Sensitizing and much more ‘to do list’ for the Indian corporates towards their Visually Impaired Employees for a Sustainable Employee Value Proposition (EVP)

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Abstract

**Purpose:** The Corporate human resources in India have a negligible attention towards the visually impaired employees. The aim is to find out the correlation between the sexual self-concept, body esteem and the psychological well-being that relates to job performance of the visually impaired employees. As this will enable the companies to enhance their Employee Value Proposition accordingly. The authors have explored other dimensions possible; apart from sensitization workshops that will create a high sustainable working environment.

**Methodology:** Full time 60 visually impaired from the service sector (namely banking, IT, hospitals, call centers, NGO and school staff) in India were considered for the study through the Mixed methods research where quantitative analysis has been done through purposive, convenience and snowball sampling. In addition, Qualitative analysis through Phenomenology method has been undertaken.

**Findings:** High correlation between the Sexual self-concept, body esteem and Psychological well-being in visually challenged people that directly relates to their job performance.

Supporting this is their verbatim that highlights the need for the companies to revamp their Employee Value Proposition.

**Practical Implications:** From the findings, there is an emerging need to create a diversity inclusive working culture and environment that will result in reviving Employee Value Proposition for Indian companies for the visually disabled.

**Social Implications:** The visually impaired will be better equipped to work if their companies take due diligence and care for their special needs to make the working environment and culture a Disability-Inclusive
Originality/Value: The paper attempts to study the Employee Value Proposition (EVP) for the visually challenged and suggests many means apart from sensitizing to make the working environment disability integrated.

Key words: Sexual Self-Concept, Self-Esteem and Psychological Well-being, visually impaired, Employee Value Proposition, sustainable workplace

Introduction:

India ranked as one of the largest number of blind people in the world in 2007 (Kounteya Sinha, 2007) with house to over 15 million blind out of the 37 million blind of the world. However, as per the World sight day report of 2017; the global number of visually impaired from infectious diseases have greatly reduced in the last 20 years.

India too has reduced the number of blind people to now 12 million (National Blindness Survey, 2017). This has been possible due to change in the definition of blindness from how it was defined earlier by India. This revised definition of blindness brings India in sync with the definition of the World Health Organization (WHO) that considers a person as blind when he/she is not able to count fingers from a distance of three metres as against India’s earlier definition of six metres.

Therefore, India can achieve the vision 2020 goal now that is planned to reduce the prevalence of blindness to 0.3% of the total population. (National program for control of blindness)

And reasons for visually impaired are typically from refractive errors, cataracts and glaucoma (World health organization)

The National Sample Survey of India (NSSO), The Indian Council of Medical Research and the National Sample Survey (1991) has established demographic pattern (Country profile) of persons with disabilities where they formed 1.9% of the Indian population. This population today is about 6% of the total Indian population (Department of Empowerment of persons with Disabilities). Moreover, in 1991; the visually impaired were only 7% population working as employees; a percentage that must have increased manifold times today. Therefore, this provides us with enough evidence that doing ample research to know more about the visually challenged employees, their challenges, concerns, work place hiccups and retaining them is the key need. Moreover, we agree with Dr. Rakhi Dandona who says, “Knowledge of the demographic associations for moderate visual impairment can help in identifying groups within the population who need particular attention in strategies to reduce this burden,” (Dr. Rakhi Dandona, 2004)

The research paper attempts in finding these key elements mentioned above of that of the visually handicapped by conducting interviews and face-to-face discussions with them. The study is to find out what the visually impaired people think about their own sexual self-concept, body esteem and psychological well-being and relates directly to their job performance.
Employee Value Proposition (EVP) means the total value that an employer offers to their employees in return of their work. (Talentlyft). This means that all the efforts put in by an employee towards the company must be exchanged with some perk or benefit by the employer. This could be in various ways; like the (i) Compensation (salary increments, bonuses and promotions) (ii) Benefits (leaves, insurance and disability benefits) (iii) Career (enhance qualifications, professional consultations, feedback etc.) (iv) Work Environment (positive work environment, healthy work-life balance, recognizing personal achievements etc.) and (v) Company Culture (team spirit, positive relationships and social responsibility) (Talentlyft).

