

DISABILITY INCLUSION POLICIES AND WORKPLACE ENGAGEMENT IN OIL AND GAS COMPANIES IN RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This study employed a cross-sectional survey design to examine the relationship between disability inclusion policies and workplace engagement among senior managers in oil and gas companies operating in Rivers State, Nigeria. From a target population of 295 registered oil and gas companies, fifteen (15) were purposively selected based on operational longevity and workforce size. A sample of 114 managers was determined using Taro Yamane's formula, and 102 valid responses were obtained, representing an 89.5% response rate. Data were collected using structured questionnaires assessing workplace accessibility, recruitment practices, and workplace engagement via a five-point Likert scale. Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient was used to analyze relationships between variables at a 0.05 significance level. Findings revealed a moderate positive and statistically significant relationship between workplace accessibility and workplace engagement ($r = 0.400$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that improved physical and technological accessibility enhances employee engagement. Similarly, recruitment practices demonstrated a moderate positive correlation with workplace engagement ($r = 0.307$, $p = 0.002$), suggesting that inclusive, bias-free recruitment strategies contribute to higher levels of employee psychological investment. These results align with the Social Model of Disability and the Job Demands-Resources model, underscoring the role of inclusive organizational resources in fostering employee commitment. The study concludes that disability inclusion policies, particularly accessible work environments and equitable recruitment processes, are vital for promoting workplace engagement in the oil and gas sector. Implications for human resource management include prioritizing infrastructural accessibility, institutionalizing inclusive hiring practices, and fostering disability awareness to enhance organizational performance and corporate social responsibility.

Keywords: *Disability inclusion policies, workplace engagement, oil and gas companies, workplace accessibility, workplace engagement.*

INTRODUCTION

Disability inclusion in the workplace has become an increasingly central pillar of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and strategic human resource management (SHRM) in the 21st century, particularly in the wake of global calls for more equitable and inclusive work environments (ILO, 2022; Shore et al., 2021). As organizations evolve under the influence of international conventions such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), disability-inclusive practices are no longer viewed as optional add-ons, but as core components of sustainable business strategy (United Nations, 2021).

Within this evolving global framework, oil and gas companies in Nigeria's Rivers State face a dual imperative: to remain globally competitive while responding to local socio-economic dynamics. In this context, disability inclusion policies are not only essential for fulfilling ethical and legal obligations but also for fostering organizational resilience, innovation, and employee engagement (Gould, 2023; Odetayo & Ogunyemi, 2022).

The extent to which these firms accommodate persons with disabilities—through inclusive recruitment processes, workplace accessibility initiatives, and supportive organizational cultures—has significant implications for employee morale, productivity, and retention (Afolabi & Ayodeji, 2021; Lindsay et al., 2023). Effective inclusion policies signal a company's commitment to diversity, which in turn enhances psychological safety and strengthens overall workplace engagement (Schur et al., 2022).

Despite increasing awareness of disability rights in Nigeria and beyond, the implementation of inclusive practices remains uneven, particularly in industries like oil and gas that have traditionally focused on physical and technical performance standards (Edewor & Ekanem, 2021). This sector's high-demand work environments and hierarchical corporate structures often pose unique challenges to disability inclusion. Therefore, an empirical examination of the relationship between disability inclusion policies and workplace engagement in this context is both timely and necessary.

Despite growing global advocacy and legislative advances aimed at promoting the rights of persons with disabilities, the implementation of effective disability inclusion policies remains inconsistent and superficial, particularly within corporate organizations in developing countries (ILO, 2022; United Nations, 2021). In many cases, inclusion is confined to symbolic gestures or compliance checklists, rather than being meaningfully embedded within organizational strategy and culture (Gould, 2023; Schur et al., 2022).

This gap is especially evident in Nigeria's oil and gas sector, where organizational structures are traditionally hierarchical, task-oriented, and risk-averse—conditions that often limit the integration of inclusive workplace practices (Edewor & Ekanem, 2021). Oil and gas companies operating in Rivers State, a major hub of Nigeria's petroleum industry, are under increasing scrutiny to align with global diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) standards. However, these companies frequently encounter systemic barriers such as inadequate infrastructure, limited policy enforcement, and low managerial awareness of disability-related issues (Odetayo & Ogunyemi, 2022; Afolabi & Ayodeji, 2021).

