

Does voluntarism work for the workplace inclusion of individuals with disabilities in a country with limited equality structures?

Article

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Does voluntarism work for the workplace inclusion of individuals with disabilities in a country with limited equality structures?

Abstract

Purpose - The study explores measures designed explicitly to manage people with disabilities in a context where diversity interventions are incorporated voluntarily. Furthermore, it examines global organizations’ approaches to marginalized groups, such as people with disabilities, in a context where there is an explicit lack of state regulation on diversity measures.

Design/methodology/approach - An abductive approach was adopted for the exploratory nature, which sought to understand how global organizations in a developing country utilize diversity management (DM) mechanisms to manage people with disabilities.

Findings - The findings reveal that human resources departments of international organizations operating in a neoliberal environment demonstrate two distinct perspectives for individuals with disabilities: (i) inclusiveness due to legal pressures and (ii) social exclusion.

Originality/value - We explored global organizations’ approaches to marginalized groups, such as people with disabilities, in the context of an explicit lack of state regulation on diversity measures and showed that the absence of coercive regulation leads to voluntary actions with adverse consequences. The paper expands theories that critique the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in untamed neoliberal contexts and explains how the responsabilization of institutional actors could enhance what is practical and possible for the workplace inclusion of individuals with disabilities. Without such institutional responsabilization, our findings reveal that disability inclusion is left to the limited prospects of the market rationales to the extent of bottom-line utility.

Keywords: Disability, Global Organizations, Diversity Management, Voluntarism, Social Exclusion

Research Type- Research Paper

Introduction

There is an urgency to include people with disabilities in the workforce effectively, as disability is considered one of the more populous diversity categories globally (Kaul et al., 2022; Patton, 2022). The UN World Programme of Action Concerning Disabled Persons statistics (UN-WPA, 2021) reveal that 500 million individuals are registered with disabilities. These numbers indicate that one out of 15 people in the world is negatively affected by some form of disability, i.e. physical, mental, or sensory disability. Workplace inclusion for people with disabilities is considered a human right (Maini & Heera, 2019). However, empirical research on disability in workplaces is scant and primarily conducted in developed countries (Kaul et al., 2022; Gunderson & Lee, 2016). This outcome is partly attributed to better-regulated diversity discourses and interventions and the normative pressure of supportive laws and mandates. The inclusion of people with disabilities varies, as diversity management practices are regulated based on national laws and customs, leading to insufficient and unethical workplace practices, and voluntary regulation of inclusion may generate poor outcomes of inclusion.

However, people with disabilities face adverse effects on their status, such as a higher rate of poverty and unemployment in low- and middle-income countries with limited social awareness and poor institutional and legal support (Schloemer-Jarvis et al., 2022). The UN Enable (2021) report highlights that almost 80% of disabled individuals reside in isolated rural areas in developing countries where they have limited access to fundamental rights of education, vocational training, and medical attention and are still marginalized and underprivileged (Hall & Wilton, 2011).

Global organizations contribute to combatting unemployment in host countries, yet they are also “important mediators of the impact of business on poverty and inequality” (Wadhvani, 2018, p. 548). The disintegration and social exclusion of people with disabilities in countries and organizational settings result in social and economic losses (Palalar et al., 2024). Thus, exploration of what global organizations do for individuals with disabilities in developing countries with limited legal and institutional arrangements is crucial. Inadequate measures by international organizations may exacerbate the existing conditions of people with disabilities and increase their vulnerability in these regions (Kamasak et al., 2022; Bainbridge et al., 2021) and reflect emic diversity adaptations by global organizations. The variations may emerge due to legal challenges, i.e., limitations in collecting ethnic data, country and context-specific priorities for specific diversity categories, and voluntarism.

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Voluntarism is a political philosophy that assumes institutions may hold a constructive stance without corrective measures and regulative pressures (Verba et al., 1995). In a neoliberal context, voluntarism emphasizes individual responsibility, withdrawing the role of government and institutions in providing social welfare. A voluntarist approach promotes community engagement and social cohesion through individual encouragement, enhancing a sense of responsibility and creating resilient social networks. Although voluntarism may enhance innovative solutions and flexibility in addressing social issues (De Wit et al., 2017), it emphasizes individual accountability and market-driven policies, and such orientation may exacerbate systemic inequality (Shandra et al., 2018), particularly for individuals with disabilities. Despite the theory of inclusion emphasizing individual rights, equal access to healthcare, employment, education, and community participation, voluntarism does not address the structural inequalities and barriers faced by people with disabilities in neoliberal regimes (Sakellariou & Rotarou, 2017) since it privatizes welfare and deflects responsibility to civil society and organizations.