Therefore, linking of job performance with the above (iv) and (v) factors that is the work culture and the work environment is the thrust area for our research. The paper delves upon the fact that in order to increase the job performance as well as retaining them will be of paramount importance for the companies and this is possible with the companies identifying ways and means to positively and suitably revisit the EVP and make necessary changes.

Experiencing emotional disturbances at work place by the visually challenged reduces mobility and presents them with fewer opportunities to learn social skills and so the companies need to act. The solution is not just the mundane sensitizing workshops that the companies run for their employees but much more pro-actively needs to be done in addition to the existing workshops. The paper reflects on creative and vivid suggestions for the companies to incorporate and try making the work environment an overall hub of organically diverse and full with loyal human assets that results in the overall growth and prosperity for both the employers as well as the employees.

**Literature Review:**

There has been enough research on the visually disabled people; however not much research is for them as ‘employees’ and facing challenges at work.

Our study aims at finding out what a visually impaired person perceives about his/her own sexual self-concept, body esteem and psychological well-being and if it relates to their job performance directly.

Alternatively, there are studies done in linking psychological well-being and self-esteem to job performance but the other two parameters body esteem and sexual self-concept is never been considered in the Indian context. According to one of the study, “the visually impaired adolescents scored significantly higher in various psychopathological symptoms as well as in their capacity for kind behavior.” (Garaigordobil & Bernarás, 2009)

Another study that is in the context of Spanish families of the blind, “the results reveal a positive correlation between subjective psychological well-being and self-esteem.” (Sola-Carmona, López-Liria, Padilla-Góngora, Daza, & Sánchez-Alcoba, 2013) Alternatively, the study by (Usman A, 2017) studies the “effect of Psychological well-being on employee job performance” and found a direct correlation between the two.
The extended research focus is to find out better ways of linking the visually impaired employees’ job performance to their Employee Value Proposition.

It is studied in many past researches; yet there is hardly any work done for reviving this EVP for the visually challenged. Usually, the companies prefer sensitizing workshops for the non-visually impaired employees but that is not enough. We agree with “there is limited understanding about their hoped outcomes, that is, increased knowledge about disability-related issues and behavioral changes with respect to those with a disability.” (Kulkarni, Gopakumar, & Patel, 2018)

Therefore, there is a huge scope for the companies to strategize and work out on many other initiatives for identifying and bringing out various ways to restructure the employee value proposition (EVP) of these visually handicapped employees. In structuring the employee value proposition, study done by (McLean-Conner, 2015) is appropriate as they have defined EVP as a “mix of characteristics, benefits and ways of working in an organization.

In another study on employee value proposition, an author (Reddy, 2017) has linked it to “morale booster” and further explains how an efficient EVP “stands out for a company and makes it unique to its competitors”. However, none of the past research links this EVP to their visually disabled employees. Thus, this research highlights that there is a need to revive the EVP in accordance with the needs of those with visually disability and tries to suggest various ways in which this can be achieved.

Accessibility to their visually impaired employees must be one of the most important goal for any company. In a paper by (Kishore & Raghunath, 2015); “the E-learning enables visually impaired students to learn the knowledge by accessing the e-content and work more independently with ease of access compared to traditional methods.” Similar suggestion with many improvisations that will suit the visually challenged employees is crux of this paper.

**Research Gap:** (Moreover, there is a very limited scholarly research attention provided to this.)

People with disability build on their inner selves strongly in order to focus on the worldly challenges that erupt and emerge every now and then in their daily lives. And the inner strength is based on one’s perception about oneself and therefore for a disabled person; their Sexual self-concept, body esteem and psychological wellbeing about themselves; become the most important ones. Therefore, we have studied these parameters of the visually impaired that gave a significant correlation and results in all the factors that lead to a good job performance. This typically would lead to their improved Employee Value Proposition. (Canadian Mental Health Association, BC division)
Negligible work is seen in the correlation of 3 variables namely Sexual Self Concept, Body Esteem and Psychological Well-Being of the visually impaired employees from India. Furthermore, there is hardly any study done linking these 3 variables to the job performance of the Visually impaired affecting their work culture and environment; that are the two of the most critical constructs of the Employee Value Proposition (EVP)

