

# *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?**

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4 ***Does voluntarism work for the workplace inclusion of individuals with disabilities in a***  
5 ***country with limited equality structures?***  
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8 **Abstract**  
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11 **Purpose** - The study explores measures designed explicitly to manage people with disabilities  
12 in a context where diversity interventions are incorporated voluntarily. Furthermore, it  
13 examines global organizations' approaches to marginalized groups, such as people with  
14 disabilities, in a context where there is an explicit lack of state regulation on diversity measures.  
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19 **Design/methodology/approach** - An abductive approach was adopted for the exploratory  
20 nature, which sought to understand how global organizations in a developing country utilize  
21 diversity management (DM) mechanisms to manage people with disabilities.  
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26 **Findings** - The findings reveal that human resources departments of international organizations  
27 operating in a neoliberal environment demonstrate two distinct perspectives for individuals  
28 with disabilities: (i) inclusiveness due to legal pressures and (ii) social exclusion.  
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32 **Originality/value** - We explored global organizations' approaches to marginalized groups,  
33 such as people with disabilities, in the context of an explicit lack of state regulation on diversity  
34 measures and showed that the absence of coercive regulation leads to voluntary actions with  
35 adverse consequences. The paper expands theories that critique the inclusion of individuals  
36 with disabilities in untamed neoliberal contexts and explains how the responsabilization of  
37 institutional actors could enhance what is practical and possible for the workplace inclusion of  
38 individuals with disabilities. Without such institutional responsabilization, our findings reveal  
39 that disability inclusion is left to the limited prospects of the market rationales to the extent of  
40 bottom-line utility.  
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48 **Keywords:** Disability, Global Organizations, Diversity Management, Voluntarism, Social  
49 Exclusion  
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52 **Research Type-** Research Paper  
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## 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

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3 individuals with disabilities at work (Kusku et al., 2021), i.e., Turkey, we identify how global  
4 organizations manage people with disabilities in the workplace and explore the emic  
5 distinctions in the implemented diversity approaches (Ozbilgin et al., 2023; Tatli et al., 2012).  
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7 We also explore the extent to which international organizations comply with the inclusion of  
8 individuals with disabilities in Turkey, where neo-liberal market-based rationales and  
9 discourses are widely adopted. The paper expands theories that critique the inclusion of  
10 individuals with disabilities in untamed neoliberal contexts and explains how the  
11 responsabilization of institutional actors could enhance what is practical and possible for  
12 workplace inclusion of individuals with disabilities. Without such institutional  
13 responsabilization, our findings reveal that disability inclusion is left to limited prospects of the  
14 market rationales to the extent of bottom line utility.  
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23 There are variations in how nations formulate and align their employment laws to the  
24 experiences of people with disabilities, especially in work settings. For example, employment  
25 has been vital for attaining social and economic inclusion in a social context. The divergence  
26 exists on multifaceted, complex grounds, i.e., socio-cultural beliefs (Mitra et al., 2013) and  
27 regulatory provisions (Santos Rodrigues et al., 2013). Considering the variations in the  
28 motivations of managing and implementing diversity practices for people with disabilities, we  
29 borrow Thomas and Ely's (1996, 2001) proposed diversity perspective with the primary focus  
30 on integration and learning to evaluate the implemented diversity efforts of global  
31 organizations toward people with disabilities. First, we provide a theoretical background,  
32 contextualize people with disabilities in global organizations in the Turkish context, and  
33 explore the regulative measures. Then, we describe the research methodology, including data  
34 collection and sample. Finally, we present the findings of the qualitative study and discuss the  
35 implications and conclusions.  
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### 46 **The theory of inclusion of individuals with disabilities**