The neoliberal stance allows organizations to empower individuals with disabilities to be active participants in promoting policy changes and enforcing disability legislation. For example, Allegis Group India's managing director advocates for disability inclusion, promoting and encouraging others to increase their awareness and insight in developing future action plans (ILO, 2022). Additionally, The Valuable 500, a global network of large and multinational companies, was launched to elevate disability inclusion on the business agenda and to homogenize policies related to disability inclusion (The Valuable 500, 2023). On the individual level, participating in a volunteer-driven program allows individuals with disabilities to develop skills and bring positive social change. However, without adequate regulatory mechanisms and corporate initiatives, the well-being of people with disabilities becomes contingent (Emerson, 2020), highly dependent on external networks such as charities, and may further marginalize people with disabilities in a voluntarist nature of neoliberalism. Hence, the literature has yet to fully uncover how the global organizations operating in countries with voluntarism manage people with disabilities and what inclusion interventions the critical actors formulate. A system without adequate policies and regulations regarding how to approach people with disabilities falls short of creating an inclusive and accessible community.

Drawing on interviews with global firms' HR executives in a country with diversity regulations based on voluntarism and a lack of organizational responsabilization for the inclusion of

individuals with disabilities at work (Kusku et al., 2021), i.e., Turkey, we identify how global organizations manage people with disabilities in the workplace and explore the emic distinctions in the implemented diversity approaches (Ozbilgin et al., 2023; Tatli et al., 2012). We also explore the extent to which international organizations comply with the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in Turkey, where neo-liberal market-based rationales and discourses are widely adopted. The paper expands theories that critique the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in untamed neoliberal contexts and explains how the responsabilization of institutional actors could enhance what is practical and possible for workplace inclusion of individuals with disabilities. Without such institutional responsabilization, our findings reveal that disability inclusion is left to limited prospects of the market rationales to the extent of bottom line utility.

There are variations in how nations formulate and align their employment laws to the experiences of people with disabilities, especially in work settings. For example, employment has been vital for attaining social and economic inclusion in a social context. The divergence exists on multifaceted, complex grounds, i.e., socio-cultural beliefs (Mitra et al., 2013) and regulatory provisions (Santos Rodrigues et al., 2013). Considering the variations in the motivations of managing and implementing diversity practices for people with disabilities, we borrow Thomas and Ely's (1996, 2001) proposed diversity perspective with the primary focus on integration and learning to evaluate the implemented diversity efforts of global organizations toward people with disabilities. First, we provide a theoretical background, contextualize people with disabilities in global organizations in the Turkish context, and explore the regulative measures. Then, we describe the research methodology, including data collection and sample. Finally, we present the findings of the qualitative study and discuss the implications and conclusions.

The theory of inclusion of individuals with disabilities

Several models approach disability in organizations. The medical model considers disability a physiological impairment affecting an individual's functional capabilities (Kasser & Lytle, 2005). The social model of disability stresses the critical impact of society on the perception of people with disabilities (D'Alessio, 2011). This model was initiated by the British disability movement of 1960 to respond to the constraints of the medical model in approaching people with disabilities. The economic model (Bacon & Hoque, 2015; Shakespeare & Watson, 2001) of people with disabilities addresses disability from a financial analysis perspective,

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emphasizing an individual's disabling effects that limit a person's capabilities in the labor and employment domain. The embodied model emphasizes (Creamer, 2009) the physical differences of disabilities and impairments that individuals experience.

Thomas and Ely (1996, 2011) identified three approaches to managing diversity at organizational levels: (i) the discrimination and fairness paradigm, (ii) the access and legitimacy paradigm, and (iii) learning and effectiveness. The discrimination and fairness paradigm, as the predominant approach adopted by various organizations, seeks fair treatment; however, it equivalently focuses on representative aspects of diversity. Although the system exceeds the traditional affirmative action efforts, it does not measure the effect of diversity interventions contributing to diversifying the work by including varying opinions. The access and legitimacy paradigm (Ely & Thomas, 2001, p. 245) has heightened focus on matching the demographics of the organizations to its primary consumer base. The learning and effectiveness approach views employees as members of diverse cultural identity groups, perceived as valuable resources for organizational effectiveness. This perspective aims to associate diversity with working processes unique to each organization's modus operandi and sees diversity as a source for learning and adaptive change.