**Objectives:**

a) To find out the correlation between Sexual self-concept, body esteem and Psychological well-being of the visually impaired employees

b) To study ways to enhance the Employee Value Proposition for the Visually disabled

**Hypothesis:**

1.1.1. H1 - There will be a high correlation between sexual Self-concept and Body-esteem among visually impaired employees

1.1.2. H2 - There will be a high correlation between sexual Self-concept and Psychological Well-being among visually impaired employees

H3 - There will be a high correlation between Body-esteem and Psychological Well-being among visually impaired employees

**Methodology:**

60 full time employees from the service sector (namely banking, IT, hospitals, call centres, NGO and school staff) from India who were visually impaired were considered for this study. The participants in the
study were from the ages of 25 to 40 years. The data is obtained through the methods of purposive, convenience and snowball sampling (one individual led to another).

Majority of the participants approached via social media groups are full time employees of the various service sectors and are visually impaired. Their prior permission is for the study. Their doubts clarified before sending in the link to fill the form. Some of these participants forwarded the link to their contacts that fit the criteria of the study to increase maximum participation.

The participants includes both males and females (33 males and 27 females)

**Tools:**

- **Multidimensional Sexual self-concept (schema scale) [Snell et al (2001)]**

  “This has 100 items arranged in a format in which respondents answer. A 5-point Likert-type scale is used to collect data and is as follows:

  all characteristic of me (0), slightly characteristic of me (1), somewhat characteristic of me (2), moderately characteristic of me (3), and very characteristic of me (4). In order to create subscale scores (discussed below), the items on each subscale averaged. Higher scores thus correspond to greater amounts of the relevance tendency.”

  Reliability: .72 to .94 & Validity: content and Varimax rotation used.

- **The Body-Esteem Scale [Franzoï & Shields, 1984]**

  “The Body-Esteem Scale – Revised is a 35-item gender-specific multidimensional measure of body esteem for women (sexual attractiveness, weight concern, physical condition) and men (sexual attractiveness, upper body strength, physical condition). The Body Esteem Scale by Franzoi and Shields (1984) is a popular
scale. It has 35 items (such as "scent" or "nose") that need to be rated on a 5 point scale, ranging from strong negative feelings to strong positive feelings.”

Internal consistencies is .81 - .87 for male subscales and .78 - .87 for the female subscale.

The BES total score is correlated moderately with the total score of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE). There was a strong correlation between the BES and the Body Cathexis Scale.

• *Psychological Well-being index: [Ryff et al]*.

It is a 18 (short) item scale and measure six sub-facets of Psychological Well-being. Both the long and medium forms “consist of a series of statements reflecting the six areas of psychological well-being: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. Respondents rate statements on a scale of 1 to 6, with 1 indicating strong disagreement and 6 indicating strong agreement.”

Responses are totalled for each of the six categories. For each category, a high score indicates that the respondent has a mastery of that area in his or her life. Conversely, a low score shows that the respondent struggles to feel comfortable with that particular concept.”

The test-retest reliability coefficient of RPWBS was 0.82. Construct (predictive) validity was found to be high and examined against a measure of mental health recorded one year later.(> .80)

Need for translation:

The samples were collected from 3 Indian major cities specializing in the services namely Mumbai (Banking), Pune (Higher Education) and Bangalore (IT enabled Services) As the scale had few sentences
that were difficult for the visually impaired to understand there was a need to translate the scales to their regional languages and the questionnaire designed was screen reading software enabled

VARIABLES: The three variables of this study were

1. V1 Sexual Self-Concept: this is the score obtained on the MSSCQ. Higher the score more positive is the self-concept related to sexuality in the group studied.

2. V2 Body Esteem: Franzoi and Sheilds calculated this from the Body Esteem scale. A high score indicated higher and well-adjusted body esteem.

3. V3 Psychological Well-Being: the PWB Index will obtain this score. Higher the score more is the optimistic perspective towards one’s life and thus higher is one’s well-being.

Confounding Variables:

1. Degree of Impairment in the eyes.

2. Causes and years since the disability occurred.

RESEARCH DESIGN: Pearson’s method of correlation done to study the nature of interaction between these Independent variables.

