

Challenges Faced by Visually Impaired Educated Youth in Seeking Jobs: The Socio-Technical Approach

Raut Nikita, Naik Asha

Assistant General Manager and Learning Head & Research Scholar at Sri Balaji University, Pune.

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ABSTRACT

This research paper examines the challenges faced by visually impaired educated youth in finding employment opportunities. Visually impaired educated youth often face difficulties from both societal and technological limitation. This study finds out the role of social factors and technological advancements affecting the employment prospects of person with visual impairment. By carrying out the analysis, this paper identifies key challenges such as societal stigma, inaccessible job environments, and limited access to education and training. Also it finds out the potential solution and interventions that helps to create more inclusive employment opportunities for persons with visual impairment.

Keywords: *Visually Impaired; Employment; Educated youth; Socio-Technical Approach; Challenges; Assistive Technologies; Inclusion.*

INTRODUCTION

The major concern for scholars and practitioners about visually impaired person is that only 32% of them aged 18 to 69 who are blind are employed and many of them are underemployed ¹. One is qualified and not working can affect his self-esteem and personality, increase feelings of hostility and also induce dependent relationships ². Persons with visual impairment can participate in society and achieve financial independence if they have opportunities for paid employment ³. There are some factors external to one's ability to perform a given job also play a huge role in limiting job opportunity ⁴. Educated adults with visual impairments encounter a twin burden of attitudinal and access barriers, which inhibits their employment inclusion. Equal opportunity regardless of abilities or disabilities of the person should be given to every individual it will not only financially stabilize but also build sense of independence and empowerment. By addressing employment challenges for persons with visual impaired educated youth, is not only the matter of social justice but also practical necessity for building diverse and prosperous societies. The awareness may spur appropriate measures for visually impaired individuals to successfully obtain and maintain employment, and may increase the employment rate among the visually impaired population ⁵.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Cumberland and Rahi (2016) contribute to the literature by examining the association between visual function, social position, and health and life chances the study shows valuable insights into the impact of visual impairment on individual's overall health. It is essential for creating inclusive workplace environments that support the health and well-being of employees with visual impairment ⁶. The employment of persons with visual impairment is a critical issue that requires careful attention to ensure that individuals with visual impairment have equal opportunities in the workforce. The prevalence of visual impairment, low vision, and blindness in the United States was estimated by Chan (2018) ⁷. The study found that visual impairment is a prevalent issue, with a significant number of individuals affected. This finding underscores the importance of addressing employment practices for individuals with visual impairment.

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An important aspect of best practices for employing individuals with visual impairment is rehabilitation and practice guidelines. Hebert (2016)⁸. However, the specific application of these guidelines to individuals with visual impairment needs to be further explored.

OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

1. To find out challenges faced by visually impaired educated youth in seeking jobs.
2. To bring out the reasons of having low rate of inclusion of visually impaired people.
3. To open pathways for persons with visual impairment to be included and to rise to their true potential.
4. To build awareness systems that allow all including physically challenged people in the management and public.

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative data collection methods were chosen for this research project. Use of more personal methods of data collection. A total of 100 visually impaired educated youth (minimum graduates) were interviewed across the country and surveyed through Google Forms.

FOCUS GROUPED DISCUSSION

The data includes a discussion of person with visual impairment who are employed and unemployed. The researcher is herself a visually impaired person who represents both the employee category and also the senior position of the HR manager.

OBSERVATION MAPPING

Via the data collected, the common observations and loopholes present in the system today were mapped. Insights gathered have been weighed and presented in percentile format

ANALYSIS & REFINEMENT OF SECONDARY DATA AVAILABLE

Analyzing & adding insights to the data available & updating it. Books, journals, articles, magazines, and other available literature relevant to the topic were studied and used for analysis.

RESULTS

The survey was carried out with 100 visually impaired persons out of which 80 males and 20 females have responded. From the 100 respondents 58 are totally blind, 26 are partially blind, 16 people have low vision. Educational qualification are- 78 of them are graduated and 22 of them are post graduate. As per the survey 40 of visually impaired youth are currently employed (36 in public sector and 4 in private sector) whereas 60 of them are still unemployed. Those 60 visually impaired youths are unemployed as they find it difficult in searching job or they are not selected by hiring managers. For those who are unemployed, around 42% of them found it difficult to get a job because of the reasons like –Mindset of the hiring manager, lack of awareness, not being called for interview, too much competition and too few opportunities and acceptance.