Moreover, the absence of robust empirical data on how disability inclusion affects key organizational outcomes—particularly workplace engagement, motivation, and employee satisfaction—poses a significant challenge to evidence-based policymaking. While some international studies highlight positive correlations between inclusive practices and employee engagement (Lindsay et al., 2023; Shore et al., 2021), there is a paucity of localized research exploring these dynamics within Nigeria's oil and gas industry. As a result, existing corporate strategies may overlook or underestimate the organizational benefits of true inclusion.

This study seeks to fill this gap by empirically examining the relationship between disability inclusion policies—specifically workplace accessibility and inclusive recruitment—and workplace engagement among senior managers in oil and gas firms in Rivers State. By doing so, it aims to contribute to the growing body of knowledge that supports evidence-driven inclusion practices in emerging markets.

Aim and Objectives

The aim of this paper is to examine the relationship between disability inclusion policies and workplace engagement in oil and gas companies in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Specific Objectives:

- i. To examine the relationship between workplace accessibility and workplace engagement.
- ii. To examine the relationship between recruitment practices and workplace engagement.

Research Questions

- i. What is the relationship between workplace accessibility and workplace engagement?
- ii. What is the relationship between recruitment practices and workplace engagement?

Research Hypotheses

H01: There is no significant relationship between workplace accessibility and workplace engagement.

H02: There is no significant relationship between recruitment practices and workplace engagement.

Review of Related Literature

Theoretical Foundation

This study draws upon two complementary theoretical frameworks: the Social Model of Disability and the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Model, both of which provide a robust foundation for analyzing disability inclusion and workplace engagement.

The Social Model of Disability, originally articulated by Oliver (1996), shifts focus from individual impairments to the societal and environmental barriers that inhibit the full participation of persons with disabilities in various aspects of life, including employment. This model critiques the traditional medical approach to disability, emphasizing instead the role of social attitudes, organizational infrastructure, and policy gaps in creating exclusionary environments (Goodley, 2021). In workplace contexts, this model highlights how discriminatory hiring practices, inaccessible facilities, and a lack of accommodations perpetuate marginalization—not the disability itself (Shakespeare, 2022). The model has been increasingly adopted in human resource management to advocate for systemic changes that enable inclusivity, accessibility, and equity in organizational settings (Bryant et al., 2023).

In tandem, the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) provides a framework for understanding how workplace conditions influence employee engagement.

According to this model, job demands (e.g., workload, time pressure, or emotional strain) can lead to burnout unless they are balanced by adequate job resources—including autonomy, managerial support, and inclusive organizational practices. In recent extensions of the JD-R model, diversity and inclusion practices have been categorized as critical organizational resources that buffer against disengagement and foster employee commitment (Taris & Schaufeli, 2021; Saks et al., 2022). Specifically, the availability of inclusive recruitment policies, workplace accessibility, and support systems for disabled employees serve as job resources that contribute to higher levels of employee motivation, psychological safety, and productivity (Van der Walt & De Klerk, 2023).

By integrating the Social Model of Disability with the JD-R framework, this study offers a holistic perspective that not only identifies the structural barriers faced by people with disabilities in the workplace, but also emphasizes how strategic inclusion policies can act as organizational enablers, enhancing employee engagement across diverse workforces.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for the study is shown below in figure 1.