Procedure:

The first section required them to fill in their basic demographic details. The next three sections dealt with the questionnaires pertaining to Sexual Self-Concept, Body Esteem and Psychological Well-Being. The instructions for the questionnaires were self-explanatory and given at the beginning of each section. However, the participants were encouraged to contact the researcher and ask for clarifications required if any. Permission was taken beforehand for them to be contacted in case of any follow up questions regarding the data filled or otherwise.
Once the data received, scores taken from the forms submitted by each participant.

Statistical analysis: To check the statistical significance in the interactions between the variables V1, V2 and V3 by calculating the Pearson’s correlation coefficient.

**Ethical Considerations:**

1. **Confidentiality**
   
The researcher kept confidentiality throughout the study and thereafter.

2. **Informed consent**
   
The participants were convinced of the fact that the survey has been for research purpose.

3. **Right to withdraw**
   
The participants were free to take a break of 15 minutes in between; while filling the questionnaire

**Data Analysis & Interpretation**

This study is to determine the relationships between the three variables, i.e. Sexual Self-concept, Body esteem and Psychological Well-being with each other.

The Hypothesis H1 was tested:

There is a significant correlation between sexual self-concept and body esteem among employees with visual impairment.

Table 4.1

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable A</th>
<th>Variable B</th>
<th>Correlation coefficient</th>
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Thus the Hypothesis H1 is accepted as there is a significant correlation seen between Sexual self-concept and Body esteem. These variables have the highest correlation coefficient amongst the three variables tested. Also the correlation was of a positive value, thus if one possesses a higher level of body esteem they might also possess a higher level of Sexual self-concept.

The result thus helps establish a positive relationship between sexual aspect and perception of their body which can be considered inter knitted in a sense and thus cannot be seen in different paradigms.

The hypothesis H2 was tested:

There has been a significant correlation between Sexual Self-concept and Psychological Well-being among employees with visual impairment.
Thus the Hypothesis H2 is accepted as there is a significant correlation seen between Sexual self-concept and Psychological Well-being. The correlation coefficient between Variable A & C has come out to be 0.34, which is slightly less than the correlation coefficient of variables A & B. The correlation was positive in nature, thus it suggests that if one possesses a higher level of sexual self-concept they will also possesses a higher Psychological Well-being.

The hypothesis H3 was tested:

Table 4.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable A</th>
<th>Variable C</th>
<th>Correlation coefficient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Body Esteem</td>
<td>Psychological Well-being</td>
<td>0.277*</td>
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*p>0.05

The correlation coefficient for Variables B & C was 0.277, which is positive and significant at 0.05 level. Thus the Hypothesis H3 is accepted as there is a significant correlation seen between Body Esteem and Psychological Well-being. Even though the correlation coefficient for Variables B & C came out to be slightly lower than the previous correlational coefficients, yet it is significant at 0.05 level.
This high correlation between the above three attributes in visually disabled employees that emerges from our data gets doubly authenticated through our collection of the brief interview with them; where they shared their work experiences and their take on the challenges at work faced by them. This also big time reflects on how they would want their company seriously to review their Employee Value Proposition (EVP)

We get this from Phenomenology method (qualitative research) where all the 60 visually impaired narrated experiences related to their work environment and work culture that are key components of Employee Value Proposition.

“There is a direct effect on the job performance of employees based on their psychological well-being” (Usman Alvi, 2017)

When asked about her work culture, Anita Singh (aged 30, banker) replies, “All is great here. I am very happy with the bank’s HR department as they not only provide me with challenging role but also encourage me to walk that extra mile and when I do that; they recognize me and get me applauded from the entire team. On few occasions, they have also issued a ‘certificate of appreciation’ too that boosts my confidence further and results in my improved job performance.”

Another employee Kapil Kaushal (aged 36, Hospital staff) remarks, “I was recently told by my hospital to better my performance but when I asked them to guide on how should I go about the same, they had no clue. So, I discussed in details with them about my visual challenges and to my surprise, they took extra efforts to solve them. As a result, I feel uplifted and ‘visually rehabilitated’. I am super excited to up my performance soon.”
“There is a direct effect on the job performance of employees based on their body esteem” (Cynthia Bulik)

Bank employee Narayan Raj (aged 32) told us, “I recently felt humiliated when my Team leader pointed towards me while explaining a distorted figure. I decided to take it up with the HR who not only expelled him but made it a point to sensitize others on my issue. This incident did lower my body esteem and reflected on my job performance but I could overcome it only because of my HR team’s constant support and encouragement.”

