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## ПРАЦІВНИКИ З ІНВАЛІДНІСТЮ ЯК СТЕЙКХОЛДЕРИ ОРГАНІЗАЦІЙ

Сучасні організації повинні розвивати довготривалі відносини зі своїми стейкхолдерами, особливо зі своїми працівниками, які є їх основним капіталом. Для цього стратегія організації повинна включати заходи, спрямовані на розвиток і забезпечення рівних можливостей для всіх працівників, у тому числі з інвалідністю. Ця стаття має на меті представити проблематику працівників з інвалідністю як внутрішніх стейкхолдерів організації. Вона окреслює напрямки підтримки аналізованої соціальної групи, включаючи цінності, що надаються організацією. Також представлено заходи, які можна застосувати для реалізації концепції корпоративної соціальної відповідальності по відношенню до аналізованої соціальної групи.

**Ключові слова:** ринок праці, працівники з обмеженими можливостями, теорія стейкхолдерів, корпоративна соціальна відповідальність, рівні можливості, бібліометричний аналіз.

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## EMPLOYEES WITH DISABILITIES AS INTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS OF ORGANISATIONS

Organisation should strive to develop lasting relationships with its stakeholders, particularly its employees, who are the cornerstone of the institution's activities. For this purpose, its strategy should include activities aimed at developing and equalising opportunities for all employees, including those with disabilities. This article aims to present the issue of employees with disabilities as internal stakeholders of an organisation. It outlines areas of support for the analysed social group, including the values provided by the institution. Measures applicable to implementing the concept of corporate social responsibility towards the social group under analysis are also outlined.

**Key words:** labour markets, employees with disabilities, stakeholder theory, corporate social responsibility, equal opportunities, bibliometric analysis.

**Problem statement.** Disability is an individual phenomenon that affects a specific, unique person. It is, therefore, a manifestation of human diversity [3], which can be expressed, among other things, in how an individual interacts with the environment. However, the limitations imposed by the body or mind should not be a barrier to the human being. Efforts should be made to provide conditions that allow the potential of people with dysfunctions of different natures to be unleashed, creating an opportunity for their development. Actions aimed at creating optimal conditions for the full functioning of each individual in society and providing growth possibilities can be called “equalising opportunities”. Such activities, from the point of view of a market organisation, require adopting a long-term and holistic perspective encompassing its internal and external environment [23].

Stakeholder theory assumes business should be conducted by creating sustainable, long-term relationships between the market organisation and all groups interested in its performance [5; 11]. These activities should balance the interests of these groups, resulting in conducting business in a socially responsible manner [31]. In this context, one important stakeholder group for contemporary market institutions is people with disabilities [20]. It is, therefore, essential to discuss areas of support for organisations' stakeholders with dysfunctions – in particular, the employees who contribute to the market institutions. Given the crucial importance of this group of internal stakeholders to the enterprise, meeting their needs has implications for the organization's survival in the marketplace [2]. In this area, important issues are outlined, which it was decided

to discuss more frankly, referring to the existing scientific output concerning the problem.

**Analysis of recent research and publications.** The practical implementation of equalisation measures is part of the concept of corporate social responsibility. Consequently, it creates a network of relationships between the numerous actors that make up its internal and external environment [21; 26]. This process should ultimately be part of a comprehensive strategy with a long-term horizon [1]. It should be based on an effort to develop lasting connections with the stakeholders that make up the aforementioned organisational environment [15; 27]. Indeed, building positive relationships with stakeholders creates favourable conditions for the development of market institutions [17; 30]. Therefore, it is the stakeholders that should be the foundation of actions taken in the area of corporate social responsibility [13]. They are not only the recipients of implemented practices but often participate in them, becoming co-creators of various benefits for the institution. From the point of view of the organisation's environment, two groups of stakeholders can be distinguished [10]:

– internal stakeholders – represented by owners and executives (managers), employees, investors and trade unions,

– external stakeholders include, among others, customers, contractors, and competitors, as well as representatives of public administration, NGOs, various associations, educational institutions, the media, the local community, the environment, and its advocates.

