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Employment for People with Disabilities: Multi-Regional Challenges, Policy Effectiveness, and Optimization Pathways

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Abstract. Economic downturns have significantly reduced corporate inclusive, further exacerbating the inherent physical limitations and lower skill levels often associated with disabilities. Presently, only a limited number of enterprises offer positions suitable for persons with disabilities, and the prevalence of accessible facilities remains low in most companies. The research identifies in existing policies, including severe regional imbalances and underdeveloped institutional mechanisms. Employment for people with disabilities is constrained by multiple factors, encompassing individual competency gaps and external environmental barriers. Based on the identified challenges, this paper proposes measures and recommendations for improvement.

Keywords: Policy Effectiveness, Three-Dimensional Barriers, Employment Pathway Optimization

1. Introduction

Employment for people with disabilities refers to the act whereby individuals with disabilities engage in labor to create value for society and receive remuneration. Even with physical or psychological impairments, individuals with disabilities can realize their personal value through work. Society bears the responsibility to safeguard their full employment, as it constitutes a fundamental right. Policy effectiveness is measured by its impact on employment participation rates, quality (income, stability), and social integration [1-2]. Digital empowerment, utilizing technologies like AI and big data, offers potential to overcome physiological and spatial limitations in employment for people with disabilities.

This paper analyzes the characteristics of government support policies from various sources, including the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability, China's 14th Five-Year Plan for Disability Protection and Development, and EU labor force policies. The aim is to promote sustained employment for people with disabilities and multi-stakeholder participation, thereby constructing a novel policy support framework for enhancing their employment.

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2. Practical challenges in employment for people with disabilities

2.1. Dual disparity in employment participation and quality

On one hand, only 68.75% of employed persons with disabilities in China have received digital skills training, indicating a notable gap in digital skill preparedness. On the other hand, the employment predicament of individuals with intellectual disabilities is particularly acute. More notably, 45% of this group opts to voluntarily withdraw from employment competition due to social stigma pressure, further intensifying their employment difficulties.

At the technological application level, significant shortcomings exist in the implementation of assistive technologies across different regions: As shown in Figure 1, only 27% of Canadian enterprises provide specialized assistive software for the visually impaired, while the adaptation rate of screen reader software in China is below 50%. Even in the European market, the situation is less than ideal-70% of webpages fail to meet the "maximum inclusivity" standard, struggling to accommodate the needs of users with disabilities [3,4-6].

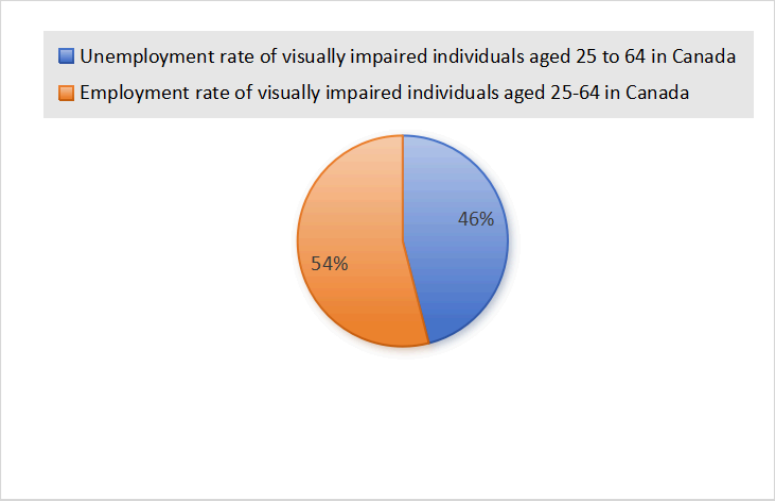


Figure 1. Employment of visually impaired individuals aged 25-64 in Canada

2.2. Insufficient implementation of disability employment policies

In China, the "Employment Quota System for Arranging Employment of Persons with Disabilities" is circumvented by some enterprises through "nominal employment" practices, undermining the policy's intent. In Europe, 60% of enterprises express cost concerns regarding accessibility modifications and assistive device investments, leading to slow progress in accessibility support.

Amid intensifying social competition, companies often engage in price wars to gain market share, compressing profit margins and consequently diminishing their willingness to invest in disability employment initiatives. Due to economic slowdown, even non-disabled individuals face employment pressures, leading them to consider downward mobility and potentially encroach upon job opportunities traditionally held by persons with disabilities. For instance, in blind massage therapy, an influx of non-disabled practitioners has eroded the competitive advantage once held by blind masseurs.

