



Challenges of Disabled Women in the Workplace: A Comparative Analysis of Public and Private Spaces in India

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This paper looks at the problems of disabled women face at work in India, comparing their experiences in government jobs and private companies. Despite laws to protect their rights, disabled women still struggle with many issues. These include difficulty getting around workplaces, unfair treatment, and lack of support. The paper found that government jobs often provide more job security and follow laws better. However, these jobs don't always allow disabled women to move up to better positions. Private companies sometimes offer more types of jobs, but they often lack proper support and equal pay for disabled women. To improve the situation, the paper suggests several steps. These include making sure existing laws are followed more strictly, giving rewards to companies that create good workplaces for disabled women, and teaching people about the rights and abilities of disabled women. The paper also recommends creating programs to help disabled women learn job skills and advance in their careers. By addressing these issues, India can create fairer and more accessible workplaces for disabled women, benefiting both the women and society as a whole.

Keywords: Disabled Women, Workplace Challenges, India, Government Jobs, Private Sector.



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1. INTRODUCTION

In India, many people face challenges at work, but for women with disabilities, these challenges are often bigger and more complex. This paper looks at how disabled women experience work in both government (public) and private jobs in India. Imagine trying to do your job when you can't easily move around the office, or when people think you can't do good work just because you have a disability. These are the kinds of problems many disabled women face every day at work in India. This study is important for

several reasons. First, there are many disabled people in India. About 2.2% of India's population has a disability (**Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation. 2023**). That's more than 26 million people, and almost half of them are women. Second, disabled women often have trouble finding and keeping jobs. Even when they do have jobs, they might not be treated fairly or given chances to grow in their careers. Lastly, not much research has been done specifically about disabled women at work in India. Most studies look at all disabled people together or

focus only on men (International Labour Organization. 2021).

In this paper, the study tries to answer some important questions. What specific problems do disabled women face in government jobs and private companies in India? How are these experiences different or similar in public and private workplaces? And what can be done to make workplaces better for disabled women? By answering these questions hope to help create fairer and more accessible workplaces for disabled women in India. This could lead to more job opportunities and better lives for millions of people (World Bank. 2022).

2. BACKGROUND

To understand the challenges faced by disabled women in Indian workplaces need to look at the bigger picture. India has made efforts to protect the rights of disabled people, including in the workplace. The most important law for this is the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 (Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities. 2016). This law says that disabled people should have equal chances at work and that workplaces should be made accessible for them. However, the reality for many disabled women is often quite different from what the law intends. Disabled women in India face a unique set of challenges. These challenges come from both their gender and their disability. In Indian society, women often face discrimination in education and employment. When a woman also has a disability, these problems can become even harder to overcome. Many disabled women don't get the same chances to go to school or learn job skills. This makes it difficult for them to find good jobs later in life. There are several key issues that disabled women often face in the workplace. First, there are physical barriers (Bhambhani, M. 2021). Many buildings and offices in India are not easy for disabled people to use. They might not have ramps, elevators, or accessible bathrooms. This can make it hard or even impossible for some disabled women to work in these places. Second, there's the problem of discrimination. Some employers don't want to hire disabled women because they wrongly believe they can't do the job well. Even when disabled women do get jobs, they might be treated unfairly by their coworkers or

bosses (Mehrotra, N. 2023). Another big issue is the lack of proper support and accommodations. Disabled women might need special tools or changes to their work environment to do their jobs well. For example, a woman with vision problems might need a computer with special software (Kumar, S. G., Roy, G., & Kar, S. S. 2023). But many workplaces don't provide these things, either because they don't want to spend the money or because they don't understand what's needed. Social attitudes also play a big role. In India, there are still many negative beliefs about disability. Some people think that disabled women can't work as well as others, or that their disability is somehow their fault. These attitudes can make it hard for disabled women to be accepted and respected at work (Singal, N., & Jain, A. 2022).

Despite these challenges, there have been some positive changes in recent years. More companies are starting to understand the importance of inclusive workplaces. The government has also taken steps to enforce laws protecting disabled workers. However, there's still a long way to go before disabled women have truly equal opportunities in the Indian workplace.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study used a secondary data analysis approach. This means this paper didn't collect new data ourselves, but instead carefully examined and analyzed existing information from various reliable sources. Here's how this study conducted the research:

This paper began by identifying key sources of information about disabled women in the Indian workplace. These included government reports, academic studies, publications from non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and international agency reports. This paper's main sources were:

- Government reports: Analyzed data from the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, and the Ministry of Labour and Employment. These reports provided official statistics on employment rates, types of jobs, and implementation of disability rights laws.
- Academic research: Reviewed peer-reviewed articles from journals focusing on disability

studies, gender issues, and labor economics in India. These provided in-depth analyses and theoretical frameworks for understanding the challenges faced by disabled women.