Following Thomas and Ely's framework, individuals are encouraged to take ownership and actively shape the organizational culture and practices. Additionally, the framework emphasizes the role of employees as change agents, the importance of creating an inclusive environment, and collective action in facilitating systemic change. In light of the voluntarist system of neoliberalism, people with disabilities may be empowered to actively promote inclusivity within organizations and contribute to the change of organizational policies and practices. Empowering and creating an inclusive environment for people with disabilities can be a strategic advantage for organizations beyond a moral imperative. By accommodating people with disabilities, an organization can increase its diversity and innovative problem-solving skills (Lopes et al., 2018). Furthermore, through the inclusion of people with disabilities in their workforce, organizations can improve products and services, comply with laws and regulations, and enhance competitiveness and performance, as well as their appeal as socially responsible organizations. However, we question these assumptions about the self-empowerment of disadvantaged groups, i.e., individuals with disabilities, in terms of organizational preparedness to go beyond the market exploitation of individuals with

disabilities, which are fundamental assumptions of theorization of inclusion with voluntarist rationales.

Managing disabilities in global organizations in the Turkish Context

The Turkish government's Prime Ministry Administration for Disabled Persons report (2016) indicates that many people with disabilities face societal and economic barriers, including access to health, education, and employment opportunities and discrimination in the workplace and social environments. The report states that Turkish citizens with disabilities seek employment through informal societal mechanisms. Even those who can obtain a job in formal organizations face challenges such as limited physical infrastructure and career immobility. Notably, the social exclusion of people with disabilities inevitably leads to innumerable instances of discrimination and violations, increasing their exposure to unfair treatment that inevitably contributes to landing in low-paying jobs (Baybora, 2006).

According to the Turkish Republic Government Statistical Institute study on the Disabled in Turkey (DIE), approximately 9 million citizens are disabled, and only one out of five (21.7%) actively participates in the labor force. Among people with disabilities, tertiary education is only 2.4%, while illiteracy is more prevalent (37%) (DIE, 2005). The upward career mobility in the Turkish context relies on a social status linked to professional and educational attainment. Thus, people with disabilities face enduring systemic discrimination (Tufan et al., 2007). The General Directorate of Services for Persons with Disabilities and Elderly People report (2018) stresses that the increasing rate of disability in the workforce is one of the main concerns for both public and private sectors. Further, the report notes that the employment rate for women with disabilities is three times lower than the global average (6.7%).

Following the global pandemic, understanding the employment of people with disabilities in an organization has gained greater prominence (WHO, 2020), particularly in settings where diversity discourses are limited and governments tend to delegate responsibility to employers (Kusku et al., 2021; Baykut et al., 2021). In this respect, we contribute to understanding people with disabilities and their existing conditions in a country with low levels of legal protection against disability discrimination. In addition, we examine the emic differences in how key HR actors manage people with disabilities in global corporations in Turkey.

Methodology

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The study adopts an abductive qualitative design approach to understand how global organizations in a developing country utilize diversity management (DM) mechanisms to manage people with disabilities. Due to its exploratory nature, the abductive approach extracts facts from observations. It generates structures that describe observed facts through hypothesis creation and evaluation and offers researchers a broader perception of a phenomenon (Reichertz, 2013). Numerous studies (i.e., Shakespeare & Watson, 2001; Härtel & O'Connor, 2015) approach people with disabilities at the individual and macro levels; however, our study conducts an organizational level of analysis to explore how HR managers approach people with disabilities.

Sample, data access and data collection

This research has examined the relationship between the implemented DM mechanisms of the people with disabilities workforce at the organizational level of analysis. We identified several important features that may help increase understanding of the emic distinctions of implemented DM measures for people with disabilities. The study involved semi-structured interviews with 21 HR officers from global companies operating in Turkey, including retail, hospitality, chemical, household goods, and food manufacturing (Table 1). Our analysis focused on the diversity concerns of each company and specific measures implemented toward people with disabilities. Transcripts of the interviews were distributed to the researchers for independent review. After the initial discussion of the documents, researchers conducted thematic analyses for interpretation and theorizing. We selected participants based on their experiences related to the phenomenon to ensure data credibility. We preferred the snowball sampling method for its convenience, cost-efficiency, and practicality (Hendricks et al., 1992).