Besides them very few visually impaired employees are working in their organization and the growth opportunities are even less. 80 % of the employee don't have any special health care insurance or any facilities available to visually impaired person in their organization. As per the observation it was also seen that organizations are also not ready to hire persons with disability as they think that such people are not ready to fit the role, they lack the awareness about the work capabilities of the visually impaired person, also the infrastructure is not designed so as to facilitate easy movement for visually impaired employees. The above reasons and more so the limiting perspective of the hiring managers make it difficult for visually impaired persons to seek jobs. We also found out from several organizations that though they have a diversity and inclusion policy in place yet they are not prepared to consider hiring a person with visual impairment.

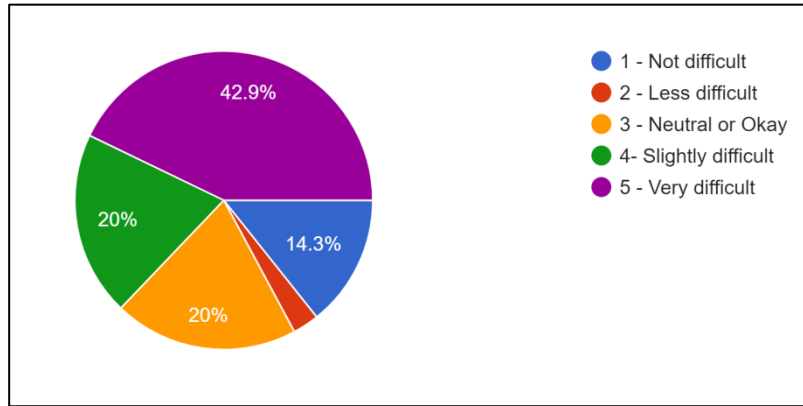


Diagram 1: Showing Level of difficulty faced by Visually Impaired person to find job.

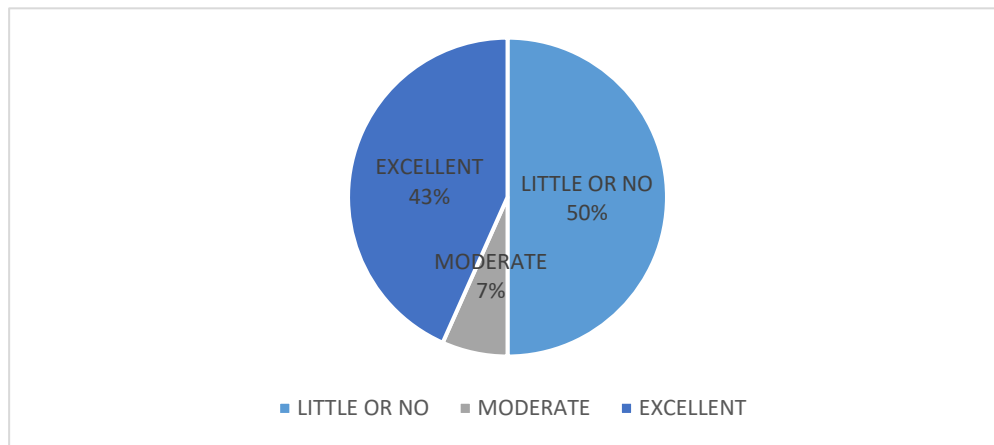


Diagram 2: Level of organizational support available as a Visually impaired employee

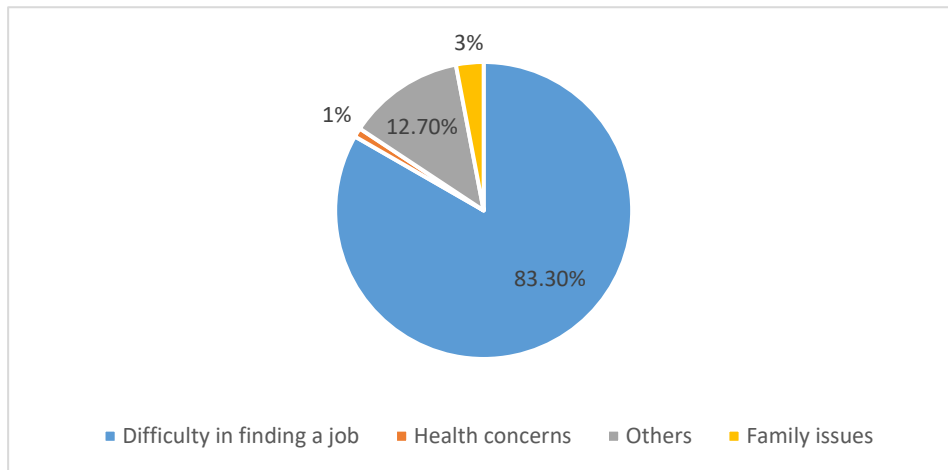


Diagram 3: Reason for not being employed at present

CONCLUSION

The challenges faced by visually impaired employable youth in seeking jobs are multifaceted and require a comprehensive socio-technical approach for effective resolution. Throughout this research, we have identified and

examined various obstacles that impede the employment prospects of visually impaired individuals, including societal stigma, inaccessible job environments, limited access to education and training, and lack of awareness.

