

Disability and workplace outcomes

Abstract

This dissertation looks at different aspects of the work-life of persons with disabilities in India. The dissertation is divided into three different essays. The first essay looks at employer attitudes towards hiring persons with disabilities. In-depth interviews with 28 human resource department heads from 28 different companies revealed that while employers exhibit norms of kindness, paternalistic and benevolent attitudes and apprehensions towards persons with disabilities, they are also slowly changing their attitudes and adapting a more egalitarian approach to looking at disability.

The second essay examines the process through which successful persons with visual impairment negotiate their identity in order to achieve great heights in their careers. Through 12 in-depth interviews with successful persons with visual impairment, the study revealed that a two-factor model can be used to explain how they negotiate their identity, namely acceptance factors and success factors. The acceptance factors include support from family and support from significant others, such as friends and colleagues. The success factors include self-esteem, self-concept and coping mechanisms such as faith in God, looking at life philosophically and looking at life practically.

The third essay examines the factors that lead to the formation of homophilous networks among persons with disability in an organization and in turn how such networks impact the organization. Persons with disability tend to form close, strong ties with each other, which makes their in-group cohesive; however, the strong cohesion within their group could impact their overall integration with the larger group, that is, the organization. I argue that three types of factors, namely, (1) achieved characteristics of persons with disabilities, such as educational qualifications and years of experience; (2) organizational context characteristics, such as the number of persons with disabilities employed and the extent of diversity at the workplace; and (3) personal characteristics of the persons with disabilities, such as their centrality in the network and the extent to which they perceive prejudice and bias from other employees will have an impact on the formation of homophilous ties.