weak administrative will, and insufficient judicial protections are compounded by the reluctance of employers to engage meaningfully with disability inclusion (Ashalatha et al., 2024; Østerud, 2021). The persistence of these failures reveals that the problem is not a lack of legal frameworks but rather the political and institutional unwillingness to confront entrenched systems of exclusion. Without stronger enforcement, sustained investment, and transformative cultural shifts in workplaces and societies, the rhetoric of inclusion risks remaining performative – a legal façade that obscures, rather than resolves, the structural marginalization of people with disabilities.

### 2. Persistent Barriers in Practice

PWD persistently encounter deeply rooted, multi-dimensional obstacles in attaining decent work, rooted in both overt discrimination and subtle structural inequities that permeate societies and labor institutions (Boutros & Fakih, 2023; Siregar et al., 2021). These systemic barriers manifest in both direct and indirect forms – ranging from explicit exclusion in hiring practices and workplace policies, to more insidious challenges embedded within ordinary physical, social, and economic environments. In Indonesia and Lebanon, for example, inaccessible public spaces, limited investment in adaptive infrastructure such as ramps and accessible transportation, and insufficient opportunities for specialized training all contribute to excluding PWD from the formal economy (Boutros & Fakih, 2023; Siregar et al., 2021). Such environments do not simply reflect oversight but are symptomatic of broader societal attitudes that frame disability as an afterthought, perpetuating cycles of disadvantage and poverty.

Further compounding these challenges, negative societal perceptions and entrenched stigma create additional barriers for PWD seeking employment. Discriminatory attitudes among employers

and colleagues often lead to exclusion from hiring or promotion opportunities, as well as social isolation within the workplace (Boutros & Fakih, 2023). Laws and policies that are meant to protect the rights of PWD frequently lack robust mechanisms for enforcement, or are undermined by weak institutional commitment, resulting in limited practical impact on real-world inclusion (Siregar et al., 2021). Additionally, the fragmentation of services and the absence of inter-sectoral collaboration make it difficult for PWD to navigate employment services, vocational training, and support programs that might otherwise facilitate labor market integration.

In public sector contexts such as South Africa and Namibia, systemic obstacles extend beyond the built environment to include institutional cultures and management practices that often fail to accommodate the diverse needs of PWD (Charles, Gie, & Musakuro, 2023; Uiras et al., 2024). Here, managerial inexperience in disability policy implementation, a lack of targeted professional development on inclusion, and attitudinal biases can perpetuate exclusion, not only in hiring but also in career advancement and workplace participation. These issues are exacerbated by conceptual blind spots in organizational leadership, where disability is viewed narrowly or misunderstood entirely, resulting in strategies that neglect the complex realities faced by PWD (Charles, Gie, & Musakuro, 2023; Uiras et al., 2024). As a result, even where legal frameworks mandate accessibility and equal opportunity, deep-rooted beliefs and routine practices can create formidable obstacles for PWD.

The impact of these structural barriers is intensified by individual-level disadvantages, such as limited educational attainment, lower socioeconomic status, and insufficient digital literacy or access to technology (Gupta, Sukhai, & Wittich, 2021). Many PWD in low- and middle-income countries are excluded from mainstream educational pathways, either because institutions remain physically and pedagogically inaccessible or due to discriminatory beliefs about their potential (Siregar et al., 2021; Gupta, Sukhai, & Wittich, 2021). This exclusion from education translates into lower chances of acquiring the skills most in demand in contemporary labor markets – especially as economies become more digitized. Additionally, the spread of assistive technologies has been uneven both globally and within communities; cost, infrastructure gaps, and lack of awareness limit the uptake of these tools, leaving many with sensory disabilities—such as blind or deaf individuals—at a disproportionate disadvantage in accessing information, professional training, and jobs (Gupta, Sukhai, & Wittich, 2021; Abed, Abed, & Shackelford, 2024).