Among the stakeholders representing the market institution's internal and external environment, people with disabilities play an essential role. According to

World Health Organisation (WHO) data, this group comprises more than one billion people [8]. Therefore, their needs and expectations should be an integral part of market organisations' strategies. Providing working and development conditions for people with disabilities, for example, allows representatives of this social group to unleash their potential and talents. Such activities are corporate social responsibility towards people with disabilities [CSR+D] [16]. However, the practical implementation of this concept requires, first of all, an understanding of the needs of stakeholders with different types of disabilities [18]. In doing so, it is worth emphasising that these needs are individual, as disability has a highly individual dimension, and even people with similar conditions may have different expectations of their environment.

The issue of people with disabilities as stakeholders in institutions can be analysed by referring to the concept of evolutionary rationality [32]. In this view, organisational mechanisms occur in an evolutionary cycle, including differentiation, selection and retention (Retention is the accumulation of earned resources due to the changes carried out). The evolutionary process is thus presented sequentially, with a parallel consideration of the following [25]:

- the individual characteristics of a given organisation determine how it shapes its relationship with the external environment (input, output),
- confrontation with variables of an exogenous nature has an essential role in improving the efficiency of the enterprise,
- the organization's effectiveness will determine the possibilities for expansion, as well as the scope of competitive initiatives taken against other market players,
- the evolutionary process initiates dynamic change so that the same organizational routines, but practised under different circumstances, may result in quite different effects linked to the phenomenon of mutation of decision-making roles and improvement of organizational characteristics,
- selection and differentiation processes contribute to the evolution of a given institution.

The evolutionary process discussed above was taken as a starting point to identify the nature of the

relationship created by the organisation with employees with disabilities. The initiation of wide-ranging projects that will consider the expectations and needs of this social group is the direction to achieve this kind of organizational change (including the launch of an evolutionary process). In doing so, it is worth looking at each organization as a collective with its own organizational culture. It fosters the development of differentiated ways of interacting to build sustainable intra-organizational and inter-organizational relationships. In this context, each market institution can be an example of a social space where evolutionary changes take place that translates into the mutual integration of individuals and entities that are diverse from one another in many ways [19].

**The purpose of the paper** is to present the issue of employees with disabilities as internal stakeholders of the organisation. Areas of support for the analysed social group are outlined, including the values provided by the institution. Measures applicable in implementing the concept of corporate social responsibility towards the social group under analysis are also listed.

**Main body.** For this study, a bibliometric analysis of publications available in the Scopus and Web of Science databases was carried out. The aim was to select studies on disability and employee issues. Based on the results obtained, it was found that several publications in the selected databases fit into the scope of the analyses undertaken. In the Scopus database, 5274 studies dedicated to both disability and employee issues were identified, while the Web of Science database contains 4251 such publications (Publications including the terms „disability” and „employee” in the subject (title, keywords or abstract), as at 22.03.2024). These studies represent a variety of disciplines, but interestingly, they mainly belong to the field of medicine and (to a lesser extent) the social sciences (Figure 1). The total number of citations of the records obtained is 86 970 in Scopus and 82 8586 in Web of Science. It gives an average number of citations of 16.49 and 19.43, respectively. The interest in the topics outlined, as illustrated by the h-index, is at 115 in Scopus and 109 in Web of Science.