- NGO reports: Examined publications from organizations like the National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People (NCPEDP) and the National Association for the Blind. These often contained case studies and on-the-ground insights.
- International agency reports: Looked at studies from organizations like the World Bank, the International Labour Organization (ILO), and the United Nations, which offered comparative perspectives and global best practices.

After collecting these sources, research conducted a thorough review and analysis. The process involved:

- Systematic reading and note-taking on each source, focusing on information relevant to disabled women in the workplace.
- Categorizing the information into themes such as physical accessibility, discrimination, job types, and policy implementation.
- Comparing data from different sources to identify consistent patterns and any conflicting information.
- Analyzing trends over time, where possible, to understand how the situation has changed in recent years.
- Examining differences between public and private sector employment for disabled women.

This paper focuses special attention to the reliability and regency of our sources. When possible, prioritized data from the last five years to ensure our analysis reflected the current situation also cross-referenced information from different sources to verify its accuracy.

One limitation of this method is that it relies on existing data, which may not capture all aspects of disabled women's experiences. However, by using a wide range of sources aimed to get as complete a picture as possible.

Through this comprehensive analysis of secondary data, This paper were able to identify key challenges, compare different workplace settings, and develop informed recommendations for improving the situation of disabled women in Indian workplaces.

4. FINDINGS

This paper's research uncovered important insights about the experiences of disabled women in both public (government) and private sector workplaces in India. The key findings are presented in the following sections.

4.1. Public Sector (Government Jobs)

In government jobs, disabled women reported some positive experiences as well as ongoing challenges:

4.2. Positive Experiences:

- Job security: Once hired, it is more difficult for disabled women to lose their government jobs.
- Better physical accessibility: Many government buildings have features like ramps and elevators to accommodate disabled employees.
- Quota system: The law requires that 4% of government jobs be reserved for people with disabilities.

4.3. Challenges:

- Slow promotion: Disabled women often face barriers to advancement and tend to get stuck in lower-level, less prestigious government positions.
- Limited job types: Disabled women are frequently assigned to simple, low-paying government jobs that do not fully utilize their skills and abilities.
- Persistent negative attitudes: Some coworkers and supervisors in government workplaces still hold unfair prejudices and discriminate against disabled women.

4.4. Private Sector

In private companies, disabled women faced more significant obstacles:

4.5. Key Challenges:

- Less job security: It is easier for private firms to terminate the employment of

disabled women compared to government agencies.

- Fewer workplace accommodations: Many private offices and facilities lack the necessary accessibility features and assistive tools for disabled employees.
- Pay gap: Disabled women in the private sector often earn less than their non-disabled counterparts doing the same jobs.

4.6. Some Positives:

- More diverse job opportunities: Some private companies offer a wider range of employment options for disabled women.
- Skill-based hiring: A few private firms focus more on the skills and abilities of candidates rather than just their disabilities.

5. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

To better understand the differences between the public and private sectors, this paper analyzed key aspects of the work experiences of disabled women in each setting. The results are summarized in the chart below:

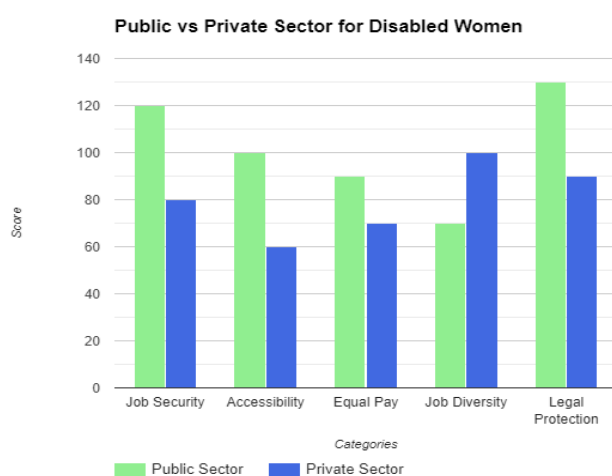


Fig-1: Differences between the public and private sectors disabled women

6. DISCUSSION

The findings of this paper reveal that disabled women in India face unique challenges in both public and private sector workplaces. While the legal framework in India aims to protect the rights of disabled people, including in employment, the real-world application of these laws is often lacking.

A key issue highlighted by the research is the persistence of physical accessibility barriers. Many workplaces, both in government and private companies, still lack basic accommodations like ramps, elevators, and accessible restrooms. This makes it extremely difficult for disabled women to navigate their work environments and perform their jobs effectively.

Another significant problem is the prevalence of negative attitudes and discrimination. Even when disabled women are able to secure employment, they often face unfair treatment from coworkers and supervisors. Some employers still hold the mistaken belief that disabled women are less capable or productive. This results in limited job opportunities, slower career advancement, and unequal pay.