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3. Effectiveness of disability employment policies

Regarding mandatory policies, Canada's Employment Equity Act establishes binding constraints, facilitating employment for 54% of the visually impaired population. However, loopholes in policy implementation persist, with 26% of enterprises still failing to meet their obligations. The European Union utilizes strict Employment Protection Legislation (EPL) as a regulatory tool; data indicates that for every 1-point increase in the EPL index [5]"

While the European Active Labor Market Policy (ALMP) special fund provides employment support, a gender disparity exists in beneficiary rates – the rate for women is 33%, 18 percentage points lower than for men, indicating a need for greater equity in support provision.

Within the domain of service-oriented policies, Canada leverages its Research Data Centres to provide data support and scientific evidence for formulating disability employment policies.

Nevertheless, significant shortcomings remain in policy execution across countries: Some European nations exhibit a tendency to "prioritize quantity over quality" in disability employment efforts, resulting in a post-employment turnover rate exceeding 40% for persons with disabilities. In China, only 15% of enterprises have established cooperative mechanisms with Disabled Persons' Federations, indicating that a multi-stakeholder collaborative support network is not yet fully realized.

4. Optimization pathways for disability employment

Optimization pathways for disability employment can involve individual training, such as digital skills for the visually impaired, life skills and simple labor training for individuals with intellectual disabilities, developing disability-appropriate tools, and further broadening digital employment channels for persons with disabilities [5]. Environmental optimization, including measures to facilitate mobility for persons with disabilities, and providing subsidies to employers who hire individuals with disabilities, are also crucial [1].

Concurrently, significant deficiencies exist in the accessibility of living environments for persons with disabilities. Many workplaces lack disability-friendly facilities, such as obstructed tactile paving, office buildings without elevators, and absence of accessible restrooms. These issues diminish work motivation and consumption willingness among persons with disabilities, potentially causing secondary harm. Increased investment by governments and enterprises in disability-friendly infrastructure would enhance work motivation, subsequently boosting their incomes. The expansion of consumption demand among persons with disabilities would also positively impact overall socio-economic development.

In the field of job creation, focus should be placed on cultivating disability-appropriate digital roles such as data annotation and accessibility testing. Information technology should not be off-limits to persons with disabilities; information accessibility support must become a measure facilitating digital employment. Internet companies and designers should keep pace with technological advancements, continuously refining assistive technologies and features, improving their compatibility and integration with mainstream technologies. This enables more persons with disabilities to interact effectively with platforms and technologies, preventing loss of job opportunities due to technical access barriers. On the other hand, enterprises should be encouraged to actively fulfill their social responsibility in aiding persons with disabilities by providing an inclusive and friendly information technology environment, enabling them to perform job tasks successfully [4-5].

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The digital economy is the core driver of future economic development and the primary source of new vocational job growth. However, during the digital transformation, a mismatch exists between labor supply and demand in the disability employment market. To address this, solutions can be pursued in three areas: First, broaden digital employment channels for persons with disabilities, developing diverse new vocational positions tailored to different disability types and severity levels. Simultaneously, leverage artificial intelligence to precisely analyze the employment needs of persons with disabilities and market demands, providing more personalized job recommendations and guidance. Second, construct accessible digital employment platforms with disability-friendly user interfaces, strengthen "digital technology empowerment" for persons with disabilities, increase new vocational job opportunities, and realize new models like "work-from-home employment" and "internet-plus employment," allowing persons with disabilities to engage in new professions characterized by lower labor intensity and higher flexibility. Third, establish a comprehensive system for tracking and monitoring employment capabilities, ensuring alignment between the abilities of persons with disabilities and job requirements, enabling them to competently fill emerging vocational positions [2].

5. Conclusion

The employment issue for persons with disabilities transcends the mere realization of individual value; it reflects societal development and a nation's degree of civilization. This paper focused on analyzing disability policies in Europe, Canada, and China, identifying countermeasures.

Employment challenges for persons with disabilities exhibit characteristics interweaving "global commonalities" and "regional disparities." Regional employment disparities for persons with disabilities are pronounced; employment data from different countries and regions indicate that employment rates for persons with disabilities correlate with regional economic development and policy support.

Various types of policy instruments demonstrate distinct value in practice. However, the full realization of their effectiveness remains constrained by multiple factors: some regions and countries exhibit a focus on quantity at the expense of quality, leading to instability in employment for persons with disabilities.

Multi-departmental collaborative mechanisms can effectively address low policy implementation efficiency. At the individual level, enhancing the competitiveness of persons with disabilities in the job market, rather than being wholly overshadowed by non-disabled individuals, can be achieved through digital skills training and peer support to reduce social exclusion. Technologically, developing new assistive tools can help persons with disabilities overcome various inherent challenges.

This study did not employ empirical research methods, and the number of literature sources used was limited.

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