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49 Several models approach disability in organizations. The medical model considers disability a  
50 physiological impairment affecting an individual's functional capabilities (Kasser & Lytle,  
51 2005). The social model of disability stresses the critical impact of society on the perception  
52 of people with disabilities (D'Alessio, 2011). This model was initiated by the British disability  
53 movement of 1960 to respond to the constraints of the medical model in approaching people  
54 with disabilities. The economic model (Bacon & Hoque, 2015; Shakespeare & Watson, 2001)  
55 of people with disabilities addresses disability from a financial analysis perspective,  
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3 emphasizing an individual's disabling effects that limit a person's capabilities in the labor and  
4 employment domain. The embodied model emphasizes (Creamer, 2009) the physical  
5 differences of disabilities and impairments that individuals experience.  
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9 Thomas and Ely (1996, 2011) identified three approaches to managing diversity at  
10 organizational levels: (i) the discrimination and fairness paradigm, (ii) the access and  
11 legitimacy paradigm, and (iii) learning and effectiveness. The discrimination and fairness  
12 paradigm, as the predominant approach adopted by various organizations, seeks fair treatment;  
13 however, it equivalently focuses on representative aspects of diversity. Although the system  
14 exceeds the traditional affirmative action efforts, it does not measure the effect of diversity  
15 interventions contributing to diversifying the work by including varying opinions. The access  
16 and legitimacy paradigm (Ely & Thomas, 2001, p. 245) has heightened focus on matching the  
17 demographics of the organizations to its primary consumer base. The learning and  
18 effectiveness approach views employees as members of diverse cultural identity groups,  
19 perceived as valuable resources for organizational effectiveness. This perspective aims to  
20 associate diversity with working processes unique to each organization's modus operandi and  
21 sees diversity as a source for learning and adaptive change.  
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33 Following Thomas and Ely's framework, individuals are encouraged to take ownership and  
34 actively shape the organizational culture and practices. Additionally, the framework  
35 emphasizes the role of employees as change agents, the importance of creating an inclusive  
36 environment, and collective action in facilitating systemic change. In light of the voluntarist  
37 system of neoliberalism, people with disabilities may be empowered to actively promote  
38 inclusivity within organizations and contribute to the change of organizational policies and  
39 practices. Empowering and creating an inclusive environment for people with disabilities can  
40 be a strategic advantage for organizations beyond a moral imperative. By accommodating  
41 people with disabilities, an organization can increase its diversity and innovative problem-  
42 solving skills (Lopes et al., 2018). Furthermore, through the inclusion of people with  
43 disabilities in their workforce, organizations can improve products and services, comply with  
44 laws and regulations, and enhance competitiveness and performance, as well as their appeal as  
45 socially responsible organizations. However, we question these assumptions about the self-  
46 empowerment of disadvantaged groups, i.e., individuals with disabilities, in terms of  
47 organizational preparedness to go beyond the market exploitation of individuals with  
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3 disabilities, which are fundamental assumptions of theorization of inclusion with voluntarist  
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5 rationales.  
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### 8 **Managing disabilities in global organizations in the Turkish Context**

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10 The Turkish government's Prime Ministry Administration for Disabled Persons report (2016)  
11 indicates that many people with disabilities face societal and economic barriers, including  
12 access to health, education, and employment opportunities and discrimination in the workplace  
13 and social environments. The report states that Turkish citizens with disabilities seek  
14 employment through informal societal mechanisms. Even those who can obtain a job in formal  
15 organizations face challenges such as limited physical infrastructure and career immobility.  
16 Notably, the social exclusion of people with disabilities inevitably leads to innumerable  
17 instances of discrimination and violations, increasing their exposure to unfair treatment that  
18 inevitably contributes to landing in low-paying jobs (Baybora, 2006).  
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21 According to the Turkish Republic Government Statistical Institute study on the Disabled in  
22 Turkey (DIE), approximately 9 million citizens are disabled, and only one out of five (21.7%)  
23 actively participates in the labor force. Among people with disabilities, tertiary education is  
24 only 2.4%, while illiteracy is more prevalent (37%) (DIE, 2005). The upward career mobility  
25 in the Turkish context relies on a social status linked to professional and educational  
26 attainment. Thus, people with disabilities face enduring systemic discrimination (Tufan et al.,  
27 2007). The General Directorate of Services for Persons with Disabilities and Elderly People  
28 report (2018) stresses that the increasing rate of disability in the workforce is one of the main  
29 concerns for both public and private sectors. Further, the report notes that the employment rate  
30 for women with disabilities is three times lower than the global average (6.7%).  
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45 Following the global pandemic, understanding the employment of people with disabilities in  
46 an organization has gained greater prominence (WHO, 2020), particularly in settings where  
47 diversity discourses are limited and governments tend to delegate responsibility to employers  
48 (Kusku et al., 2021; Baykut et al., 2021). In this respect, we contribute to understanding people  
49 with disabilities and their existing conditions in a country with low levels of legal protection  
50 against disability discrimination. In addition, we examine the emic differences in how key HR  
51 actors manage people with disabilities in global corporations in Turkey.  
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### 58 **Methodology**