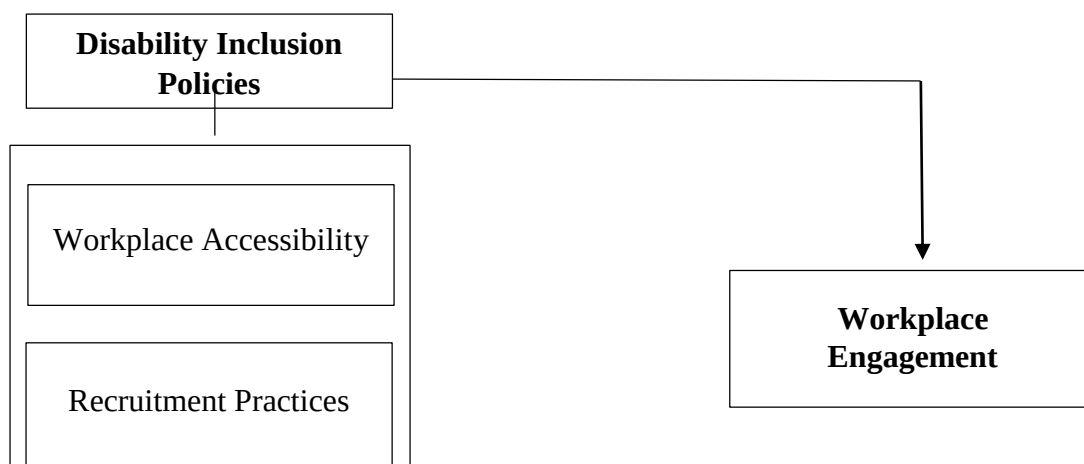


Fig. 1: Conceptual framework of disability inclusion policies and workplace engagement conceptualized by the Researchers (2025).

Concept of Disability Inclusion Policies

Disability inclusion policies refer to a set of formal organizational guidelines, practices, and strategic commitments aimed at creating an equitable work environment where individuals with disabilities are recruited, retained, supported, and given equal opportunities to thrive. These policies extend beyond compliance with legal frameworks to embody a proactive organizational culture that values diversity, accessibility, and belonging (Friedman & Owen, 2022).

Modern disability inclusion policies typically encompass dimensions such as accessible recruitment practices, reasonable accommodations, non-discriminatory workplace policies, inclusive leadership training, and ongoing employee education. They are designed to

dismantle institutional barriers and address systemic biases that may hinder the participation of people with disabilities in the workforce (Bualar & Chueyprasit, 2021).

Importantly, post-pandemic shifts in work arrangements—such as remote work and flexible scheduling—have further highlighted the importance of adaptive and inclusive policy frameworks. These new norms present both challenges and opportunities for better inclusion of employees with various physical, sensory, and cognitive disabilities (Lindley & Machin, 2023). Organizations that embed disability inclusion as a strategic HR priority tend to see higher employee engagement, innovation, and retention—particularly among marginalized groups (ILO, 2022).

Disability inclusion is no longer solely a moral or legal imperative but a business strategy aligned with corporate social responsibility (CSR), sustainability goals, and employee wellbeing initiatives. It also aligns with global movements such as the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the UN Sustainable Development Goal 8, which promotes "decent work for all," including persons with disabilities (United Nations, 2021).

Therefore, in the context of oil and gas companies operating in complex and high-risk environments like Rivers State, Nigeria, well-structured and effectively implemented disability inclusion policies are essential not just for legal compliance, but also for fostering an engaged, diverse, and resilient workforce.

Workplace Accessibility

Workplace accessibility encompasses the physical, digital, organizational, and attitudinal modifications that enable individuals with disabilities to fully participate in the workforce. This includes not only the removal of physical barriers (e.g., ramps, elevators, accessible restrooms), but also the implementation of assistive technologies, adaptive workstations, inclusive communication systems, and flexible work arrangements (Lindsay et al., 2019; Samant et al., 2022).

The modern conception of accessibility goes beyond compliance with legal standards such as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) or Nigeria's Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act. It emphasizes universal design principles, ensuring that environments and tools are usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without adaptation (UNESCO, 2021). Digital accessibility—ensuring that websites, internal platforms, and HR systems are compatible with screen readers and other assistive tools—is especially crucial in the era of remote and hybrid work (Almeida et al., 2023).

Studies have consistently shown that accessible workplaces enhance employee engagement, morale, and retention, particularly for those with disabilities, while also benefiting the broader workforce by promoting a culture of inclusion and respect (ILO, 2022; Van der Walt & De Klerk, 2023). Furthermore, inclusive design contributes to organizational innovation by fostering diverse perspectives and creative problem-solving.

Recruitment Practices

Inclusive recruitment practices are essential to ensuring that persons with disabilities are not systematically excluded from employment opportunities. These practices involve the design and implementation of hiring policies and processes that are equitable, accessible, and free of bias at all stages—from job advertisement and application to interview and onboarding (Sabharwal, 2014; Friedman & Owen, 2022).

