# Working with Adults with Intellectual Challenges to Enhance their Employability Skills

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**Abstract**

The employability of the intellectually challenged has received little attention in the past. In order to fill this research gap, the present study was undertaken. The study is centered on the experiences of six intellectually challenged individuals who received employability training at a non-governmental organization. A focus group discussion along with a case study was conducted. The researchers employed the Rigorous and Accelerated Data Reduction (RADaR) technique to analyze the data from the focus group discussion. Results from both the focus group discussion and the case study revealed that the training program has had a significant impact on the lives of the participants and has aided them in becoming economically empowered and independent.

**Keywords-**Employability, Employment, Empowerment, Intellectual disability

**Funding information**

**Ethical Statement**

Written consent was obtained from the participants as well as their parents/guardians. Secondly, the ethical approval for the study was granted by the educational institution of the first author.

**Conflict of Interest Statement**

The second author is currently an employee at Diya Foundation. However, both researchers have worked together to ensure that the findings of the present study remain unbiased. The present study has not been funded by Diya Foundation or any other organization.

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**Author Contribution Statement**

The authors confirm that both authors have made substantial contribution to the article and deserve authorship.

**Introduction**

One of the hallmarks of an effective group worker is the quality of being an inherent educator (Malekoff, 2007). In fact, this particular quality is of great utility while training groups of individuals with skills that are necessary for day-to-day functioning and living. Employability skills are one such set of skills that are defined by Yorke (2004, as cited in Tymon, 2013) as "a set of achievements, skills, understandings and personal attributes, that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy." Employability in other words, is the capability of an individual to work and meet not only their own needs, but also the needs of society and the economy. For those who are intellectually challenged, this skill becomes critical to be considered employable as there is a stigma attached with being intellectually challenged (Ditchman et al., 2013) and they need to prove themselves employable before they are considered to be so. The intellectually challenged are also at a disadvantage when it comes to seeking highly competitive jobs because employers in such scenarios operate with a focus on profitability rather than empathy, leading to the exclusion of the differently abled/intellectually challenged (Pandey, 2022). As a result of such exclusion, people with disabilities are at high risk of poverty in India (Vijayan et al., 2020). There is also considerable stigma attached to being intellectually challenged which is perhaps contributing to the under-diagnosis of the problem in the country. Social workers often note that some parents of the intellectually challenged refuse to accept that their child has an intellectual disability despite a diagnosis.

The aim of the present study is to understand the experiences of intellectually challenged individuals who are currently in the job market/employed and were formerly provided employability training by an organization in India and to note the transformation they have undergone as a result of the training program. However, before diving into the issue of

employability among the intellectually challenged, there is a need to define who the intellectually challenged are.

**Defining Intellectual Disability**

Intellectual disability which was formerly known as mental retardation (Schalock, 2015) is defined as a form of disability that is "characterized by significant limitations both in intellectual functioning and in adaptive behavior as expressed in conceptual, social, and practical adaptive skills" (Shalock 2015). Just like many other disabilities, intellectual disability also has several risk factors that can be broadly classified as biomedical- which is associated with injuries and infections at early stages of life, social- which is related to poverty and low levels of education, behavioral- which is associated with parental neglect and abuse, and educational- which is about delayed diagnosis and lack of medical referral at the right time (Schalock, 2015). Some forms of intellectual disability are a combination of genetic and environmental factors (Masi et al., 2017). According to Lee et al. (2022), people with intellectual disability "have neurodevelopment deficits characterised by limitations in intellectual functioning and adaptive behaviour." Moreover, these disabilities emerge during birth and are visible before the age of 18 (Lee et al., 2022). These deficits limit the ability of the individual in a variety of ways and create a host of barriers for them.

**The Prevalence of Intellectual Disability**

Among all the regions of the world, South Asia has the highest prevalence of intellectual disability (Olusanya et al., 2020). Official estimates suggest that the prevalence of disability is between 2-2.3 per cent in the country (Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, 2019) and that those who are intellectually challenged constitute 0.2 per cent of the population (Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, 2018), which translates to 2.7 million individuals as per the 2018 population of India. A worrying factor to deliberate over, is that due to the under-reported nature of the problem in India as a consequence of the stigma attached to being differently abled, it is arduous to be able to accurately decipher the precise number of individuals who are