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3 The study adopts an abductive qualitative design approach to understand how global  
4 organizations in a developing country utilize diversity management (DM) mechanisms to  
5 manage people with disabilities. Due to its exploratory nature, the abductive approach extracts  
6 facts from observations. It generates structures that describe observed facts through hypothesis  
7 creation and evaluation and offers researchers a broader perception of a phenomenon  
8 (Reichertz, 2013). Numerous studies (i.e., Shakespeare & Watson, 2001; Härtel & O'Connor,  
9 2015) approach people with disabilities at the individual and macro levels; however, our study  
10 conducts an organizational level of analysis to explore how HR managers approach people with  
11 disabilities.  
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### 20 *Sample, data access and data collection*

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

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

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3 We analyzed the data about diversity interventions of HR managers to identify how people  
4 with disabilities are managed in global organizations. To ensure intercoder reliability, three  
5 researchers independently coded and analyzed the data. After the preliminary process of coding  
6 the transcript, we collated the explicit codes into initial themes recognized in the data (Braun  
7 & Clarke, 2006). The first author collected the data and asked interviewers to describe diversity  
8 management approaches for people with disabilities. For reliability, each coauthor  
9 independently identified diversity interventions and checked the common and significant  
10 themes. In case of a lack of consensus on a theme, we omitted or reconstructed it until we  
11 reached a complete agreement.  
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20 *Please Insert Table 2*  
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22 We have identified two general themes regarding how participating global companies manage  
23 people with disabilities (Table 2). The table illustrates that international organizations  
24 operating in Turkey have implemented diversity interventions, including inclusiveness, due to  
25 legal pressures from the country's quota system mandating hiring and managing people with  
26 disabilities. In contrast, others have implemented interventions resulting in the social exclusion  
27 of persons with disabilities. The findings section will provide a more detailed discussion of the  
28 themes.  
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## 35 **Findings**

