

Role of Inclusive Leadership among Working Women with Disabilities

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Abstract

The concept of inclusion has transcended its status as a social construct and has drawn significant attention from organisational practitioners and scholars. A set of global objectives that aim to transform society are called Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). SDG 10 explicitly called on nations to "reduce inequalities within and among countries." The concept of inclusive leadership has great potential to foster collaborative and humanistic workplaces.

Though inclusive programmes in general and policies that are accessible to persons with disabilities in particular can advance the SDGs. However, little is known about how corporate executives bring access and growth to people with impairments. This paper throws light on novel ideas of inclusive leadership that promote the social and economic integration of people with disabilities, particularly working Women With Disabilities (WWD). Stigmas and barriers relating to women with disabilities exist on a global scale. Previous studies have found bias and preconceptions related to working women with impairments.

There hasn't been a lot of research on employee disabilities, but there isn't a lot of material out around about what disabled working women think and experience, especially in the Indian context. We offer a new perspective on inclusive leadership (IL) as a personalized uplifting process of socio-economic inclusion to close the divide between Persons without Disabilities in society and business by researching how leaders include the PwDs-Working Women with Disabilities (WWD) in social businesses.

Keywords: Inclusive Leadership, reduced inequalities, persons with disabilities, working women with disabilities, inclusive leadership

1. Introduction

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i. Sustainability Development Goals: SDG 10- Reduced Inequalities

The SDGs, which were adopted in September 2015, did include a separate objective on eliminating inequality as well as a broad commitment to "Leave No One Behind" in their implementation. The most outstanding and ground-breaking features of the agenda 2030 when compared to the MDGs (Millennium Development Goals) is Sustainable Development Goal-10 (SDG-10). In Goal 10, states express their public commitment to eliminating inequality within and between countries. Income inequality, more egalitarian fiscal and wage policies, financial regulation, political and social empowerment, discrimination, immigration and more democratic global economic governance are all goals that go hand in hand with this objective.

ii. Sustainability Development Goals & Disability Matters

Reduced disparities are a Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 10 that relates to the daily experiences of people with disabilities (PwDs) and their access to business and society. The literature and their personal experiences show the need for better co-design and implementation of workplace accessibility and disability challenges.

iii. Sustainability and Inclusive Leadership

In view of the rising inequality, the literature on inclusive leadership that encourages inclusion at the workplace, irrespective of status or demographic background, is unquestionably significant. The data that advocates the idea were generally acquired from HR executives and professionals, managers, and skilled employees/executives, and the data majorly concerned with skilled employees in for-profit firms. The theories that have been heavily referenced in studies of inclusive leadership to promote strategies that leaders can use to promote social inclusion among employees in diverse work units are:

- The optimal distinctive theory (Tajfel, 1981)
- Social categorisation (Turner, 1987)
- Social Identity (Brewer, 1991) Theory etc. Veli et al. (2020) and Randel et al. (2018) offered theoretical support of IL frameworks for successful diverse workforce units that satisfy employees' need for belongingness by equitable treatment, positive relationships (interpersonal) with leaders, and shared decision-making and also

uniqueness/individuality by empowering employees, leaders fostering diverse inputs/contributions and supporting employees' learning & development.

2. Literature Review

i. Sustainability Development Goals, Inclusive Leadership (IL), and Working Women Disabilities

Individual-related disparities exist in every nation on earth, such as those based on sex/gender, age, ability, and other factors. Consider this:

- An estimated 1 billion individuals worldwide suffer from a disability (WHO and World Bank, 2011).
- There are more than 700 million people who are 60 or older (UN, 2011). Over a billion senior individuals will live on the planet in ten years (UN, 2011; HAI Global Age Watch, 2013).
- An estimated 35 million individuals are HIV-positive (UNAIDS, 2014).

Despite being one of the newest SDGs added to the 2030 Agenda, "Reducing inequality within and between countries" (SDG 10) is of utmost importance for the world as a whole because of the aggravation of the phenomenon of rising wealth disparities identified throughout the world, as well as the various ways in which political factors react to these disparities. Even while there are basically uniform policies, strategies for action, and aims, we regrettably still detect differences.