differently abled and among them, the number of individuals who have intellectual disability. The numbers could be substantially higher than reported. Furthermore, it has been reported that children with intellectual disability who experience peer victimisation suffer from low self esteem (Nambiar et al., 2020). Of the 2.7 million individuals who are differently abled, the government has noted that 58 per cent require assistance in carrying out day to day activities (Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, 2018). Unfortunately, those who are intellectually challenged have to not only live their lives with a deficit in intelligence but also have to overcome the limitations posed by limited resources under their possession. Since those who are intellectually challenged have certain limitations in ability, their employability in India, which currently has a 7.5 per cent unemployment rate (Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy, 2022) and which has a highly competitive job market, is extremely challenging. There are also attitudinal and institutional barriers that prevent the intellectually challenged from securing gainful employment. These barriers also prevent the intellectually challenged from realising their true potential.

**Legislations for the Intellectually Challenged**

In India, there are certain legislations and schemes to help ensure that those who are intellectually challenged also have an equal opportunity to secure gainful employment. One such legislation is the Persons with Disability Act, 2016 which mandates the government to provide five per cent reservation (or affirmative action) of government jobs for persons with disabilities. The Act also directs the government to set up special employment exchanges for such individuals and for providing incentives to private employers who provide five per cent reservation in jobs for those who are differently abled (Narayan & John, 2017). This is a landmark legislation that has been responsible for sparking off not only institutional level reorientation on how the differently abled including the intellectually challenged are treated, but has also created a positive attitudinal change in society towards them. One other noteworthy scheme is the National Rural Livelihood Mission, aimed at alleviating rural poverty, which guarantees that at least three percent of the total

beneficiaries must be persons with disabilities (Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, 2013). Although such measures do address the need for change at the institutional level and improve the employment opportunities for the intellectually challenged, with the increasing population and stiffer competition for jobs, unless the intellectually challenged are better trained, more of them could remain unemployed in the years to come despite their educational qualifications. Here is where there is a compelling need for employability training. With India being home to almost 1.4 billion people (World Bank, 2022), the government is constantly in need of support from civil society to reach out to the vulnerable sections of society, including the intellectually challenged. Non-governmental organizations working for the intellectually challenged have a mammoth task of empowering them and to rescue them from abject poverty which they are inevitably heading towards unless they are economically empowered.

**Intellectual Disability and Employability**

Intellectual disability undoubtedly has a negative effect on daily living and is often a potential barrier for securing gainful employment. Moreover, the degree of intellectual disability that varies from one individual to the other, is an important determining factor worthy of note. In one comparative study among intellectually challenged males, conducted by Kolstoe (1961), those who were employed were found to possess superior physical, social, personality, and work characteristics than those who were not employed.

Employability, although well defined, could vary based on several factors. In one noteworthy study by Sigelman et al. (1980), six students pursuing a personnel management course were shown recorded parts of simulated job interviews among 88 intellectually challenged individuals. The students found those with good verbal skills, among other skills, to be more employable than others, suggesting the importance of verbal skills in determining the employability of individuals with intellectual disability. In the same year, a similar study of this nature was published. In that specific study, the authors- Mullins & Hays (1980) investigated the important variables related to successful

employment among 21 intellectually challenged adults and discovered that conscientiousness, assertiveness, self-sufficiency, and imaginativeness, which constituted the personality variables in the study, along with cooperativeness, punctuality, completing work on time, attendance, and quality of work, which fall under the ambit of attitudinal variables, together determined the successful employment of the intellectually challenged. This hints at the possibility that apart from verbal skills, a positive improvement in the personality and attitudinal variables could also enhance the employability of those who are intellectually challenged.

One other concern related to the employability of the intellectually challenged is the culture and attitude of the people that can act as barriers to their employability (Alanazi, 2019).

This initial support for bolstering the autonomy of individuals could also emerge from fruitful group work sessions. Carter et al. (2013), note that group work with the intellectually challenged can lead to an enhancement of their autonomy, with the help of group activities and job coaches, promoting their self-efficacy, empowerment, and the ability to make decisions. The authors also suggest that group workers ought to employ the strength based approach to improve self-efficacy as well as self-esteem of the intellectually challenged (Carter et al., 2013). Strength based approach aims at focusing on and developing the strengths of the individuals rather than focusing on their weaknesses. Many non-governmental organisations in India working with the intellectually challenged do provide job training through group work and job coaches.