### 36 *Diversity management practices based on voluntarism and minimum legal requirements*

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38 Interestingly, the approach in global organizations operating in Turkey and perceptions of  
39 human resource managers towards people with disabilities are constrained to a physical  
40 impairment. Most participating HR officers defined disability as a form of physical impairment  
41 and failed to address hidden disabilities, i.e., psychological impairments, learning difficulties,  
42 and social anxiety. Barnes et al. (2010, p. 225) indicated that the definition of disability in the  
43 21st century needs to incorporate and include the concept of the "able mind" as there are  
44 numerous hidden disabilities individuals face in the modern world. Furthermore, participating  
45 companies have offered positions to people with disabilities based on their physical impairment  
46 rather than their accumulated skills and competencies.  
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57 Most participant companies failed to address the concept of disability relating to the able mind  
58 and viewed it narrowly. In addition, most participant companies (85%) only comply with  
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3 government regulations regarding diversity management for people with disabilities. An HR  
4 executive in retail described managing people with disabilities as an obligatory process to avoid  
5 legal penalties since the quota system stipulated in Article 30 of the Turkish Labor Law No.  
6 4857 mandates that 3% of the workforce should consist of people with disabilities for profit-  
7 oriented companies with 50 or more employees.  
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13 *“You know, with disabled employees, if you have more than a certain number of*  
14 *employees in Turkey, you need to employ disabled people. We support the quota system*  
15 *and currently attain the required figures (Company FX).”*  
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19 HR executives of food manufacturing and financial services also referred to people with  
20 disabilities in the context of a quota obligation. The companies operating in the hospitality  
21 industry reinstated similar references. They implied that although the companies have global  
22 equality, diversity, and inclusion practices, local operations follow what the state mandates in  
23 Turkey.  
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29 *“For us, the criteria for employment are evaluated within the scope of suitability for*  
30 *the job; other than that, we do not apply many HR discourses implemented globally at*  
31 *the local operations. We do not have comprehensive human resources practices on*  
32 *disability or any specific workforce diversity; for example, a foreign language*  
33 *certificate is a priority criterion for us for the hiring process” (Company TX)*  
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38 The participants from the hospitality industry also indicated that the hiring process and  
39 diversity concerns of their organizations are structured based on individual competence, such  
40 as foreign language usage and industrial tenure. However, due to a lack of vocational training  
41 and limited job opportunities, many people with disabilities face barriers to landing an option  
42 in the hospitality industry. Since managers play a pivotal role in developing employees, taking  
43 initiatives such as providing assistance and nurturing relationships among the workforce may  
44 lead to minimizing people with disabilities and vulnerabilities in such organizations (Kulkarni,  
45 2013).  
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53 Although there is a particular legislative framework, such as a quota system guiding businesses  
54 on the employment of people with disabilities in Turkey, the legislation sets a discriminatory  
55 target way below the number of individuals available for work. The HR executive of a chemical  
56 product manufacturer highlighted the importance of inclusion for people with disabilities in the  
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3 workplace and raised her concerns about the general norms for approaching people with  
4 disabilities in Turkey.  
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8 *“Unfortunately, we sometimes see that in some companies, they are hired due to quota  
9 and only get paid...this is not the case for us; if we hire employees with disability, of  
10 course, depending on the nature of the disability, they need to conduct their job duties”  
11 (Company OX)  
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15 As Kocman and Weber (2018) argue, the workplace's structural design and physical conditions  
16 must promote inclusion for people with disabilities.  