Vivek Mane, another visually impaired employee (aged 27, school staff) shared, “My performance goes unnoticed as I am not treated as an employee but more as a sorry figure. I am made uncomfortable on many occasions throughout the day but what to do, I stay silent and continue my work as I am the only bread earner of the family.”

We met another visually impaired school teacher Vandana Sood (aged 38) who told us, “I am not happy and content working here as my school management does not provide equal opportunities to me for growing as they provide opportunities to my other colleagues. I often tell them that including me in their Diversity basket is the solution and not differentiating me.”

These are just a few employees concerns we share but there are many more visually impaired employees across India who are subjected to daily humiliation and discomfort that may tend them to have a negative opinion about their body esteem and lack good performance.

Riyaz Iqbal (aged 24) is a bank employee who replies about his work culture, “Great! As they take care of my conveyance and drop me home even when I work overtime. “He stays 30 kilometers away (one way)
from his bank and is the sole earner in the family of ten. We further probe him and ask whether he is happy with the company and he replies, “Oh Yes! I love coming here for work as the staff is cordial and caring. They do not differentiate me as someone who is not amongst them. We have fun working together.” And when questioned about anything he needs to ensure his work better, he is quick to say, “Get me some Magnifying glass as at times, I find it difficult to read the balance sheet figures.”

Babita Kumari (aged 30), a school staff answered about the major problem faced by her, “I have a request to make my school principal about sensitizing our students about my disability as often they make fun of me. Also, I need some extra buffer time in reporting to school as I stay very far and got to walk very carefully and this slows down my speed.”

Kirti Athle (aged 25) a banker replies candidly, “ I am good. Thanks. All well except that my bank must review my EVP for me as I am exhibiting a great performance year on year but not getting due recognition of this fact and this is making me demotivated and low self-esteem.”

Mihir Gautam (aged 27) who works in the IT service sector spoke to us, “I am skeptical of continuing here as the company does not care for people like me. Forget about recognizing us, they don’t even take cognizance of the fact that we have our own set of challenges like E-content that does not have text conversions for the graphics and flashes, software like JAWS, Voice over, Google eyes etc that I have been demanding for the past 2 years now is still not done. And each time, I go to the HR to know the reason, they rudely tell me that they don’t have the budget for this.”

Tarun Ganesh (aged 28) is a BPO Call center employee says, “I enjoy the company of my colleagues as they don’t make me feel different and it is they who treat me as a part of their big organic diverse group
that we are. Out of a team of 51 employees, 20 are females, 31 males, 15 are white, 36 are black and I am one of them with a huge spectacle, he chucks.”

**Sandhya Gupta (aged 33) who works at an NGO**, shared with us, “Recently, I was the center of attraction when our NGO had a Bollywood personality for Christmas celebrations. The star immediately read my discomfort through my body language and told me that I am special to which I replied that not really, as am as simple as you. Listening this reply, my NGO Head supported and all clapped for me. I truly felt that I am one amongst them.

**Parikshit Sinha, an IT Employee (aged 30)** told us, “ It will be good if our company keeps the training modes more experiential as otherwise it gets very difficult for us to concentrate on the screen for a very long time.”

**Anamika Tiwari (aged 29) a BPO Call centre employee** said, “ Recently I overheard my HR team saying that they get referral emails for hiring disabled people but we are not sure about the detailed policies; to which I felt like telling them, to go and get updated. This will make someone’s life.”

Many other employees have echoed similar sentiments where it is a clear message for the companies who are not yet in sync with their visually impaired employees and need to do a lot more to have a suitable structure for them in place. This will not only improve the employees’ job performance but will also help the companies create a better EVP for them.

Overall, this would result in a better sustainable work culture and environment.

**There is a direct effect on the job performance of employees based on their sexual self-concept** could not be found out from our data collection nor from the literature review.
Findings & Discussions

Findings show three things clearly. Firstly, there is a direct correlation between sexual self-concept, body esteem and the psychological well-being of those who are visually challenged employees. Secondly, they are quite confident, good attitude and have a positive mindset towards their job, just as any other normal employee that is quite evident from all the verbatim that we received. Lastly, there is a lot of scope of improvement for companies towards these employees and therefore to work out on a more comprehensive EVP suiting their talent and contributions to the company.