This paper includes novel ideas of inclusive leadership that promote the social and economic integration of people with disabilities, particularly working women with disabilities (WWD). Stigmas and barriers relating to women with disabilities exist on a global scale. Previous studies have found bias and preconceptions related to working women with impairments. They are perceived as being generally dependent on others, weak, and unable. There hasn't been a lot of research on employee disabilities, but there isn't a lot of material out around about what disabled working women think and experience, especially in the Indian context.

ii. **Inclusive Leadership for Inclusion**

"Inclusion" has gained popularity in today's cross-border corporate climate. The wellness of businesses' workforces and workers as well as their competitive advantage depend on inclusiveness, according to researchers and practitioners. It is recommended that inclusion be used as a special diversity management technique rather than viewing diversity as an issue that has to be fixed (Roberson, 2006; Zanon & Janssens, 2007; Shore et al., 2009).

By concentrating on concurrently meeting employees' desires for originality and belongingness, inclusion may be made possible (Shore et al., 2011), allowing individuals to be themselves at work while still feeling at "home." This paradigm enables businesses to get past the point of merely acceptance when it is implemented fully. Employees can realize their full potential, handle difficulties, bridge barriers to work with others, and enhance their work environments.

Inclusive leaders need to understand:

- Intersections and Overrepresentation
- Social construction of disability
- Efficacy of inclusive services
- Response to intervention
- Presuming competence

Leadership inclusivity was defined as leaders' "invitation and appreciation for others' contribution" by Edmondson and Nembhard (2006). As per Carmeli et al. (2010), it refers to a set of behaviours that leaders exhibit while interacting with employees on a daily basis to show that they are accessible, approachable, and available.

A theory-based, updated definition of IL was created by Randel et al. (2018) based on the framework of the theory for inclusion created by Shore et al. (2011). According to this definition, inclusive leadership is a set of leader behaviours aimed at promoting group members' sense of belonging to a group and preserving their individuality & uniqueness while participating in strategies and group methods.

Four dimensions of inclusive leadership (IL) behaviour are as follows: (Korkmaz, A. V, van Engen, M. L., Knappert, L., & Schalk, R. (2022)

Fostering Uniqueness of Employees

a. Fostering Diversity

- Recognises employees' individual differences.
- Exhibits openness to employees.
- Values employees' uniqueness.
- Helps employees contribute.
- Listens to employees' ideas.

b. Contributing and supporting employees' (L&D) Learning and Development

- Responsive to employees' need for growth and development.
- Helps employees advance their career prospects.
- Provides feedback to employees.
- Encourages employees' ability to learn and work.
- Guides employees when mistakes are made.

c. Employee Empowerment

- Engaging employees during Decision Making.
- Encourages employees to participate in organisational activities & processes.
- Encourages the exchange of ideas about how to carry out tasks.

d. Providing employees with individual support.

- Demonstrates concern for the expectations, feelings, and interests of employees.
- Offers guidance to employees.
- Exhibits availability to employees.
- Shows emotional support to employees.
- Exhibits accessibility to employees.

Strengthening Belongingness within a team

a. Fostering relationships/connections.

- Gives team members a sense of belonging and importance.
- Supports employees as team members.
- Enables the effective function of diverse workgroups.
- Builds closer connections with employees.
- Fosters relationships.
- Enables respectful interactions within the team.

b. Ensuring equity

- Shows moral behaviour.
 - Shows unbiased judgment.
 - Ensures justice.
 - Distributes rewards fairly.
- c. Sharing decision-making**
- Provides reasoning for practices.
 - Acts in concert with colleagues rather than acting in response to people.
 - Fosters transparent decision-making.
 - Consults with workers.
 - Builds consensus.
 - Includes others in decisions.
- d. Showing Appreciation**
- Recognising efforts and contributions.
 - Notices the efforts.
 - Affirms contributions.
 - Praises achievements.