There have been studies that showcase the impact of employability training and supported employment for the intellectually challenged (Almalki, 2021). Supported employment refers to the practice of placing a person into competitive employment as well as giving them the necessary support to maintain that job (Modini et al., 2016). However, very little is known about the perspective of individuals who are intellectually challenged on the impact of such services. Voermans et al. (2021), note that that for people with intellectual disability, employment is an important part of community participation as well as as a source for social contact.

**Non-governmental Organizations Working for the Intellectually Challenged in India**

After India's Independence in 1947, the nation adopted a socialist ideological approach to almost everything including the economy, which lay greater emphasis on the government sector (Das et al., 2021). This approach had its own advantages but the socialist economic policy eventually led to a major balance of payments crisis in 1991 and as a result, India could afford only two week's worth of imports (Ahluwalia, 2019). This eventually motivated the government to rethink its economic philosophy and open up its economy, which is widely known as the liberalization, privatization, and globalization policy. This major reform led to a significant improvement in the economic growth of the country and ushered in the golden period of GDP growth in the nation as well (Wang et al., 2018). On the one hand, the market forces have certainly boosted the economy, but on the other hand, in recent years, labor legislations have been diluted as well (Breman, 2020). Despite the efforts of the state, over the last two decades, there is very little scope for the employment of the intellectually challenged in today's highly competitive employment system. This is where the role of non-governmental organizations in training the intellectually challenged to compete and succeed in the job market of India becomes critical for the empowerment of the intellectually challenged and in India, there are several non-governmental organizations working for the intellectually challenged.

**Diya Foundation and its Employability Program for the Intellectually Challenged**

Diya Foundation in the city of Bengaluru, India, is one such organization that specializes in vocational training for intellectually challenged young adults and adults (Diya Foundation, 2019). Its training is geared toward vocational and life skilling for the intellectually challenged with the goal of improving their chances of employability. The organization has so far trained 200 intellectually challenged adults (Diya Foundation, 2019). The employability skill training framework at Diya Foundation covers four essential employability skills-1) Exhibiting appropriate employability skills. 2) Knowing and exploring employment possibilities. 3) Exploring employment

choices. 4) Seeking, securing, and maintaining employment. Each of the of these four skills highlight the skills in demand and also the areas where the intellectually challenged need support and training so as to be able to compete with others in the highly competitive job market. The first skill is aimed at helping the students learn about different job roles and responsibilities. They are taught how to work and interact with others, meet demands for quality work, and work at expected levels of productivity. This is important as the ability to work in a team is one of the most critical employability skills a graduate can have (Reedy et al., 2020). The second skill is focused on inculcating an interest towards being employed by pointing out the benefits of being employed rather than being unemployed. Specifically, the students identify personal values met through work, identify societal values met through work, identify remunerative aspects of work, and locate sources of employment and training information. Apart from the economic benefits of having a job, being employed is also associated with better subjective-wellbeing (Diener et al., 2018).

The third skill is surrounding employment choices. Here, students learn how to identify major employment interests, employment aptitudes and the requirements of desired and available employment opportunities. This is connected to the individual's area of interest in terms of the career path that they would like to pursue. At the end of the day, the individual's interest in the area of work has a bearing on their employability as well (Quinlan & Renninger, 2022).

Finally, the last skill is the core skill that transforms all that the individuals have learnt into a positive outcome. This involves being trained for an interview as well. In fact, mock interviews have been known to be very helpful (Lord et al., 2019) in helping individuals secure their first job.

To be precise, students learn managerial skills and team work, independence, how to search for a job and apply for it, solve job related problems, maintain and advance in employment, and demonstrate knowledge of workplace safety. All these four skills are taught in groups using instruction based training, sometimes with the help of videos as well. The trainers are trained to employ a person-centric approach to group work, thereby establishing a humanistic and less rigid

relationship with the trainees (Santana et al., 2018). At Diya Foundation, When a new student joins the programme, a meeting is conducted with the trainers to identify the needs of the student. This meeting generally includes the family members and others who are close to the student such as their friends. Based on the meeting and assessment, a particular topic and goals are chosen. Examples of topics include- grooming skills, relationship skills, and employability skills. Once the required topic has been identified, the particular goals are determined. For example, under employability skill training, an individual might need to develop computer skills followed by soft skills to secure employment in the information and technology sector. Students with similar goals will have group sessions for the training. This encourages team building. The training can last anytime between 1- 4 years, depending on the severity of the intellectual disability and the training required. The training continues until the trainee secures gainful employment.