Please Insert Table 1

We kept the company names confidential and referred to them with alphabetical acronyms regardless of hierarchical order. Before data collection, we obtained mandatory permissions from the ethical committee, and the interviewees were guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality. Some interviews were conducted on video conferencing platforms in addition to face-to-face. The study findings revealed that participating companies managed people with disabilities via distinctive methods.

Method of data analyses

We analyzed the data about diversity interventions of HR managers to identify how people with disabilities are managed in global organizations. To ensure intercoder reliability, three researchers independently coded and analyzed the data. After the preliminary process of coding the transcript, we collated the explicit codes into initial themes recognized in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The first author collected the data and asked interviewers to describe diversity management approaches for people with disabilities. For reliability, each coauthor independently identified diversity interventions and checked the common and significant themes. In case of a lack of consensus on a theme, we omitted or reconstructed it until we reached a complete agreement.

Please Insert Table 2

We have identified two general themes regarding how participating global companies manage people with disabilities (Table 2). The table illustrates that international organizations operating in Turkey have implemented diversity interventions, including inclusiveness, due to legal pressures from the country's quota system mandating hiring and managing people with disabilities. In contrast, others have implemented interventions resulting in the social exclusion of persons with disabilities. The findings section will provide a more detailed discussion of the themes.

Findings

Diversity management practices based on voluntarism and minimum legal requirements

Interestingly, the approach in global organizations operating in Turkey and perceptions of human resource managers towards people with disabilities are constrained to a physical impairment. Most participating HR officers defined disability as a form of physical impairment and failed to address hidden disabilities, i.e., psychological impairments, learning difficulties, and social anxiety. Barnes et al. (2010, p. 225) indicated that the definition of disability in the 21st century needs to incorporate and include the concept of the "able mind" as there are numerous hidden disabilities individuals face in the modern world. Furthermore, participating companies have offered positions to people with disabilities based on their physical impairment rather than their accumulated skills and competencies.

Most participant companies failed to address the concept of disability relating to the able mind and viewed it narrowly. In addition, most participant companies (85%) only comply with

government regulations regarding diversity management for people with disabilities. An HR executive in retail described managing people with disabilities as an obligatory process to avoid legal penalties since the quota system stipulated in Article 30 of the Turkish Labor Law No. 4857 mandates that 3% of the workforce should consist of people with disabilities for profit-oriented companies with 50 or more employees.

“You know, with disabled employees, if you have more than a certain number of employees in Turkey, you need to employ disabled people. We support the quota system and currently attain the required figures (Company FX).”

HR executives of food manufacturing and financial services also referred to people with disabilities in the context of a quota obligation. The companies operating in the hospitality industry reinstated similar references. They implied that although the companies have global equality, diversity, and inclusion practices, local operations follow what the state mandates in Turkey.

“For us, the criteria for employment are evaluated within the scope of suitability for the job; other than that, we do not apply many HR discourses implemented globally at the local operations. We do not have comprehensive human resources practices on disability or any specific workforce diversity; for example, a foreign language certificate is a priority criterion for us for the hiring process” (Company TX)

The participants from the hospitality industry also indicated that the hiring process and diversity concerns of their organizations are structured based on individual competence, such as foreign language usage and industrial tenure. However, due to a lack of vocational training and limited job opportunities, many people with disabilities face barriers to landing an option in the hospitality industry. Since managers play a pivotal role in developing employees, taking initiatives such as providing assistance and nurturing relationships among the workforce may lead to minimizing people with disabilities and vulnerabilities in such organizations (Kulkarni, 2013).

Although there is a particular legislative framework, such as a quota system guiding businesses on the employment of people with disabilities in Turkey, the legislation sets a discriminatory target way below the number of individuals available for work. The HR executive of a chemical product manufacturer highlighted the importance of inclusion for people with disabilities in the

workplace and raised her concerns about the general norms for approaching people with disabilities in Turkey.