Supporting Organisational Efforts

- a. Supporting the organisation's commitment to diversity.**
- Creates an environment where everyone is heard.
 - Explains the connection between the mission and vision and inclusivity.
 - Facilitates a diverse workforce and inclusion.
 - Describes the relationship between organisational practices and inclusivity.
 - Promotes participative management mechanisms.
- b. Being open to organisational change.**
- Promotes change.
 - Pays attention to new opportunities.
 - Focuses on organisational development.
 - Understands and engages with resistance.

The combined conception reveals that, as would be expected, IL is at the nexus of leadership and diversity management areas. In addition to the other factors contained during conceptualisation, inclusive leadership considers perspectives on inclusion and learning and incorporates

inclusion and diversity into decision-making (Dwertmann et al., Nishii & Ozbilgin, 2007, 2016; Nishii, 2013) (Ely & Thomas, 2001). Given that it emphasizes the value of connections between leaders and specific workers, between the team and the leader, and within the team, IL is comparable to other leadership types, including servant leadership (Brown et al., 2005) and ethical leadership in this regard (Liden et al., 2014). Additionally, we can observe a connection between transformational leadership (TL) and IL in terms of how they both support employee growth. These intersections suggest that inclusive leadership may eventually take the form of an umbrella leadership style that unifies the key relational leader traits. Additionally, as firms now increasingly reflect diversity as a result of societal globalisation, inclusive leadership is very important for today's enterprises owing to its relationship to inclusion and diversity. Not to mention, IL (Inclusive Leadership) exemplifies the multilayer aspect that frequently distinguishes leadership itself by looking beyond team and individual employee priorities and taking the organisational level into consideration. In light of the many different theories of leadership, we thus suggest that IL may be a useful framework for leaders in the diverse workplaces of today and the future.

3. Inclusive Leadership (IL) promotes the upliftment of Working Women with Disabilities and contributes to SDG 10

Human disability is a complex issue with many facets and dimensions (Baumgärtner, 2013). Every year, the number of persons with disabilities increases globally, increasing by precisely 12% in high-income ones and 14% in low-income nations (Mitra & Sambamoorthi, 2014). Effective communication and interaction between policymakers, major international organisations and forums, and social interest groupings are essential to the employment of the disabled. The governments of numerous nations have periodically developed measures to reduce the unemployment rate of people with disabilities (Robertson, Lewis, & Hiila, 2004). According to research, people with disabilities value and highly esteem their employment just like everyone else (Dag & Kullberg 2010; Ali, Schur & Blanck, 2011). Average academic performers with disabilities are frequently given low-profile employment (Kaye, 2009). The (WHO 2011) World Report on Disability emphasises the difficulties that physically disabled people face when they attempt to join organisations, the misconceptions that healthy people have about them, their struggle to gain access to organisations, and the complexities of the labor laws that present

obstacles to employers. All employment domains completely exclude disabled women. They number about 250 million, and 75% of them are found in poor countries (Mehrotra, 2015). Contrary to popular belief, women make up the majority of people with disabilities worldwide and endure ongoing injustice because of their physical limitations and gender. The degree of prejudice and discrimination varies and is distinct from that of the general public. In their research, Singh & Adaikalaswamy (2013) made it abundantly evident that discrimination based on disability and gender results in a significant degree of social isolation and outright contempt from various sectors.

Because their abilities are frequently undervalued, disabled women are cast aside in jobs with lower levels of responsibility. Due to their disabilities and gender, even their remuneration is lower than that of other employment categories (Chouinard, 2010). Because of this, disabled female employees are given the lowest priority (Fawcett, 2000). The majority of firms' policies make it clear that disabled workers are viewed as liabilities and are only employed in order to satisfy labour laws or improve the company's reputation. Studies demonstrating how customers closely monitor the employment of persons with disabilities in firms have backed the latter (Sipersteina, Romanob, Mohlera, & Parker, 2006).