Key elements of inclusive recruitment include non-discriminatory job postings that avoid biased language and explicitly welcome applicants with disabilities; accessible application platforms that accommodate various assistive technologies; bias-free screening and selection tools, such as structured interviews and inclusive aptitude tests; and reasonable accommodations during interviews, including extended time, accessible locations, and sign language interpreters where necessary (Mitra & Brucker, 2021).

Recent research has emphasized the positive impact of inclusive hiring on organizational outcomes, such as improved reputation, employee engagement, and workforce diversity (Mori et al., 2021). In Nigeria, where social stigma and infrastructural limitations often restrict persons with disabilities from equal employment access, inclusive recruitment serves not just as a fairness initiative but as a strategic imperative for workforce sustainability and equity (Ogunyemi & Akinlabi, 2023).

Concept of Workplace Engagement

Workplace engagement refers to the emotional, cognitive, and behavioral connection that employees have with their job roles, colleagues, and the broader organizational mission. It encompasses the extent to which individuals are psychologically present, enthusiastic, and committed to contributing meaningfully to organizational success (Schaufeli et al., 2002; Saks, 2022).

Engaged employees exhibit vigor, dedication, and absorption—the three core dimensions outlined in the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES). Vigor relates to high levels of energy and mental resilience, dedication reflects strong involvement and a sense of significance, and absorption describes being fully concentrated and happily engrossed in one's work (Schaufeli et al., 2006).

Contemporary studies emphasize that workplace engagement is not only shaped by individual motivation but also by organizational culture, leadership quality, inclusive practices, and psychological safety (Saks, 2022; Chaurasia & Shukla, 2021). In inclusive organizations—particularly those that recognize and accommodate disability—employees are more likely to feel valued, respected, and empowered, which in turn enhances engagement levels (Robinson et al., 2021; Van der Walt & De Klerk, 2023).

For persons with disabilities, engagement is significantly affected by access to resources, fair treatment, and perceptions of inclusion. Research by Mitra and Brucker (2021) found that when employees with disabilities receive appropriate support and accommodations, their levels of work engagement match or even surpass those of their peers without disabilities.

Moreover, in a post-pandemic context characterized by remote work and increased mental health challenges, organizations are recognizing the importance of engagement as a driver

of resilience, adaptability, and well-being (Gallup, 2023; Knight et al., 2022). This makes inclusive engagement strategies—such as participatory decision-making, recognition, and accessible communication—more critical than ever.

In sum, workplace engagement is not only a marker of individual satisfaction but also a strategic asset for organizations seeking to enhance productivity, innovation, and retention, especially within diverse and disability-inclusive work environments.

Empirical Review

A growing body of empirical evidence underscores the significant impact of inclusive human resource (HR) practices on employee engagement, organizational commitment, and overall workplace effectiveness. Historically, Shore et al. (2011) established that organizational inclusion contributes to greater employee well-being, reduced turnover intentions, and enhanced psychological safety. Kulkarni and Lengnick-Hall (2014) also demonstrated that inclusive recruitment strategies are positively associated with job satisfaction and retention, particularly for individuals from underrepresented or marginalized groups.

In the post-2020 era, the focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) has intensified, driven by global social movements, the COVID-19 pandemic, and increasing calls for corporate accountability. Contemporary research has provided more granular insights into how disability inclusion policies affect organizational outcomes. For example, Kaye et al. (2021) found that organizations with proactive disability-inclusive policies experienced improved team cohesion and employee engagement, especially when inclusive values were embedded in organizational culture and leadership practices.

Similarly, Robinson et al. (2021) emphasized the importance of inclusive leadership in cultivating an environment of trust and mutual respect, which significantly boosts engagement among employees with disabilities. Their findings suggest that the presence of psychological safety—created through fair HR practices and transparent communication—can mediate the relationship between inclusion and engagement.

Further, Kalargyrou et al. (2022), in a cross-industry study, observed that companies that made deliberate efforts to recruit, retain, and develop employees with disabilities reported higher levels of innovation, employee morale, and organizational resilience. Their study highlighted the importance of accessibility not just as a legal or ethical obligation but as a strategic business advantage.

Okechukwu and Mordi (2023), focusing specifically on Nigerian industries, found a statistically significant relationship between disability-inclusive recruitment practices and employee engagement metrics, such as job involvement, affective commitment, and productivity. Their study supports the argument that cultural and contextual adaptation of global HR inclusion frameworks enhances their effectiveness in emerging markets like Nigeria.