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20 *“We hire employees with disabilities as mandated; at the end of the day, the retail  
21 industry has limited opportunities for many physically impaired. We have a hearing-  
22 impaired friend in our store, and when necessary, we implement some vocational  
23 educational programs for him; our training department usually implements these.  
24 Generally, as human resources, we determine the programs to be implemented for that  
25 year with the sales and marketing department” (Company LX).  
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31 Our findings have shown that global companies operating in retail argued that the physical  
32 conditions were not suitable for the needs of people with disabilities because of the nature of  
33 their business. This notion may be due to their limitations in defining disability concerning  
34 physical impairment. In congruence with Bam and Ronnie (2020), inclusion strategies for  
35 managing people with disabilities in the workplace necessitate actions more than offering  
36 suitable physical conditions, such as giving an active role in decision-making and workplace  
37 orientation. In our study, only a few global companies adopted inclusion strategies for people  
38 with disabilities. This finding is unsurprising since interpreting individual, social and human  
39 rights is contextual (Syed & Ozbilgin, 2009). Thus, eliminating structural inequality requires  
40 further actions in a country with a limited legislative framework and neoliberal rationale.  
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49 *Social exclusion through forever paid leave rather than inclusion.*  
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52 Global organizations are inclined to have plans for the social and economic inclusion of people  
53 with disabilities. The reason for this kind of implementation may be partially attributed to  
54 multinational companies' legal responsibilities to the local legal regulations. Nevertheless, even  
55 with the implemented legal measures in the workplace, various obstacles, such as dismissive  
56 organizational cultures, can stigmatize and create employment constraints for many people  
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3 with disabilities (Brite et al., 2015). Our interviews with HR executives in retail and  
4 manufacturing indicated that the companies engage in practices that we believe may trigger the  
5 social exclusion of people with disabilities. For example, one retail company executive said  
6 that the additional people with disabilities employees over the mandated quota are provided  
7 with financial support even though they are not required to perform any roles or tasks in return.  
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13 *“With people with disabilities employees, you know, if you employ more than a certain*  
14 *number of employees in Turkey, you have to hire people with disabilities. There are two*  
15 *active employees in our head office and two additional employees who do not have an*  
16 *active role, so we only pay them; they are on our payroll, and we want to fulfil and go*  
17 *beyond our obligation. We use the term ATM disability for those without any active*  
18 *role. However, one of our goals is to hire two additional employees to stores and aim*  
19 *to offer them more active roles shortly” (Company IX).*  
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26 Another participating company's HR manager indicated that the company created a social  
27 exclusion for many people with disabilities due to budget restrictions.  
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31 *“We implement certain programs to help our people with disabilities in the workforce.*  
32 *For example, we provide voluntary sign language training to other employees so they*  
33 *can communicate with them; apart from that, we do not currently have any other*  
34 *implemented discourses. We have digitized 12 of our HR services; however, these*  
35 *services, for instance, were inaccessible for those visually impaired due to budget*  
36 *restrictions” (Company, GX).*  
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42 Disabled people are among the most socially excluded groups, and their opportunities remain  
43 severely restricted (O'Grady et al., 2004). Moreover, the vital factors resulting in the social  
44 exclusion of people with disability include limited access to work, adequate training, and  
45 stigmatization. The interviews with HR executives show that, although unintentionally, the  
46 adopted DM measures can lead to social inclusion. Social exclusion can heighten the  
47 challenges of people with disabilities in a country with scarce economic policies and adequate  
48 benefit systems.  
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## 54 **Discussion**