Additionally, businesses have doubts regarding the security and safety of such personnel. The widespread perception is that hiring disabled people might result in expensive mishaps, which the private sector uses as an excuse to avoid hiring disabled people (Morgan & Alexander, 2005). In the private sector, a smaller percentage of disabled workers are employed (Woodhams & Corby, 2007). WWD (Working Women with Disabilities) are more likely than working males with disabilities to encounter prejudice. This has been stated by workers who have admitted to experiencing direct unfairness and discrimination and lesser job satisfaction (Snyder, Carmichael, Blackwell, Cleveland & Thornton, 2010). Working women must decide whether to reveal their problems or ask for assistance because they believe their physical limitations will have a greater negative impact on their careers (Moloney, Brown, Ciciurkaite, & Foley, 2018).

The inclusive leadership behaviours, which are more in accordance with stereotypically feminine behaviours, contradict the traditional cultural notions of leadership. Additionally, there is some evidence to support the notion that women exhibit inclusive leadership behaviours more frequently than do males. When taken together, these factors produce a "double-bind"

where women executives are criticised for not exhibiting stereotypically female behaviour patterns while upholding conventional leadership norms, but are seen as inept if they do. People's attitudes toward leadership and gender stereotypes will reveal prejudices that frequently impede women from being recognised as leaders and obscure many of the accomplishments that women make.

According to our perspective, changing perceptions of what leadership and leaders should include will enable the path to inclusive leadership for both men and women. Reduced disparities are a Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 10 that relates to the daily experiences and encounters of people with disabilities (PwDs) and their accessibility to business and society. The literature and their personal experiences show the need for better co-design and implementation of workplace accessibility and disability challenges.

4. Limitations

This research has several restrictions. First, we restricted our attention to the Web of Science database, which might have impacted the findings because other (unpublished) publications might have been accessible that had more details on ideas, connections, and underlying theories. Scholars should discuss non-significant outcomes of inclusive leadership publicly because they may offer insightful possibilities for future theory and research.

5. Future Direction

We urge academics to look at inclusive leadership together with the closely connected leadership philosophies. For instance, the traits of servant leadership include encouraging and developing staff (Van Dierendonck, 2011). There isn't nearly enough study on working women's impairments in general, which is quite worrying and necessitates quantitative and qualitative research on a global and cross-cultural scale. We advise researchers to look at the connections between the various aspects of inclusive leadership to determine how they interact with the situation of working women with disabilities and related issues such as: the nature of employment for the PwDs and career development and goals, recruiting and selection procedures, and the type of support systems, loopholes in support systems, and the actual problems at workplaces for the Working Women with Disabilities.

6. Conclusion

According to the report, working women with disabilities are an underrepresented category of employees who, as a result of prevalent prejudices and preconceived ideas, have been denied many of their rights in both the economic and social spheres. Discrimination in its many forms is pervasive across the world to varied degrees. The engagement of NGOs has been shown to foster empathy between the management and the disabled personnel. The top management must take an assertive role, the HR rules must be carefully prepared and correctly comprehended by all sections. The main issue is that large amounts of support and help are provided in more general private organisations, but fall short in small company businesses. Therefore, the necessity for financial support from the government to encourage the hiring and the retention of Working Women with disabilities in these businesses becomes critical.

We aimed to present a comprehensive overview of the factors associated with inclusive leadership in the review we generated by combining the research expertise in the area of IL. According to Dionne et al. (2014) and Yammarino & Dansereau (2008), leadership at several levels, especially at the employee, team, and organisational level, was addressed in each of these domains. We also looked at the knowledge that was based on these leadership practices. In terms of conceptualisation and research paradigms, this review shows that inclusive leadership has advanced significantly. This offers optimism for future study, but for this area to advance, a more organized approach will be needed. We offer a new perspective on inclusive leadership (IL) as a personalised uplifting process of socio-economic inclusion to close the divides between/among the PwDs & Persons without Disabilities in society and business by researching how leaders include the PwDs-Working Women with Disabilities (WWD) in social businesses. This viewpoint opens up new areas for research on diversity and inclusion that will lead to reduced inequality.

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