Moreover, inclusive HR practices such as bias-free recruitment, accessible onboarding processes, and inclusive training have been shown to reduce discrimination and create a

sense of belonging, which in turn fosters long-term engagement (Hirsch et al., 2021; Van der Walt & De Klerk, 2023).

Operational Framework

Accessible workplace environments are essential for fostering a culture of inclusion and equity, particularly for employees with disabilities. Workplace accessibility extends beyond mere physical accommodations to include digital infrastructure, flexible work arrangements, and communication tools that enable full participation by all employees. When accessibility is embedded into the organizational design, it promotes a sense of belonging and empowerment, which enhances employee engagement across all demographic groups (Kalargyrou et al., 2022; van der Walt & de Klerk, 2023).

Research indicates that accessible workspaces lead to higher levels of psychological safety, reduced work-related stress, and increased commitment among staff (Robinson et al., 2021). Moreover, when employees observe that their organization prioritizes inclusive practices, such as barrier-free workstations, accessible restrooms, and adaptive technologies, they tend to perceive the company as more socially responsible and ethical—factors strongly correlated with engagement and retention (Hirsch et al., 2021).

Lengnick-Hall et al. (2008) laid the groundwork by arguing that accessible environments enhance engagement, especially for underrepresented groups. Recent empirical studies have reaffirmed this linkage in both developed and developing contexts. For instance, Okechukwu and Mordi (2023) found that improved physical and digital accessibility in Nigerian oil and gas companies significantly increased job involvement and satisfaction among employees with disabilities.

Inclusive recruitment practices are a cornerstone of a robust disability inclusion strategy. These practices encompass a broad array of actions, including accessible job postings, adaptive interviewing procedures, inclusive onboarding processes, and the elimination of systemic biases in candidate evaluation. Sabharwal (2014) emphasized the role of fair recruitment in reinforcing organizational trust and improving morale.

More recent studies confirm that when organizations actively pursue equitable hiring, particularly for individuals with disabilities, it leads to higher engagement levels across the workforce—not just among those directly affected. Employees interpret inclusive hiring practices as evidence of ethical leadership and value-driven culture, which strengthens their organizational identification and emotional investment in their work (Kaye et al., 2021; Kalargyrou et al., 2022).

Van der Walt and de Klerk (2023) further suggest that inclusive recruitment serves as a key organizational resource in the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model, helping to buffer stressors while enhancing engagement and motivation. Okechukwu and Mordi (2023) observed that companies in Nigeria that implemented comprehensive disability-inclusive hiring frameworks experienced lower turnover rates and improved teamwork metrics. In light of the above discussion, the following hypotheses were formulated for empirical testing:

H01: There is no significant relationship between workplace accessibility and workplace engagement.

H02: There is no significant relationship between recruitment practices and workplace engagement.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a cross-sectional survey research design to obtain quantitative data at a single point in time. This approach was appropriate for identifying and analyzing the relationship between disability inclusion policies and workplace engagement among managerial personnel within oil and gas companies operating in Rivers State, Nigeria. The target population consisted of 295 registered oil and gas companies in Rivers State. From this population, a purposive sampling technique was used to select fifteen (15) oil and gas companies. The selection criteria included operational longevity (companies operating for at least ten years) and workforce size (minimum of 50 employees). These criteria were used to ensure that the selected organizations had established structures and sufficient staff to support the study's objectives. An accessible population of 159 senior managers across these selected companies was identified. Using Taro Yamane's formula (1967) at a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error, a statistically representative sample size of 114 was calculated. A simple random sampling technique was then employed to select respondents from the accessible population, ensuring that each eligible manager had an equal chance of being included in the study. Primary data were collected through the administration of structured, self-completion questionnaires delivered physically to the respondents. The questionnaire was systematically organized into four sections: demographic information, workplace accessibility, recruitment practices, and workplace engagement. All substantive items were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), to capture varying degrees of perception and experience. The collected data were coded and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Specifically, Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient was utilized to examine the strength and direction of the relationships between the independent variables (workplace accessibility and recruitment practices) and the dependent variable (workplace engagement). The statistical significance threshold was set at $p < 0.05$. Out of the 114 questionnaires distributed, 102 were returned and deemed valid for analysis, resulting in a response rate of 89.5%, which is considered robust for managerial-level surveys.