Our analysis underscores the intertwined nature of social and technological factors shaping the employment landscape for visually impaired youth. Societal attitudes and prejudices contribute significantly to the marginalization of this demographic group, perpetuating barriers to equal opportunities in the workforce. Simultaneously, technological advancements have the potential to facilitate inclusion and accessibility, yet gaps persist in the adoption and implementation of this in the organizations.

In conclusion, the socio-technical approach offers a holistic framework for addressing the complex challenges faced by visually impaired individuals in seeking employment. By integrating social reforms with technological adoption and innovations, we can strive towards a future where all individuals, regardless of their visual abilities, have the opportunity to fulfill their potential and contribute meaningfully to the workforce and society at large.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the inputs received from primary data collection, following are some measures that can be taken by the organization to improve the employment ratio of person with visual impairment and their overall experience in the workplace-

- There should be more sensitization for inclusion of persons with visual impairment.
- Mentor-ship/ career coaching focus track to progress and growth of visually impaired youth.
- Technical facilities like Screen reading software, voice ATM etc, should be provided
- Equal opportunity should be given irrespective of disability.
- Generating awareness is also very important for hiring person with visual impairment.
- Infrastructure development such as removal of physical barriers in the premises for smooth physical movement.
- Identification of certain job roles (indicative list) can be done by organizations to be provided to the visually impaired persons.

RESEARCH & MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

This study is an attempt to open pathways for persons with visual impairment to get hired thereby fostering diversity and inclusion.

SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research scope in this study can be exploring the effectiveness of accessibility initiatives, investigating the role of assistive technologies, assessing the effectiveness of skills training programs, understanding employer attitudes and practices, examining the inter sectionality of identity, developing interventions and policy recommendations.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study operates within a specific time-frame which may limit the depth of analysis. Other limitations can be changing organizational landscape, sampling challenges, technological access variability, nature of work, and even perception variability. Factors such as varying degrees of visual impairment and diverse professional backgrounds could influence experiences differently.

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AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY



Nikita Raut stands as a trailblazing Human Resources professional, currently holding the prestigious position of Assistant General Manager at the forefront of Bank of Baroda. A beacon of inspiration, she is not only the youngest in her role but also the first blind individual to attain such a senior management position within the institution. With around 15 years of experience as an HR leader and As the Learning Head at the Training College of the Bank in Mumbai, she designs and leads programs in Leadership, Soft Skills, and HR. Nikita plays a pivotal role in the corporate ethics committee and contributes significantly to HR policies, Diversity and Inclusion initiatives , and workplace empowerment initiatives.

A Ph.D. scholar and a highly qualified professional, Nikita's dedication and excellence have been recognized through various awards, notably the "National Award for Best Employee [Visual Impairment]" conferred by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, presented by the Honorable President of India.

Besides being a veteran speaker on the HR subjects, She is a motivational speaker too, having inspired over 10,000 individuals through more than 100 sessions and interviews.



Dr. Asha Naik is Managing Partner Corporate Consulting Group. She has held the distinguished position of Chair Professor - Bank of Maharashtra, at the National Institute of Bank Management.

She started her career with Center for Organization Development, as Consulting Associate. She has several years of corporate experience which includes, Head - Human Resources at Fujitsu ICIM (RPG Group) and Global Head – Human Resources at Tata Technologies (Tata Group).

In consulting and academics, her contribution is as Chair Professor National Institute of Bank Management, Subject Expert in the field of Human Resource Management and Leadership, Professor at Sri Balaji University, and Doctoral Program Guide - Symbiosis International University and Sri Balaji University.

Dr. Naik has worked in India, Thailand, Germany and the U.S. Her areas of expertise are Strategic Human Resource Management, Sustainable Leadership, Competency Assessment, Individual, Management and Organization Development.

Dr. Naik has a Master's from The Tata Institute of Social Sciences and a Doctorate in Business Management from the Osmania University.