On the whole, the four different skills being taught at Diya Foundation, have transformed the lives of 200 intellectually challenged individuals so far. However, in the present study, for the first time, the experiences of those individuals who have graduated will be closely examined in a systematic manner so as to identify the exact strengths and weaknesses of the program, and to consider its applicability to other such non-governmental organizations working to empower the intellectually challenged in India and elsewhere.

**Methodology**

*Sampling*

A group message over an internet chat application was sent to all the members of the intellectually challenged community who had attended the employability training program in the last five years, inviting them to be a part of the study. The inclusion criteria was that the participants had to have undergone the employability training program in the past five years and needed to be currently interning, currently employed or employed/interned in the past six months. Those who could not communicate in English were excluded as the focus group discussion was to be held in

English. A total of six members who met the inclusion criteria and were willing to take part in the study, were selected as the participants for the present study.

*Data Collection and Analysis*

Focus group discussion was chosen as the method of data collection as it is capable of providing in-depth qualitative data on several issues (O.Nyumba et al., 2018). Three of the participants were male, while the remaining three were female. Respondent S, respondent R, and respondent L are males aged 35, 30, and 43 years, respectively. Respondent C, S, and P, are female and are 35, 30, and 27 years old. The mean age of the participants was 33 years. All the participants have been diagnosed with developmental delay, a form of intellectual disability (Vitrikas et al., 2017). A case study was also conducted to fully understand the extent of transformation the participants have undergone as a result of the training program. P, who is one out of the six participants in the present study, was willing to be part of the case study. The focus group discussion was carried out with the help of a set of pre-identified questions based on the employability program at Diya Foundation. A total of 19 questions were generated by the researchers which were then included in the focus group discussion (Guest et al., 2017) to help keep the discussion going and also to gain an understanding of the experience of the six participants with regard to the employability training program. The researchers used the Rigorous and Accelerated Data Reduction (RADaR) technique to analyze the data from the focus group discussion (Watkins, 2017). This basically involves entering the collected qualitative data into tables which are then revised several times. This revision is called data reduction so that it is more manageable and user friendly. It is called rigorous and accelerated because after each set of revision, the next revision is faster and more stringent (Watkins, 2017).

Member checking was also conducted to avoid any potential errors in the transcription of data (Motulsky, 2021). The transcribed data was then formatted into a phase 1 table with the headings representing each of the 19 focus group discussion questions. The key responses were identified and

placed in the phase 2 table with headings representing each of the four key employability skills. The important codes were also listed out. In the phase 3 table, the codes under each of the employability skills were further shortened /summed up and listed out. In the phase 4 table, one important theme summarizing the codes under each of the four skills was noted. The recorded discussion was conducted in two phases for about an hour each. The first phase covered the first two skills while the second phase covered the remaining two skills. The researchers used the grounded theory approach to analyze the collected data (Tuckett, 2005). Both the researchers were involved throughout the process of analysis of data to prevent the possibility of biases and misinterpretation of data.

### Ethical Consideration

Written consent was obtained from the participants as well as their parents/guardians. Secondly, the ethical approval for the study was granted by the educational institution of the first author.

### Case Study

P is 27 years old. She lives with her elder sister and brother in Bengaluru. She is an individual with mild intellectual challenge. She joined the Diya Foundation program back in 2015. Her dream was to find a job and support her family. Back then, she displayed anger issues and wanted to be left alone. She would avoid communicating with others and particularly avoided interacting with the male staff members in the organization. P was interested in designing and working on computers and Diya Foundation built on this interest by partnering and collaborating with AIMS Multimedia, to initiate a multimedia training program to hone the skills of the adults in the digitization unit. P was selected and this training provided her with a platform to be part of a group and learn to socialize. She enjoyed the training program and gradually opened up. Her trainer, Mr. A, encouraged her to shoulder more responsibilities - she was asked to volunteer for activities during training. Once, during the training, she received feedback that upset her. Later, her trainer

had a one on one session with P and taught her the importance of taking feedback positively, which she eventually learnt to do.

After the AIMS multimedia training, she got an opportunity to work as a team to create Diya's sheltered employment - "Studio C Cubed", a digital workstation. She and her colleagues were instrumental in coming up with the name, creating a logo and also marketing a video. Since then, P has also worked as a proofreader of books for the visually impaired. When she underwent the employability training, she learnt how to develop the right attitude to work, how to develop job skills, and most importantly, became fully prepared for the job. She learnt essential employability skills such as being punctual, taking up responsibilities, time management, quality at work, setting targets and meeting them, team work, and accepting everyone equally. During her employability training, she took up various responsibilities such as being the attendance, discipline, time, and maintenance manager. She even began volunteering to plan for celebrations at Diya Foundation.