“Unfortunately, we sometimes see that in some companies, they are hired due to quota and only get paid...this is not the case for us; if we hire employees with disability, of course, depending on the nature of the disability, they need to conduct their job duties”
(Company OX)

As Kocman and Weber (2018) argue, the workplace's structural design and physical conditions must promote inclusion for people with disabilities.

“We hire employees with disabilities as mandated; at the end of the day, the retail industry has limited opportunities for many physically impaired. We have a hearing-impaired friend in our store, and when necessary, we implement some vocational educational programs for him; our training department usually implements these. Generally, as human resources, we determine the programs to be implemented for that year with the sales and marketing department” (Company LX).

Our findings have shown that global companies operating in retail argued that the physical conditions were not suitable for the needs of people with disabilities because of the nature of their business. This notion may be due to their limitations in defining disability concerning physical impairment. In congruence with Bam and Ronnie (2020), inclusion strategies for managing people with disabilities in the workplace necessitate actions more than offering suitable physical conditions, such as giving an active role in decision-making and workplace orientation. In our study, only a few global companies adopted inclusion strategies for people with disabilities. This finding is unsurprising since interpreting individual, social and human rights is contextual (Syed & Ozbilgin, 2009). Thus, eliminating structural inequality requires further actions in a country with a limited legislative framework and neoliberal rationale.

Social exclusion through forever paid leave rather than inclusion.

Global organizations are inclined to have plans for the social and economic inclusion of people with disabilities. The reason for this kind of implementation may be partially attributed to multinational companies' legal responsibilities to the local legal regulations. Nevertheless, even with the implemented legal measures in the workplace, various obstacles, such as dismissive organizational cultures, can stigmatize and create employment constraints for many people

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with disabilities (Brite et al., 2015). Our interviews with HR executives in retail and manufacturing indicated that the companies engage in practices that we believe may trigger the social exclusion of people with disabilities. For example, one retail company executive said that the additional people with disabilities employees over the mandated quota are provided with financial support even though they are not required to perform any roles or tasks in return.

“With people with disabilities employees, you know, if you employ more than a certain number of employees in Turkey, you have to hire people with disabilities. There are two active employees in our head office and two additional employees who do not have an active role, so we only pay them; they are on our payroll, and we want to fulfil and go beyond our obligation. We use the term ATM disability for those without any active role. However, one of our goals is to hire two additional employees to stores and aim to offer them more active roles shortly” (Company IX).

Another participating company's HR manager indicated that the company created a social exclusion for many people with disabilities due to budget restrictions.

“We implement certain programs to help our people with disabilities in the workforce. For example, we provide voluntary sign language training to other employees so they can communicate with them; apart from that, we do not currently have any other implemented discourses. We have digitized 12 of our HR services; however, these services, for instance, were inaccessible for those visually impaired due to budget restrictions” (Company, GX).

Disabled people are among the most socially excluded groups, and their opportunities remain severely restricted (O'Grady et al., 2004). Moreover, the vital factors resulting in the social exclusion of people with disability include limited access to work, adequate training, and stigmatization. The interviews with HR executives show that, although unintentionally, the adopted DM measures can lead to social inclusion. Social exclusion can heighten the challenges of people with disabilities in a country with scarce economic policies and adequate benefit systems.

Discussion

This study explored how global companies manage people with disabilities in Turkey. Some participant companies' key HR personnel indicated rigorous diversity management programs

designed explicitly for people with disabilities at their headquarters. Nonetheless, the findings indicate that many global organizations in Turkey prioritize business case-driven DM interventions due to budget constraints and prevailing market logic. In terms of transferring DM contents and creating a balance among various locations, companies provide unique solutions to address emic concerns in the host country. Our findings show that companies exert minimal effort in managing people with disabilities as most participants hire an adequate number of people with disabilities as mandated by the government quota system.

Furthermore, most key actors consider only physical impairment as a disability, thus excluding many aspects of post-industrial challenges such as social anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder. Therefore, global companies operating in Turkey approach people with disabilities with a limited perspective, excluding mental, intellectual, and sensory impairments, as outlined by the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN, 2022). Many barriers exist for people with disabilities, not limited to attaining upward career mobility, access to health support, and assistive technologies that inevitably exacerbate their existing conditions (Moore et al., 2017; Stough et al., 2017).