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57 This study explored how global companies manage people with disabilities in Turkey. Some  
58 participant companies' key HR personnel indicated rigorous diversity management programs  
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3 designed explicitly for people with disabilities at their headquarters. Nonetheless, the findings  
4 indicate that many global organizations in Turkey prioritize business case-driven DM  
5 interventions due to budget constraints and prevailing market logic. In terms of transferring  
6 DM contents and creating a balance among various locations, companies provide unique  
7 solutions to address emic concerns in the host country. Our findings show that companies exert  
8 minimal effort in managing people with disabilities as most participants hire an adequate  
9 number of people with disabilities as mandated by the government quota system.

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

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22 Our results reveal that most global companies approach people with disabilities to fulfil their  
23 legal obligations. Although the participant companies adhere to legal standards, they provide  
24 limited career mobility. Furthermore, some participant companies implement DM measures  
25 causing social exclusion, inevitably increasing their precariousness and vulnerability.  
26 Approaching people with disabilities through limited insight may be inadequate in addressing  
27 their imperative needs, such as increasing their social inclusion while minimizing  
28 discriminatory prejudice and stigma (The World Bank, 2022). Although Thomas and Ely  
29 propose learning and effectiveness perspective as one of the practical approaches to managing  
30 a diverse workforce, in a context where limited regulative measures are adopted, it is evident  
31 that voluntarism yields to the heightened vulnerability of many people with disabilities. The  
32 voluntarism of global organizations in developing countries implementing varying diversity  
33 measures creates obscurity. Global company operations in developing country contexts show  
34 minimal engagement in a progressive DIE agenda based on a business case with an inadequate  
35 legislative framework. Since 80% of people with disabilities live in developing countries,  
36 understanding their vulnerability and implementing measures and policies to increase their  
37 inclusivity must be the organization's responsibility, even under the voluntarism philosophy. It  
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3 is a crucial responsibility of society to implement valuable solutions to accommodate people  
4 with disabilities, acknowledge their challenges, and minimize their adversaries.  
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8 The contribution of this study is twofold. First, from the perspective of HR executives of global  
9 corporations, the study interrogates the inclusion of people with disabilities. It explores  
10 measures designed explicitly to manage people with disabilities (UN Enable, 2021) in a context  
11 where diversity interventions are incorporated voluntarily. The previous research findings  
12 exploring people with disabilities in organizations refer to more sophisticated contexts where  
13 the inclusion of individuals with disabilities is supported and mandated (Kusku et al., 2021).  
14 Secondly, most diversity policies and measures on disability serve as a framework rather than  
15 a mandate (ILO, 2001) for many people with disabilities in developing countries. For instance,  
16 the ILO report on “Code of practice on managing disability in the workplace” section 2.3.2.  
17 states, “Workers’ organizations should actively encourage workers with disabilities to join their  
18 organizations as members and assume leadership roles” (ILO, 2001, p.10). Within the  
19 mandated regulation, global organizations are “encouraged”; thus, the voluntary nature of  
20 managing people with disabilities has resulted in many challenges, such as attaining limited  
21 roles in organizations (Kusku et al., 2021). Diversity measures for people with disabilities were  
22 adopted to uphold minimum standards, often at the expense of effectively excluding  
23 individuals with disabilities. The second contribution of this study is to explore global  
24 organizations’ approaches to marginalized groups, such as people with disabilities, in the  
25 context where there is an explicit lack of state regulation on diversity measures. Per the United  
26 Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), institutions are  
27 more responsible for ensuring that people with disabilities are included in all aspects of their  
28 lives. Considering that disabilities are a concept beyond physical impairments, the convention  
29 calls for a paradigm shift toward recognizing disabilities. A new disability rights movement  
30 aims to eliminate barriers to employment and address the challenges facing people with  
31 disabilities across all spheres of life. As stakeholders in society, global companies should  
32 promote diversity initiatives that foster global inclusion of people with disabilities and  
33 minimize emic differences. Therefore, tying diversity to business core functions can  
34 significantly impact work performance, as adopting such an orientation allows for cultural  
35 change and can significantly impact employees with disabilities (Thomas & Ely, 1996).  
36 Disability should become a more pronounced issue in developing countries, as there has been  
37 an increase in the prevalence of invisible disabilities, namely chronic fatigue (Truxillo &  
38 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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3 disabilities increases significantly, there is a heightened need for creating and implementing  
4 firm-level policies and developing tailored practices demonstrating diversity in the workplace  
5 (Tatli & Özbilgin, 2009; Tatli et al., 2012).  
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9 Furthermore, the commitment of other senior management to increasing the inclusion of people  
10 with disabilities through their actions and resource allocations is equally essential. By  
11 leveraging the diverse skills and experiences of people with disabilities, organizations can be  
12 more creative and innovative (Lopes et al., 2018), resulting in greater efficiency. Given  
13 neoliberalism's voluntarist nature, however, action beyond the boundaries of organizations is  
14 necessary. Collaboration should be incorporated at the institutional level to mitigate  
15 socioeconomic barriers and uneven access to social support to address and accommodate  
16 individuals with disabilities at work. It is imperative that advocacy organizations, charities, and  
17 organizations collaboratively promote inclusive practices to combat local systems' inadequacy.  
18 Although the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) seeks to  