When she began receiving payment for her work, her role in the family was viewed by others in her family, as equal to anybody else's. P began helping her sister on the household front as well. During the daily meeting with the trainer and fellow proofreaders, she was able to clarify her doubts on the work front and even helped others. In the year 2021, she received a three months paid internship with a corporate company as a newsroom editorial intern. She learnt different tools and methods used to extract information and generate reports of her daily task. The team identified her as a good team player cum potential candidate, and extended her internship to three more months. This experience has taught her to be updated about the news regularly and she even plans grocery shopping with her family. Her sister as well as all the staff at Diya Foundation have observed P's journey from a person who once had anger issues and would not communicate openly to someone who can now spread happiness and joy, openly communicate, and be an excellent team player, apart from being able to work almost as efficiently as someone without an intellectual disability.

**Findings of the Focus Group Discussion**

*Exhibiting Employability Skills*

According to the participants, being employable entails the ability to work in groups, being punctual, avoiding mistakes, and supporting one another under the guidance of a supervisor. The participants felt that the training program at Diya Foundation was able to provide them these skills. The participants also felt that a supervisor was necessary for guiding them at work. Respondent P says *"It's important to have a supervisor because they can motivate and guide us at work."* The importance of team work was realized by all the participants.

*Knowing and Exploring Employability Possibilities/Necessity to Work*

The participants understood the need to search for a job and the necessity to work as an adult. To be more precise, the participants felt that *"a job is necessary to earn money, to become a responsible person. Moreover, the chosen job must be enjoyable."* Respondent C said *"It is important to work in order to earn money, fulfill family responsibilities, look after parents."* It is necessary to remember that the training program is not just aimed at teaching employability skills to the participants but is also focused on inculcating the desire to become independent and economically empowered which the training program has achieved to a certain extent.

*Exploring Employment Choices*

The participants in the present study stated that they use job portals and use their social network (family members and friends) to find jobs. The participants understood the need to have a job. In fact, the participants were more than capable of distinguishing their short term career goals from their long term career goals. Respondent P stated that her "*Long term goal is to earn Rs.100,000 (about $1,200) monthly salary and short term goal is to secure a promotion (at her current job).*" The participants were able to comprehend the need to update their skills in order to secure a promotion or secure better jobs. Respondent R stated that *"With the same skills it is difficult to find an alternative job because different companies have different job roles. However, at times, we need to **update our skills** so that we match the requirements of the particular job."*

*Seeking, Securing, and Maintaining Employment*

All six members in the present study were confident about finding a job as well as maintaining it. The participants did however admit that they required support from their family or friends to fill out job applications. Regarding the ability to fill a job application, respondent P had to say this *" I can fill out a job application but I require guidance or help about what to add and what not to."*

As far as attending job interviews was concerned, the participants felt that the key was to be able to stay calm and be confident. The participants realized the need for reading the company's safety policy in order to avoid workplace injuries.

**Discussion**

From the results of the focus group discussion, it can be said that the participants have a good understanding of how to be a working professional. Although in some cases, they do require the assistance of those around them, such as for filling out job applications, by and large, they are able to function independently. The participants have understood that team work is a critical component to be considered employable, especially in large organizations as teamwork activities are known to enhance employee motivation (Hanaysha & Hussain, 2018). Small talk as an interpersonal skill is known to enhance employee well-being (Methot et al., 2021) and such sophisticated interpersonal skills are taught as part of the employability program at Diya Foundation. The participants understand the importance of being employed. All of them were motivated to work and had a long term as well as short term goals on the career front. In other words, the participants are motivated to work and motivation is key to positive organizational performance (Osabiya, 2015). They also show signs of commitment towards their job and have highlighted the need to update their skills. This is significant because upskilling is very helpful in the context of career development (Li, 2022). One major concern for those who are differently abled and especially those who are intellectually challenged is the possibility of work related

injuries. The employability training for the participants in Diya Foundation includes a section on avoiding workplace injuries and as expected, the participants appeared to be aware of the importance of reading the company's safety policy in order to reduce the possibility of them experiencing workplace injuries.