Table 1: Distribution of Population, Sample Size, and Valid Responses across Selected Oil and Gas Companies in Rivers State

S/N	Oil and Gas Companies	Population	Proportional Sample Size	Questionnaires Distributed (Valid Responses)
1	Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC)	14	10	9
2	Nigerian Agip Oil Company (NAOC)	13	9	8
3	TotalEnergies Nigeria	12	9	8
4	ExxonMobil Nigeria	11	8	7

S/N	Oil and Gas Companies	Population	Proportional Sample Size	Questionnaires Distributed (Valid Responses)
5	Chevron Nigeria Limited	14	10	9
6	Addax Petroleum Development (Nigeria) Ltd	10	7	6
7	Eroton Exploration & Production Company	10	7	6
8	Seplat Energy Plc	12	9	8
9	Aiteo Eastern Exploration and Production Co.	11	8	7
10	Waltersmith Petroman Oil Limited	9	6	5
11	Niger Delta Petroleum Resources (NDPR)	10	7	6
12	First Exploration & Petroleum Development Co.	13	9	8
13	Oriental Energy Resources Ltd	11	8	7
14	Belemaoil Producing Ltd	14	10	9
15	Green Energy International Ltd	15	11	10
Total		159	114	102

Source: Field Survey (2025); Sample size derived using Taro Yamane's Formula (1967) at a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error.

Data Analysis and Results

Test of Hypothesis 1

H01: There is no significant relationship between workplace accessibility and workplace engagement.

Correlation Result for Workplace Accessibility and Workplace Engagement.

		Workplace Accessibility	Workplace Engagement
Workplace Accessibility	Pearson Correlation	1	.400
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	102	102
Workplace Engagement	Pearson Correlation	.400	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	102	102

***Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).**

Source: SPSS 23.0 Data Output, 2025.

The correlation coefficient ($r = 0.400$) indicates a moderate positive relationship between workplace accessibility and workplace engagement. This means that as the level of workplace accessibility increases, the level of employee engagement also tends to increase. The direction of the relationship is positive, suggesting that efforts to make the workplace more accessible are associated with more engaged employees. The p-value = 0.000 is less

than the alpha level of 0.05, indicating that the result is statistically significant. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis (H_{01}) and accept the alternative hypothesis, which states that there is a significant relationship between workplace accessibility and workplace engagement. This result supports the theoretical proposition that workplace accommodations and inclusive infrastructure play a vital role in enhancing employee morale and engagement. These findings align with contemporary literature, which emphasizes the importance of accessibility in driving organizational commitment and productivity among employees, including those with disabilities (e.g., Shore et al., 2021; Wilson & Blackford, 2022).

Test of Hypothesis 2

H02: There is no significant relationship between recruitment practices and workplace engagement.

Correlation Result for Recruitment Practices and Workplace Engagement.

		Recruitment Practices	Workplace Engagement
Recruitment Practices	Pearson Correlation	1	.307
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.002
	N	102	102
Workplace Engagement	Pearson Correlation	.307	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	
	N	102	102

***Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).**

Source: SPSS 23.0 Data Output, 2025.

Hypothesis 2 (H_{02}) posited that there is no significant relationship between recruitment practices and workplace engagement. The results of the Pearson correlation analysis indicate a correlation coefficient (r) of 0.307 between recruitment practices and workplace engagement, with a significance level (p -value) of 0.002. Since the p -value is less than the conventional alpha level of 0.05, the result is statistically significant. This means we reject the null hypothesis (H_{02}) and accept the alternative hypothesis that a significant relationship exists between recruitment practices and workplace engagement among senior managers in oil and gas companies in Rivers State. The positive correlation coefficient of 0.307 suggests a moderate positive association, indicating that more inclusive and effective recruitment practices tend to be associated with higher levels of employee engagement. In practical terms, organizations that implement fair, accessible, and disability-inclusive recruitment strategies are likely to foster greater emotional and psychological investment from employees, leading to enhanced engagement. This finding aligns with existing literature emphasizing the role of inclusive recruitment as a key driver of employee morale, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment (Kim & Han, 2023; Singh & Point, 2020). It also underscores the importance of organizational efforts to design recruitment processes that minimize bias and barriers for persons with disabilities, thereby enhancing overall workplace engagement.