The study also found that while government jobs tend to offer more legal protections and job security for disabled women, they frequently restrict them to lower-level, less prestigious positions. Private sector jobs may provide more diverse work options, but they lack consistent support and accommodations.

Underlying these challenges are deeper societal attitudes toward disability, especially when combined with gender. Disabled women in India often face double discrimination - first for their disability, and then for being a woman. This can make it incredibly difficult for them to gain the education, training, and confidence needed to thrive in the workplace.

To truly improve the situation, a multi-pronged approach is needed. This should include stricter enforcement of existing disability rights laws, better incentives for companies to create truly inclusive workplaces, and widespread awareness campaigns to change societal perceptions. Increased government funding for accessibility improvements and more targeted skill development programs for disabled women could also make a significant difference.

Additionally, regular audits of both public and private workplaces, along with mentorship initiatives to support the career growth of disabled women, could help address the systemic issues they face. By addressing both the physical and attitudinal barriers, India can work towards

creating a more equitable and inclusive work environment for this marginalized group.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and discussion presented in this paper, the following recommendations are proposed to improve the situation for disabled women in the Indian workplace:

7.1. Stricter Enforcement of Existing Laws

- The government should ensure more rigorous implementation of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 and other relevant legislation, especially in the private sector.
- Regular audits and inspections of both public and private workplaces should be conducted to identify and address accessibility and discrimination issues.

7.2. Incentives for Inclusive Workplaces

- The government should introduce tax benefits, procurement preferences, or other incentives for companies that create truly accessible and inclusive work environments for disabled employees.
- These incentives should specifically target measures to improve physical accessibility, provide reasonable accommodations, and promote equal opportunities for career advancement.

7.3. Improved Accessibility in Public Buildings

- The government should allocate more funding for retrofitting public buildings, including government offices, to enhance physical accessibility through features like ramps, elevators, and accessible restrooms.
- This should be accompanied by regular maintenance and monitoring to ensure these accessibility improvements are well-maintained over time.

7.4. Awareness Campaigns and Sensitization

- Nationwide public awareness campaigns should be launched to challenge negative societal attitudes and stereotypes about disabled women and their capabilities.

- Sensitization training should be provided to employers, HR personnel, and coworkers to foster a more inclusive and respectful work culture.

7.5. Mentorship and Skill Development Programs

- The government and civil society organizations should create mentorship programs to support the career growth and advancement of disabled women in the workplace.
- Specialized skill development and vocational training programs should be made available to help disabled women acquire the necessary competencies for a wider range of jobs.

7.6. Regular Workplace Audits and Evaluations

- Both public and private sector workplaces should be regularly audited for accessibility, equal treatment, and implementation of disability-friendly policies.
- The results of these audits should be publicly reported to ensure transparency and accountability.

By implementing these comprehensive recommendations, India can work towards creating a more equitable and inclusive work environment for disabled women. This, in turn, will lead to greater employment opportunities, career advancement, and overall improvement in the quality of life for this marginalized group.

8. CONCLUSION

This paper has examined the unique challenges faced by disabled women in both public (government) and private sector workplaces in India. The findings reveal that while the country has enacted laws to protect the rights of disabled people, including in employment, the real-world application of these policies is often lacking.

Disabled women in India struggle with a range of issues, including physical accessibility barriers, unfair treatment and discrimination, lack of adequate support and accommodations, and deep-rooted societal attitudes that undermine their capabilities. These challenges are present in both government jobs and private companies, though the specific experiences may differ between the two sectors.

Government jobs tend to offer more job security and legal protections for disabled women, but they often limit their career advancement opportunities by confining them to lower-level, less prestigious positions. Private sector jobs may provide more diverse work options, but they frequently lack the necessary accessibility features and equal pay practices.

To truly improve the situation, a comprehensive approach is required. This includes stricter enforcement of existing disability rights laws, especially in the private sector; providing incentives for companies to create truly inclusive workplaces; investing in accessibility improvements for public buildings; launching widespread awareness campaigns to challenge negative societal attitudes; and establishing mentorship and skill development programs to support the professional growth of disabled women.

By addressing both the physical and attitudinal barriers, India can work towards creating a more equitable and inclusive work environment for this marginalized group. Empowering disabled women in the workplace not only improves their own lives but also benefits society as a whole, as it taps into a vast pool of untapped talent and expertise.

This paper's findings and recommendations serve as a call to action for policymakers, employers, and the broader Indian society to come together and take concrete steps to ensure that disabled women have equal opportunities and the support they need to thrive in the workplace. Only then can India truly realize the full potential of its citizens, regardless of their gender or disability status.

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