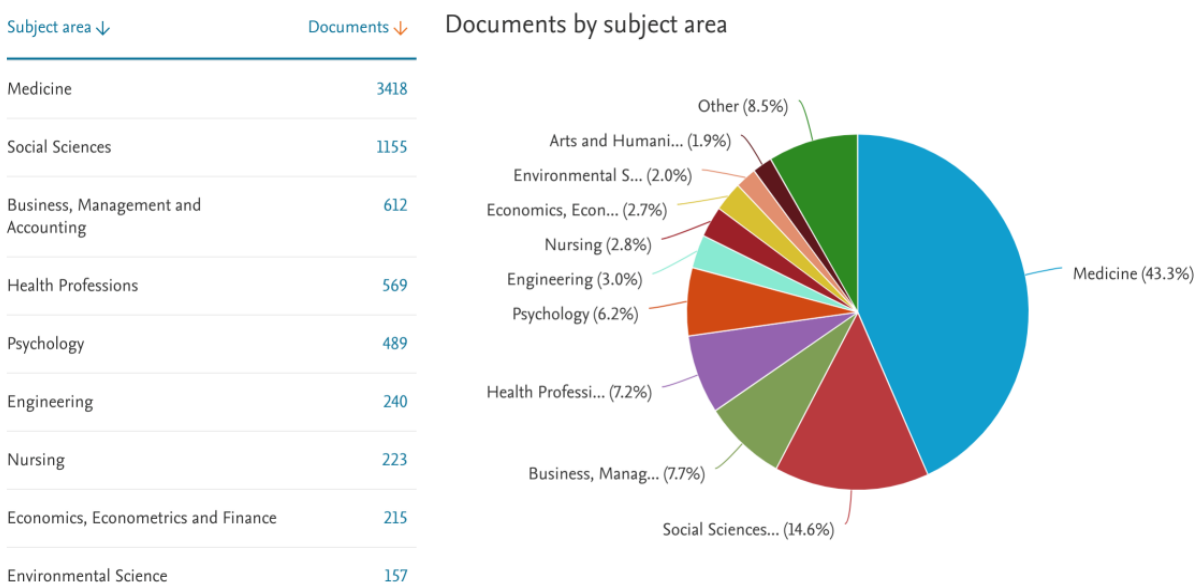


Figure 1. Thematic breakdown of publications combining the terms „disability” and „employees” in the Scopus database Source: [24].

In light of the analysis, it can be concluded that it is legitimate to discuss disability and the concept of internal stakeholders, with particular emphasis on employees as representatives of this group. A key aim of such a discussion should be to clarify and identify the research areas that link the specified conceptual categories.

The issue of measures related to equalising opportunities for workers with disabilities and enabling them to develop their potential is addressed in United Nations Resolution A/RES/70/1, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development [29]. When considering this document from the point of view of the issue of the present deliberations, it seems particularly important to highlight the goals numbered 8, 10 and 17. They are primarily dedicated to reducing social inequalities, economic growth, decent work, and strengthening global partnerships for sustainable development. Actions recommended by the United Nations and individual initiatives taken by individual countries contribute to equal opportunities for people with disabilities. At the same time, the cooperation of government institutions and business entities can lead to increasing the accessibility of infrastructure and workplaces and implementing other solutions that facilitate the professional development of employees with disabilities.

Such legal acts and global management trends related to the inclusion of corporate social responsibility activities result in an increasing consideration of stakeholders' needs and preferences in strategy. Understanding society's expectations, including those of people with disabilities, is essential [22; 28]. Therefore, it is necessary to recognise the nature of individual dysfunctions [4] and the barriers they generate [6; 9]. From the point of view of the internal stakeholders, who are the employees, the difficulties may relate to the following areas:

– physical barriers – inadequate building and transport infrastructure, as well as any other impediments

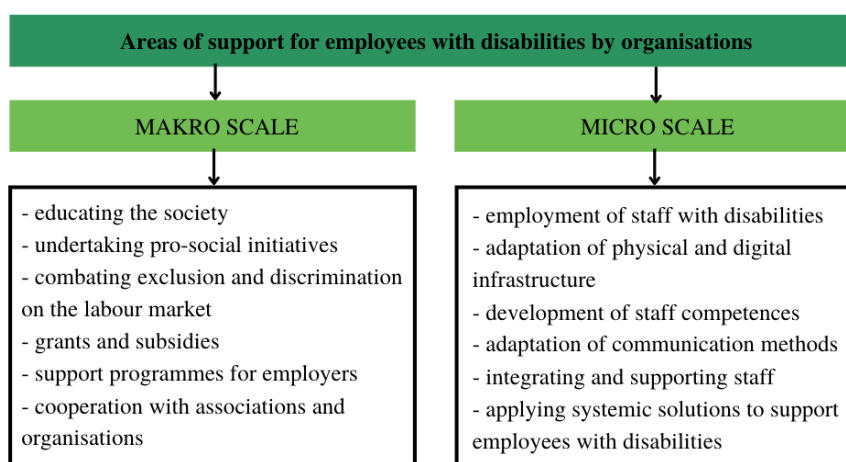
that are related to making physical space accessible,

– digital barriers – the inadequate adaptation of information systems and technological means to the physical and perceptual capabilities of those using them,

– social barriers – the problem of social exclusion, limited opportunities to participate in activities and initiatives, and insufficient integration,

– system barriers – inadequate adaptation of legal regulations, organizational policies or lack of top-down accessibility standards.