19 establish standards and norms for the protection of human rights for people with disabilities,  
20 there are employment gaps exist resulting from regulating bodies that govern the laws vary and  
21 promote voluntarist employment (Tatli, 2012; Vornholt et al., 2018). The United Kingdom, for  
22 instance, has implemented a combination of legislation governing the rights of persons with  
23 disabilities and promoted awareness. In line with this, a strategy to achieve disability equality  
24 has also been launched by the Office for Disability Issues under the title Roadmap 2025. As  
25 such legislative interventions define the legal and social parameters of acceptable norms for  
26 persons with disabilities in the workplace, they have a profound effect on their employment  
27 prospects. Bruyere et al. (2004) find that employers provide accommodations to increase  
28 inclusivity in the workplace for people with disabilities. According to Woodhams and Corby  
29 (2007), the UK Disability Discrimination Act (1996) led to higher employment for persons  
30 with disabilities and the implementation of practices aimed at creating an inclusive work  
31 environment. The country-specific conditions can, however, vary significantly as national  
32 cultural factors shape social, economic, and legislative contexts that can affect people with  
33 disabilities. For example, Lebanon continues to disempower people with disabilities and  
34 exclude the participation of many people with disabilities when implementing laws, policies,  
35 and programs that are specifically tailored to them (Makarem, 2023). Moreover, in a context  
36 where employment of people with disabilities is approached within the framework of a  
37 compulsory employment quota and historical injustices (Ministry of Family and Social Policy,  
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3 2020; Yılmaz, 2020), global organizations' role in facilitating equal opportunities becomes  
4 crucial.  
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8 Although the Republic of Turkey signed the UN-CRPD and fully completed the ratification  
9 process in 2009 (Ministry of Family and Social Policy, 2022), the study findings show that  
10 global companies may reinforce systemic inequalities in a voluntarist context. The study  
11 findings indicate that there are significant policy gaps in the integration of people with  
12 disabilities into the workplace. Neoliberalism, particularly in developing countries, further  
13 exacerbates systemic inequalities through its voluntarist stance. As regulatory regimes continue  
14 to be lax, global companies need to act beyond fulfilling compulsory quotas, becoming  
15 disability champions, collaborating with non-governmental organizations, and engaging with  
16 community organizations to become more proactive in hiring people with disabilities. This  
17 further highlights the importance of integrating diversity initiatives into the organization's core  
18 functions regarding people with disabilities to achieve a true transformation.  
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28 The study provides a critical assessment of how global companies approach people with  
29 disabilities in the context of neoliberalism. The study findings show that global companies need  
30 to implement an integrated policy to accommodate people with disabilities and foster a culture  
31 of inclusion where disability constitutes a critical part of the population (Ministry of Labor and  
32 Social Security, 2022) to bring about a real paradigm shift. We extend existing knowledge by  
33 emphasizing institutional responsibilities as mechanisms of change at the grassroots level.  
34 People with disabilities are one of the largest minority groups worldwide, so institutions must  
35 create equal opportunities and protect their fundamental rights globally. The study explored  
36 how emic differences can contribute to vulnerabilities in voluntarist contexts for people with  
37 disabilities. Thus, increasing cooperation between advocacy groups, charities, and institutions  
38 is needed to minimize the incongruity of an emic approach. Integrating learning and  
39 development into corporate cultures will enable global companies to move beyond mandatory  
40 practices based on market logic and force them to provide the accommodations necessary for  
41 people with disabilities. In a society with an increasing prevalence of disabilities, a paradigm  
42 shift is imperative.  
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55 Future research could delve into exploring comparative studies and further highlight drivers,  
56 motivational factors, and potential obstacles in the employment of people with disabilities. Our  
57 study is limited to using qualitative data that might produce potential biases of the participants.  
58 Since the topic is sensitive, the HR executives might embellish their interventions to present a  
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3 favorable image of the firm or themselves. Thus, other researchers could employ quantitative  
4 and published secondary data to examine historical progress. Another study limitation is that  
5 the sample is within the Turkish context; thus, we cannot generalize our findings to every  
6 developing country. Although we have approached the Turkish context as a candidate  
7 providing insights and different perceptions of key actors and employers' understanding of the  
8 voluntarist stance of neoliberalism, we have used retail, chemical, hospitality, and tourism  
9 industries. Comparative industry-specific studies may produce and offer more detailed  
10 descriptions and show further insights into institutional responsibilities and varying cultural  
11 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
<p>-Physical impaired</p> <p>-Loss of bodily functions (over 40% such as sight impairment, loss of limb etc.)</p>	<p>- Intellectual, sensory or mental impairments</p>	<p>Legal requirement to hire people with disabilities</p>	<p>Barriers of physical infrastructure and architectural design</p>	<p>Organizational inclusion arises from legal obligation</p>
		<p>Need to adopt “positive discrimination” approaches to those disabled</p> <p>Willing to include them in processes, particularly decision making</p> <p>Want to offer a seat in managerial positions in a near future</p>	<p>Lack of technological/digital assistive technologies</p> <p>Inadequate feedback from people with disabilities to implement tailored DM policies</p> <p>Inadequate performance assessment standards tailored for people with disabilities</p>	<p>Recruitment and placement in positions based on physical impairment</p>
		<p>Hiring additional people with disabilities above required quota-</p>	<p>Lack of dedication to support and monitor employment of people with disabilities within the organization</p>	<p>Organizational/Social exclusion</p>

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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

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Personnel Review