Discussion of Findings

The study sought to examine the relationships between disability inclusion policies—specifically workplace accessibility and recruitment practices—and workplace engagement

within oil and gas companies in Rivers State, Nigeria. The findings provide important insights into how these inclusion strategies influence employee engagement.

The first hypothesis tested whether workplace accessibility significantly relates to workplace engagement. The Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.400 indicates a moderate positive relationship between these variables, with a statistically significant p-value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$). This result demonstrates that improvements in workplace accessibility, such as the provision of physical accommodations and adaptive technologies, are associated with higher levels of employee engagement.

This finding corroborates the theoretical framework suggesting that accessible environments reduce barriers and foster a sense of belonging among employees, thus enhancing their emotional and psychological investment in their work (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Oliver, 1996). Practically, it confirms that oil and gas companies that prioritize accessible infrastructures create more inclusive climates that contribute to increased motivation, productivity, and organizational commitment. These findings are consistent with contemporary research emphasizing the positive impact of workplace accessibility on employee well-being and engagement (Shore et al., 2021; Wilson & Blackford, 2022).

The second hypothesis explored the relationship between recruitment practices and workplace engagement. The correlation coefficient of 0.307 reveals a moderate, positive, and statistically significant relationship ($p = 0.002$). This indicates that recruitment strategies characterized by fairness, inclusivity, and accessibility positively influence workplace engagement.

Inclusive recruitment practices send a strong organizational message about commitment to diversity and equity, fostering employee trust and satisfaction (Sabharwal, 2014). By implementing recruitment processes free from bias and tailored to accommodate individuals with disabilities, organizations not only widen their talent pool but also enhance employee morale and engagement (Kim & Han, 2023; Singh & Point, 2020). This finding underscores the critical role of equitable hiring procedures in cultivating a motivated workforce and aligns with the Job Demands-Resources model, which posits that organizational resources like inclusive recruitment promote engagement by supporting employees' needs (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).

Together, these findings affirm the positive influence of disability inclusion policies on workplace engagement. Oil and gas companies that invest in both accessible work environments and inclusive recruitment practices are better positioned to foster an engaged, productive, and committed workforce. This not only benefits employees with disabilities but also enhances overall organizational performance, echoing global calls for corporate social responsibility and inclusive human resource management.

CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that disability inclusion policies, specifically workplace accessibility and inclusive recruitment practices, have a significant positive relationship with workplace engagement among senior managers in oil and gas companies in Rivers State, Nigeria. The findings reveal that enhancing physical and technological accessibility,

alongside implementing equitable recruitment strategies, fosters greater employee emotional and psychological investment in their roles. These results underscore the critical importance of integrating disability-inclusive policies as part of strategic human resource management to promote a diverse, motivated, and productive workforce. Ultimately, oil and gas companies that prioritize inclusion are better equipped to improve employee satisfaction, organizational commitment, and overall performance, contributing positively to both corporate social responsibility goals and sustainable business success.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance disability inclusion and workplace engagement in oil and gas companies operating in Rivers State, Nigeria:

1. Enhance Physical and Technological Accessibility

Organizations should invest substantially in improving workplace accessibility by providing physical infrastructure such as ramps, elevators, accessible restrooms, and ergonomic workstations. In addition, adoption of assistive technologies and accessible digital platforms should be prioritized to accommodate employees with diverse disabilities. Regular accessibility audits can help identify and address barriers promptly (Wilson & Blackford, 2022).

2. Institutionalize Inclusive Recruitment Practices

Companies must develop and implement recruitment policies that explicitly promote inclusivity. This includes creating accessible job advertisements, training HR personnel on unconscious bias, ensuring interview environments are accessible, and applying equitable selection criteria. Recruitment should actively target qualified candidates with disabilities to promote workforce diversity (Mensah & Adjei-Bamfo, 2023).

3. Provide Disability Awareness and Inclusion Training

Continuous professional development programs should be organized to sensitize managers and employees about disability rights, inclusion practices, and the benefits of a diverse workforce. Such training fosters empathy, reduces stigma, and equips leaders to better support employees with disabilities (O'Leary & Legg, 2022).

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