Market institutions can mitigate the problems generated by the aforementioned barriers in two ways: at the macro and micro scale (Figure 2). Macro activities are mainly related to social initiatives that go beyond the company's core business. They are carried out in cooperation with the environment, e.g. government and local government units, foundations and other organizations. These activities are carried out parallel to the business but not directly linked. Above all, they revolve around the creation of conditions for the development of society and are of a long-term nature. They are usually the result of cooperation between several market players and are sometimes coordinated by public authorities. Micro activities, on the other hand, focus on the organisation itself and its resources. These activities focus directly on the organization's internal stakeholders. They are usually part of a company's strategy, and their undertaking requires implementing multifaceted modifications to an organization's business structure and an evolutionary approach. It is worth emphasising at this point that, irrespective of the nature of the activities for the equalisation of opportunities for employees with disabilities, the resultant effect will mainly depend on the following issues: the individual characteristics of the stakeholders, the specific characteristics of the organisation, and the social, legal and economic characteristics of the environment.



Source: own study.

Figure 2. Areas of support for employees with disabilities by organisations in macro- and micro scale

In conclusion, it should be added that identifying support areas for employees with disabilities, including their key levels, is a remarkably complex task. Indeed, several multifaceted disability-related issues exist, and possible dysfunctions and related needs should be considered individually. Also, individual market institutions have different resources, capacities, and

knowledge to provide support.

Considering the needs of employees with disabilities in an organization's strategy requires an in-depth recognition of the organizations' environment [16]. Only then will the practices undertaken deliver the most desirable values and consequently contribute to building sustainable relationships with stakeholders (not only

internal stakeholders). The practices undertaken must be integral to the organization's business strategy [12]. At the same time, it is worth pointing out that the way value is delivered to dysfunctional employees can take on a diverse character and be measured through a variety of metrics (Table 1).

Table 1. Examples of measures for equal opportunities for employees with disabilities

Barriers	Example measure
Physical barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– the level of adaptation of buildings to users' fitness,</li> <li>– extent to which workplaces are adapted to the individual needs of employees,</li> <li>– degree of adaptation of working time and formula to employees' capabilities,</li> <li>– amount of money spent by employees on adapting to the workplace.</li> </ul>
Digital barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– the extent to which electronic equipment is adapted to the individual needs of employees,</li> <li>– the extent of adaptation of the website to the capabilities of dysfunctional audiences,</li> <li>– extent of adaptation of means of intra-organisational communication.</li> </ul>
Social barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– percentage of employees with dysfunctions about all employees,</li> <li>– level of fairness of the recruitment process towards candidates with disabilities,</li> <li>– treatment of employees with limitations (e.g. no bullying, reduction of exclusion)</li> <li>– results of surveys (quantitative and qualitative) on employee exclusion,</li> <li>– the number of mentions of the institution's employees published by organizations for people with disabilities.</li> </ul>
Systemic barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– degree of compliance with the law in the area of ensuring accessibility of physical and technical infrastructure for employees with disabilities,</li> <li>– amount of investment directed towards employees with disabilities,</li> <li>– amount and extent of subsidies allocated for equal opportunities for people with disabilities,</li> <li>– amount of information published in the media on measures for the benefit of employees with disabilities,</li> <li>– transparency of information published in reports, including the amount of data concerning employees with disabilities,</li> <li>– the results of surveys (quantitative and qualitative) on the internal perception of initiatives undertaken to benefit employees with disabilities.</li> </ul>

Source: own study.

The metrics presented relate to equalising opportunities for workers with disabilities, considering

physical, digital, social and systemic barriers. However, they do not constitute a closed list. They should attempt to detail exemplary tools that fall within the scope of the discussion undertaken and may inspire further research.

**Conclusions** from this study and prospects for further investigations. It should be emphasized that the benefits of implementing measures for equalizing opportunities for employees with disabilities do not only lead to internal benefits for the organization, such as the development of human capital, well-being of employees or a positive working atmosphere. They are also related to building a positive image of the institution among external stakeholders. It can lead to the generation of public commitment and trust. It is thus the foundation for further cooperation with the environment and market and strategic alliances [7]. It creates entirely new perspectives for implementing socially responsible activities, contributing to solving various social problems [14].

The presented article contributes to further discussions on people with disabilities as organizational stakeholders. Based on the results of the bibliometric analysis, it was shown that there is a significant research gap in the literature regarding the relationship between conceptual categories such as disability and employee. It is, therefore, essential to continue research of a theoretical and empirical nature.

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