The COVID-19 pandemic amplified these challenges, casting a spotlight on persistent inequities in the world of work and beyond. Women with disabilities in African countries, for example, faced heightened risks stemming from the intersection of gender, race, and disability (Mahlungulu & Mudau, 2024). Loss of employment, expanded caregiving responsibilities due to the closure of support services, and increased exposure to gender-based violence collectively deepened their marginalization. The shift to remote work and online services, while beneficial for some, excluded many who lacked access to digital devices or accessible online platforms, creating new forms of isolation and disadvantage (Mahlungulu & Mudau, 2024). Such intersecting challenges reveal the urgency of developing comprehensive, intersectional policy frameworks that go beyond physical accessibility to address social norms, provide robust educational supports, ensure the diffusion of accessible digital technologies, and foster genuine inclusion at every level of the labor market.

Innovative and sustainable solutions for PWD employment thus require coordinated action on multiple fronts. This includes investing in universal design for public infrastructure, strengthening the enforcement mechanisms of disability rights legislation, reforming educational systems to deliver inclusive and high-quality learning, and sensitizing employers and public officials to the value and capabilities of persons with disabilities (Boutros & Fakih, 2023; Charles, Gie, & Musakuro, 2023). Only through such multi-dimensional and intersectional strategies can societies begin to dismantle the entrenched barriers facing PWD and realize genuine access to decent work.

### 3. Strategies and Facilitators for Inclusion

A growing body of scholarship highlights both the challenges and the progress made in advancing inclusive employment for PWD. Cross-national evidence emphasizes that inclusive practices are increasingly being embedded into organizational systems, though their effectiveness varies by context. For example, in South Africa, a state-owned enterprise reported significant gains in disability employment equity through a holistic strategy that combined inclusive recruitment, reasonable accommodations, disability awareness training, partnerships with organizations of persons with disabilities, and well-structured support mechanisms (Maclean, Geiger, & Ned, 2024). This case

illustrates how institutional commitment, supported by organizational infrastructure, can shape more equitable employment outcomes.

Beyond structural reforms, scholars point to the effectiveness of individualized employment strategies. Job matching, flexible accommodations, and tailored support mechanisms are frequently cited as central to sustaining long-term workforce participation among PWD. Suresh and Dyaram (2022) contend that such measures cannot remain one-off interventions but must be embedded in an ongoing cycle of ability profiling, job analysis, skills-gap identification, and post-hiring evaluation. Their framework underscores the importance of continuous adaptation, suggesting that inclusion is a process rather than a fixed outcome.

Regional variations also reveal the differential weight of enabling and constraining factors. In Vietnam, higher education attainment and the support of employment-focused organizations are reported as the strongest determinants of paid employment for PWD, whereas environmental barriers, such as inaccessible transportation, are perceived to be relatively less prohibitive (Mo, 2024). This finding stands in partial contrast to research in other global contexts where structural barriers are often identified as critical inhibitors, suggesting that the local policy and organizational landscape may mediate the degree to which such barriers pose challenges.

Crucially, the literature also directs attention to the reciprocal benefits of inclusive employment. Studies consistently indicate that inclusive practices extend beyond individual welfare, yielding organizational advantages such as improved employee loyalty, enhanced public reputation, and greater workforce reliability (Adenan et al., 2024). Moreover, for individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities, inclusive employment environments are associated with increased independence, self-determination, and broader social acceptance (Gjertsen, Hardonk, & Ineland, 2021). Taken together, these findings highlight an emerging consensus that disability-inclusive employment generates value at multiple levels – individual, organizational, and societal – while also pointing to the ongoing need for context-sensitive strategies that adapt to local institutional realities.

#### 4. Measuring and Sustaining Disability Inclusion

Beyond the quantitative expansion of hiring rates, the realization of genuine workplace inclusion for PWD requires more than headcounts; it hinges on embedding rigorous, transparent mechanisms for systematic measurement, formalized evaluation, and continuous, organization-wide improvement. This entails not simply tracking the number of hires but institutionalizing dynamic processes that reveal how inclusive practices evolve, are experienced, and truly transform organizational culture and performance over time (Neely, Gregory, & Platts, 1995). Measurement, in this regard, is best understood as a strategic tool that aligns daily practices with core institutional objectives – ensuring that disability inclusion is continuously recalibrated in response to employee feedback, environmental shifts, and evolving social norms rather than being treated as a static compliance requirement (Neely, Gregory, & Platts, 1995).