Companies must consider the disabled employees as a part of the Organic Diversity, rather than categorizing them as someone who are less abled. As one of the employee remarks that they are to be included in diversity and not differentiated.

Based on the analysis of the phenomenology method; and the research work carried out by us, we propose that these service sectors must incorporate the following changes; apart from their Sensitizing workshops to bring in a sustainable work culture and work environment:

a) Changing vision towards the disabled employees by way of creating a place for them under the umbrella of Organic Diversity; just as we do for Gender, Race etc. (Lesa Bradshaw, 2017)

b) Vision Rehabilitation: This means installation of screen reading software like JAWS, Non-visual desktop access, Window eyes, Voice over, Web anywhere etc.

Secondly, the E-Content to be enabled to these assistive software. For example, certain graphics, pop-ups, converting flash messages to texts for them to be able to read. They must also carry out website accessibility audits on a regular basis. Next, there must be visual aids provided to them like Electronic magnifiers, ZoomX etc.
c) Carrying out regular Accessibility Audits related to specific infra needed for the visually impaired. For example- creation of walking ramps and railings, accessible toilets, tactile floorings etc.

d) Corporates should not set very low benchmarks of expectations with their disability staff because when this is done; one does not see the value such an employee has added to the organization.

e) The HR (Human Resource) of an organization must equip themselves with a thorough understanding of ‘disability’ through an experiential learning program rather than just attending a sensitizing workshop.

f) The other employees must be trained on the basic etiquettes on how to greet, meet, talk and work with their challenged employees.

g) Indian government’s ‘Digital India Movement’ also is paving the way for inclusion of the visually impaired (TBI Blogs, Better India; 2017)

“Access to assistive technology-enabled devices and the internet makes it possible for blind people to function independently and avail various services on their own. It also opens up a huge arena of employment opportunities for them. With voice-over-enabled smart phones (seeing AI app), screen reader-compatible computers, audio books, etc., blind people find themselves capable of coping with sighted peers. Several accessible apps are making lives easier for blind people. For instance, the Uber app enables a blind person to a cab. The Paytm app allows him/her to make the payment to the Uber cab driver, or any other vendor who accepts digital payments.”

The corporates need to follow similar initiatives to streamline the work environment and make these employees at ease and comfortable. ICICI Bank for example has a net banking app that
allows blind people to access internet banking on their phones or computers. Therefore, the corporates need to provide such facilities to their blind employees.

All of these suggested above would result in a high investment. Yet this is justified because as per the statistics; 20% of employees have turned disabled at a later stage and so this can happen to any of the employees in the future. Thus if the company invests in their employees; in future will reap the capital gains as well as get loyal human asset. (Lesa Bradshaw, 2017)

**Limitations & Future Scope for Research:**

Every research has certain limitations and so has ours. We may have taken a restricted sample size and focus on just service sector from India. Yet from these limitations; there is a scope for further research opportunities.

The authors have limited their research mainly on the two key factors under the EVP; namely the Work Environment and the Work Culture and have left out the other three components namely Compensation, Benefits and Career, as this did not come under their focus of research.

Secondly, the disability undertaken for the study has been the ‘Visually Impaired’ and therefore this research can be extended to various other categories of disabilities.

**Conclusion:**

Our study has added to our knowledge that just sensitizing the workplace will not be enough and so the corporates need to incorporate vivid ways of engaging the employees in a diversity inclusive way where the visually disabled employees also be considered as one big part of this diverse work culture.

In our limited capacity, we have attempted to suggest various ways in which companies can revamp their Employee Value Proposition (EVP) towards their visually disabled employees.
They must also consider adapting to changing work environment to suit the needs of these visually challenged employees to be able to work stress free and with increased passion and confidence as this will not just increase their work performance; but also boost companies’ growth.

Companies largely can gain access to budgets for improving the working environment for these visually handicapped from their CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) budget as recognizing their internal employees ‘special needs’ also will gain them in good lens.

Finally, this research adopted mixed methods, as this was the requirement of the research undertaken.

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