Our results reveal that most global companies approach people with disabilities to fulfil their legal obligations. Although the participant companies adhere to legal standards, they provide limited career mobility. Furthermore, some participant companies implement DM measures causing social exclusion, inevitably increasing their precariousness and vulnerability. Approaching people with disabilities through limited insight may be inadequate in addressing their imperative needs, such as increasing their social inclusion while minimizing discriminatory prejudice and stigma (The World Bank, 2022). Although Thomas and Ely propose learning and effectiveness perspective as one of the practical approaches to managing a diverse workforce, in a context where limited regulative measures are adopted, it is evident that voluntarism yields to the heightened vulnerability of many people with disabilities. The voluntarism of global organizations in developing countries implementing varying diversity measures creates obscurity. Global company operations in developing country contexts show minimal engagement in a progressive DIE agenda based on a business case with an inadequate legislative framework. Since 80% of people with disabilities live in developing countries, understanding their vulnerability and implementing measures and policies to increase their inclusivity must be the organization's responsibility, even under the voluntarism philosophy. It

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is a crucial responsibility of society to implement valuable solutions to accommodate people with disabilities, acknowledge their challenges, and minimize their adversaries.

The contribution of this study is twofold. First, from the perspective of HR executives of global corporations, the study interrogates the inclusion of people with disabilities. It explores measures designed explicitly to manage people with disabilities (UN Enable, 2021) in a context where diversity interventions are incorporated voluntarily. The previous research findings exploring people with disabilities in organizations refer to more sophisticated contexts where the inclusion of individuals with disabilities is supported and mandated (Kusku et al., 2021). Secondly, most diversity policies and measures on disability serve as a framework rather than a mandate (ILO, 2001) for many people with disabilities in developing countries. For instance, the ILO report on “Code of practice on managing disability in the workplace” section 2.3.2. states, “Workers’ organizations should actively encourage workers with disabilities to join their organizations as members and assume leadership roles” (ILO, 2001, p.10). Within the mandated regulation, global organizations are “encouraged”; thus, the voluntary nature of managing people with disabilities has resulted in many challenges, such as attaining limited roles in organizations (Kusku et al., 2021). Diversity measures for people with disabilities were adopted to uphold minimum standards, often at the expense of effectively excluding individuals with disabilities. The second contribution of this study is to explore global organizations’ approaches to marginalized groups, such as people with disabilities, in the context where there is an explicit lack of state regulation on diversity measures. Per the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), institutions are more responsible for ensuring that people with disabilities are included in all aspects of their lives. Considering that disabilities are a concept beyond physical impairments, the convention calls for a paradigm shift toward recognizing disabilities. A new disability rights movement aims to eliminate barriers to employment and address the challenges facing people with disabilities across all spheres of life. As stakeholders in society, global companies should promote diversity initiatives that foster global inclusion of people with disabilities and minimize emic differences. Therefore, tying diversity to business core functions can significantly impact work performance, as adopting such an orientation allows for cultural change and can significantly impact employees with disabilities (Thomas & Ely, 1996). Disability should become a more pronounced issue in developing countries, as there has been an increase in the prevalence of invisible disabilities, namely chronic fatigue (Truxillo & Fraccaroli, 2013). When combined with a decline in the working-age population (Vornholt et