Recent research from Spain exemplifies this approach through the development and application of a multidimensional evaluative framework consisting of 26 finely tuned indicators distributed across several critical domains of workplace inclusion – namely, individual work performance, social and organizational impact, and managerial assessment (Sánchez-Arizcuren, García-Uceda, & Oliván-Blázquez, 2025). Such a framework echoes the influential logic of the Balanced Scorecard, which stresses the necessity of appraising organizational effectiveness not only in financial or compliance terms, but also by systematically analyzing human resource development, social climate, and strategic leadership (Kaplan & Norton, 1992). This multi-dimensionality serves, in practice, both as a diagnostic and a developmental tool, supporting organizations in identifying strengths, surfacing hidden challenges, and guiding directed interventions that target persistent inequities.

Yet, the aspiration for disability inclusion is shaped as much by the structural and normative context as by in-house evaluation methods. Theories of institutional isomorphism reveal that the capacity of organizations to foster meaningful disability inclusion is fundamentally mediated by the larger policy, regulatory, and cultural environment in which they operate (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Integrative reviews of international experience consistently recommend that organizational evaluation systems be anchored within frameworks of enabling policy infrastructure, which include robust anti-discrimination protections, incentives for digital upskilling, funding for workplace accommodations, and ongoing advocacy coalitions that champion inclusive employment at both sectoral and national levels (Jetha et al., 2022; Boutros & Fakh, 2023; Morwane, Dada, & Bornman, 2021). Without such

scaffolding, even the most sophisticated organizational tools risk becoming performative, lacking the institutional support required for sustained, system-wide progress.

Viewed through the lens of the capability approach, these evaluative and structural arrangements are not merely about achieving formal compliance with existing norms, but are fundamentally about expanding the true, substantive freedoms and opportunities available to workers with disabilities (Sen, 1999; Nussbaum, 2011). This philosophical perspective foregrounds the importance of agency, dignity, and social participation, challenging organizations and policymakers to think beyond metrics and quotas toward systemic transformation that empowers PWD to define and pursue their own aspirations in the workplace.

Ultimately, effective disability inclusion is a multi-level, integrated process. Bridging the persistent disconnect between formal policy aspirations and the practical realities of workplace participation demands a dual orientation: one that is attentive to micro-level organizational reform—cultivating cultures of measurement, feedback, and learning—and macro-level investments in enduring, enabling policy environments that make genuine inclusion possible and resilient (Jetha et al., 2022; Boutros & Fakhri, 2023). Only by simultaneously targeting both the organizational and systemic levers of change can the vision of accessible, equitable, and dynamic workplaces for PWD be realized in sustainable and meaningful ways.

## D. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

### Conclusion

The systematic review highlights that while significant global progress has been made in recognizing the rights of PWD in employment, persistent barriers continue to obstruct meaningful inclusion. Legal frameworks and policies often demonstrate strong normative commitments, yet their implementation frequently falls short due to weak enforcement, systemic inequities, and entrenched discriminatory practices. Structural constraints such as inaccessible infrastructure, limited organizational awareness, and attitudinal biases remain influential across both advanced and developing economies. However, the evidence also underscores that inclusive recruitment and employment strategies—ranging from tailored accommodations to holistic organizational frameworks—have the potential not only to improve access to work for PWD but also to generate broader organizational and societal benefits. Ultimately, disability-inclusive recruitment should be regarded as a strategic pathway to organizational excellence, social equity, and sustainable development rather than as a tokenistic compliance exercise.

### Recommendation

To close the gap between policy intentions and lived realities, organizations, policymakers, and practitioners must adopt a multi-level and intersectional approach to recruitment and employment inclusion. At the policy level, governments should strengthen legal enforcement mechanisms, allocate adequate funding, and establish accountability systems to prevent legislation from becoming symbolic. At the organizational level, employers must embed disability inclusion into their long-term strategies by ensuring accessible recruitment systems, providing continuous disability awareness training, and institutionalizing support structures such as job coaching and flexible accommodations. Furthermore, the systematic measurement of inclusion outcomes through multidimensional evaluation frameworks is critical to sustaining meaningful progress. Finally, scholars are encouraged to pursue intersectional and context-specific research, particularly at the intersections of disability, gender, class, and digital labor markets, to inform adaptive and equitable strategies. By aligning structural reforms with workplace-level innovation, stakeholders can collectively advance the recruitment of PWD as a cornerstone of inclusive growth and social justice.

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