The case study of P, a 27 year old female with intellectual disability who has managed to overcome her internal limitations to launch her career is very inspiring. P has not only managed to secure a job but is gaining experience in a complex field that requires training and expertise. In this regard, her ability to work as part of a team and also to reach out to others when required, is a clear manifestation of the positive impact of the employability training program at Diya Foundation. P's transformation from a non-communicative and secluded individual to a team player who voluntarily shoulders her responsibilities is testament to this transformation. It is also worthy to note that the training program itself is not solely responsible for the progress made by P. Rather, it was a critical starting point that began a chain reaction leading to the slow social integration of P into mainstream workplace. The social interaction at the workplace warrants further and closer examination as peer interaction has been found to highly beneficial for those who are intellectually challenged (Schoop-Kasteler & Müller, 2020). That being said, the training program does have certain shortcomings that were identified through the focus group discussion. Employability is a broad term that encompasses several elements and it is more than just an individual's employability skills and other attributes. Employability is strongly associated with communication skills, analytical skills, and time management (Lim et al., 2016). Apart from these factors, there could also be certain personal circumstances at the household front that could be acting as a barrier to the employability of the individual. For example, the socio-economic circumstances at home and the attitude of the parents and other family members might either encourage or discourage the individual to actively seek gainful employment. Wealthy parents may not prefer to send their children to work. Although Diya Foundation does its best to keep in touch with the family members and does provide psychological

support to family members during a crisis, the employability training does little to alter the unfavourable attitudes of some family members who may want to overprotect their family member with intellectual challenges rather than encourage them to go out into the world and bravely face the challenges that the world might throw at them. Often, the personal circumstances dictate the employability of an individual and with a substantial prevalence of early marriage in India despite existing laws to curtail them (Goli et al., 2015), there is always a possibility of young girls being forced to give up on their dreams and career ambitions due to the parental pressure to get married. It must also be added that none of the participants in the present study have so far faced such a pressure but they might in the near future and employability training that they received may not be wholly helpful in overcoming such a situation. Therefore, the need of the hour is a more robust employability program that also takes the attitude of the family members into account and helps shape it so that both the family members and the individual with the intellectual challenge are on the same page and both are working in tandem to empower the individual. In some cases, despite the employability training being provided, parents may choose to place their adult children with intellectual disability in residential homes that may help satisfy their children's basic needs but the intellectually challenged individuals then lose out on an opportunity to be employed and economically independent. Despite these shortcomings, the employability training program at Diya Foundation is an excellent example of how group work can not only be used to modify maladaptive behavior, but can also be utilized to empower special groups such as the intellectually challenged who truly deserve our support and empathy. Workplaces need to be more inclusive and so do the attitudes of employers. The intellectually challenged have the same human rights as everyone and deserve the same opportunities for progress, happiness, and success. The advancement of any society can be viewed through the extent of support it provides to those who need a helping hand.

**Limitations**

One of the limitations of the present study is the sample size. A larger sample size could have been adopted. Secondly, the study is largely qualitative in nature. A mix of quantitative and qualitative techniques could have yielded richer data. Finally, the study is limited to Diya Foundation and not all the organizations working for the intellectually challenged in India. This could affect the generalisability of the study. It is hoped that these limitations will be treated as a research gap by other researchers interested in this area of investigation.

**Suggestions for Future Research**

As mentioned, the present study mainly employed qualitative techniques to gauge the impact of the employability training program. Future research on this matter could involve the use of quantitative or mixed methods so as to obtain a more quantifiable result that can also be generalized. Furthermore, a comparative study on the employability training programs for the intellectually challenged across two countries could also be conducted to identify the similarities and differences and to note the best practices in both countries, leading to an improvement in the employability of the intellectually challenged.

**Conclusion**

The present study has provided a qualitative overview of the experiences of six individuals who have undergone employability training in an organization working for the intellectual challenged in India. Results from both the focus group discussion and the case study revealed that the training program has had a significant impact on the lives of the intellectually challenged and has aided them in the process of becoming economically empowered and independent. Further quantitative studies or studies involving mixed methods could provide an even more objective view of the current status of such individuals. At the familial and societal level, there is a need to encourage the economic dreams of the intellectually challenged so that they lead a dignified life, free from exclusion and discrimination. The findings of the study have broader implications for

encouraging the intellectually challenged in undergoing employment training and seeking gainful employment.

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