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3 al., 2017), the participation of people with disabilities in the workforce will become
4 increasingly important.
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8 We show that the absence of coercive regulation leads to voluntary actions with adverse
9 consequences, often leading to the exclusion of individuals with disabilities. Human resource
10 departments can implement several strategies to accommodate and promote an inclusive work
11 environment in a neoliberal environment in line with Thomas & Ely's integration and learning
12 perspective. To foster an inclusive culture and promote continuous learning, human resources
13 professionals need to ensure that people with disabilities have equal opportunities for growth
14 and career advancement. The participant organizations demonstrated invisible barriers to
15 upward career development for people with disabilities, resulting in social exclusion. To
16 alleviate the adversaries and challenges, the provision of accessible physical spaces and
17 assistive technology, as well as flexible working arrangements and learning materials, need to
18 be incorporated and considered an essential investment for organizations at the global level.
19 Incorporating perspectives of people with disabilities into the core functions can enhance
20 employee participation and encourage personal development for many. This calls for moving
21 beyond the paradigm of discrimination and fairness that emphasizes compliance with quota
22 system regulations (Ministry of Labor and Social Security, 2024) in a context where laws and
23 policies protect the rights of people with disability ceremonially.
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36 As the findings of this study demonstrate, emic distinctions such as lack of supportive legal
37 frameworks can exacerbate structural inequalities for persons with disabilities and present
38 further barriers to employment for many, including social exclusion. Therefore, human
39 resources must integrate inclusive policies to stimulate participation and engagement. Through
40 a shift in perspective from initiatives focused on achieving diversity goals or perceiving
41 diversity efforts as an opportunity to access heterogeneous markets, adopting learning and
42 effectiveness will promote an inclusive organizational culture that values the insights of
43 individuals with disabilities. By providing training programs for employees on various types
44 of disabilities beyond physical impairments, one can increase awareness at the organizational
45 level. Therefore, we propose that companies elaborate further on the definition of the people
46 with disabilities framework within the needs of post-industrial conceptualization and define
47 disability as something that encapsulates various learning and physiological impairments.
48 Approaching disability and addressing invisible disabilities can be beneficial. Since in Turkey,
49 the prevalence of people with disability is 13% (EYDER, 2023) and the number of people with
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disabilities increases significantly, there is a heightened need for creating and implementing firm-level policies and developing tailored practices demonstrating diversity in the workplace (Tatli & Özbilgin, 2009; Tatli et al., 2012).

Furthermore, the commitment of other senior management to increasing the inclusion of people with disabilities through their actions and resource allocations is equally essential. By leveraging the diverse skills and experiences of people with disabilities, organizations can be more creative and innovative (Lopes et al., 2018), resulting in greater efficiency. Given neoliberalism's voluntarist nature, however, action beyond the boundaries of organizations is necessary. Collaboration should be incorporated at the institutional level to mitigate socioeconomic barriers and uneven access to social support to address and accommodate individuals with disabilities at work. It is imperative that advocacy organizations, charities, and organizations collaboratively promote inclusive practices to combat local systems' inadequacy. Although the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) seeks to establish standards and norms for the protection of human rights for people with disabilities, there are employment gaps exist resulting from regulating bodies that govern the laws vary and promote voluntarist employment (Tatli, 2012; Vornholt et al., 2018). The United Kingdom, for instance, has implemented a combination of legislation governing the rights of persons with disabilities and promoted awareness. In line with this, a strategy to achieve disability equality has also been launched by the Office for Disability Issues under the title Roadmap 2025. As such legislative interventions define the legal and social parameters of acceptable norms for persons with disabilities in the workplace, they have a profound effect on their employment prospects. Bruyere et al. (2004) find that employers provide accommodations to increase inclusivity in the workplace for people with disabilities. According to Woodhams and Corby (2007), the UK Disability Discrimination Act (1996) led to higher employment for persons with disabilities and the implementation of practices aimed at creating an inclusive work environment. The country-specific conditions can, however, vary significantly as national cultural factors shape social, economic, and legislative contexts that can affect people with disabilities. For example, Lebanon continues to disempower people with disabilities and exclude the participation of many people with disabilities when implementing laws, policies, and programs that are specifically tailored to them (Makarem, 2023). Moreover, in a context where employment of people with disabilities is approached within the framework of a compulsory employment quota and historical injustices (Ministry of Family and Social Policy,

2020; Yılmaz, 2020), global organizations' role in facilitating equal opportunities becomes crucial.

Although the Republic of Turkey signed the UN-CRPD and fully completed the ratification process in 2009 (Ministry of Family and Social Policy, 2022), the study findings show that global companies may reinforce systemic inequalities in a voluntarist context. The study findings indicate that there are significant policy gaps in the integration of people with disabilities into the workplace. Neoliberalism, particularly in developing countries, further exacerbates systemic inequalities through its voluntarist stance. As regulatory regimes continue to be lax, global companies need to act beyond fulfilling compulsory quotas, becoming disability champions, collaborating with non-governmental organizations, and engaging with community organizations to become more proactive in hiring people with disabilities. This further highlights the importance of integrating diversity initiatives into the organization's core functions regarding people with disabilities to achieve a true transformation.

The study provides a critical assessment of how global companies approach people with disabilities in the context of neoliberalism. The study findings show that global companies need to implement an integrated policy to accommodate people with disabilities and foster a culture of inclusion where disability constitutes a critical part of the population (Ministry of Labor and Social Security, 2022) to bring about a real paradigm shift. We extend existing knowledge by emphasizing institutional responsibilities as mechanisms of change at the grassroots level. People with disabilities are one of the largest minority groups worldwide, so institutions must create equal opportunities and protect their fundamental rights globally. The study explored how emic differences can contribute to vulnerabilities in voluntarist contexts for people with disabilities. Thus, increasing cooperation between advocacy groups, charities, and institutions is needed to minimize the incongruity of an emic approach. Integrating learning and development into corporate cultures will enable global companies to move beyond mandatory practices based on market logic and force them to provide the accommodations necessary for people with disabilities. In a society with an increasing prevalence of disabilities, a paradigm shift is imperative.

Future research could delve into exploring comparative studies and further highlight drivers, motivational factors, and potential obstacles in the employment of people with disabilities. Our study is limited to using qualitative data that might produce potential biases of the participants. Since the topic is sensitive, the HR executives might embellish their interventions to present a

favorable image of the firm or themselves. Thus, other researchers could employ quantitative and published secondary data to examine historical progress. Another study limitation is that the sample is within the Turkish context; thus, we cannot generalize our findings to every developing country. Although we have approached the Turkish context as a candidate providing insights and different perceptions of key actors and employers' understanding of the voluntarist stance of neoliberalism, we have used retail, chemical, hospitality, and tourism industries. Comparative industry-specific studies may produce and offer more detailed descriptions and show further insights into institutional responsibilities and varying cultural norms.

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Table 1. *Participating organizations, job title of interviewees and industry information*

Number	Company (pseudonyms)	Company origin	Job title of the interviewee	Industry information
1	AX	Turkey	HR director	Food manufacturing
2	BX	Turkey	CHRM	Retail (consumer goods)
3	CX	Turkey	HR-BP	Retail (clothing)
4	DX	U.S.A.	Regional HR director	Chemical (consumer goods)
5	EX	U.S.A.	HR BP	Retail (clothing)
6	FX	France	HR director	Retail (Food)
7	GX	Turkey	HR manager	Manufacture (Household)
8	HX	U.S.A.	HR director	Retail (clothing)
9	IX	U.S.A.	HR director	Retail (clothing)
10	JX	Turkey	HR director	Food manufacturing
11	KX	U.K.	HR manager	Retail (clothing)
12	LX	U.S.A.	HR director	Retail (clothing)
13	MX	France	HR regional director	Retail (cosmetics)
14	NX	U.K.	HR manager	Retail (consumer goods)
15	OX	U.S.A.	HR director	Chemical (consumer goods)
16	PX	Italy	HR director	Retail (food)
17	QX	U.S.A.	HR regional director	Retail (consumer goods)
18	RX	Belgium	HR manager	Food manufacturing
19	SX	U.S.A	HR manager	Hospitality and tourism
20	TX	Germany	HR director	Hospitality and tourism
21	UX	Turkey	HR director	Retail (clothing)

Table 2. *The thematic structure of the data*

Definition of Disability	Aspects Missing from the local people with disabilities definition	Global Organizations' Approach to people with disabilities	Gap with progressive DM approaches	Current DM Approaches of Global Organizations
-Physical impaired -Loss of bodily functions (over 40% such as sight impairment, loss of limb etc.)	- Intellectual, sensory or mental impairments	Legal requirement to hire people with disabilities Need to adopt “positive discrimination” approaches to those disabled Willing to include them in processes, particularly decision making Want to offer a seat in managerial positions in a near future	Barriers of physical infrastructure and architectural design Lack of technological/digital assistive technologies Inadequate feedback from people with disabilities to implement tailored DM policies Inadequate performance assessment standards tailored for people with disabilities	Organizational inclusion arises from legal obligation Recruitment and placement in positions based on physical impairment
		Hiring additional people with disabilities above required quota-	Lack of dedication to support and monitor employment of people with disabilities within the organization	Organizational/Social exclusion

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		<p>commercial stance on disability</p> <p>“We do not ask them to come to work due to their disability”</p> <p>Providing financial support solely</p> <p>Withdrawal of their monthly income from the debit card provided by the company without physically being present at the workplace</p>	<p>Minimal attention to social factors of people with disabilities</p>	
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Personnel Review