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Changing the Paradigm of Inclusion: How Blind People Could Help People without Disabilities to Acquire New Competences

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ABSTRACT

People with disabilities have been increasingly regarded as the most powerful and overlooked workforce in the labor market, although frequently confronted with ineffectiveness in cooperation with colleagues without disabilities. The traditional paradigm of inclusion considers blind people as dependents needing help. Inclusive society is highly aimed at effective interactions between the workforce with and without disabilities. The present article regards people with disabilities as those having diverse potentials, which stem from different cultural backgrounds, and behaving differently during intercultural interactions with individuals without disabilities. This article proposes a new disability inclusion paradigm involving successful blind professionals in mentoring activities, to share their experience with top managers and experts in Russian organizations. Through focus groups and in-depth interviews, this article finds specific differences in explicit and implicit interactive behaviors between individuals with and without blindness.

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Furthermore, the present article highlights the positive effect of a disability inclusion paradigm on cultural intelligence development of organizational managers and experts.

KEYWORDS

blind person's competence, paradigm of disability inclusion, mentoring and mentorship, cultural intelligence, intercultural interaction

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Introduction

In an unstable social and market environment, diversity management in an organization has become one of the most pressing problems. In particular, the question arises of how to ensure the effective functioning of organizations where the workforce is diverse in terms of language, well-being level, and work experience. In turn, these differences can lead to misunderstandings and even conflicts in interactions between employees, managers and subordinates. One of the manifestations of diversity is inclusion as a way of involving people with disabilities in a work team (Alexandra et al., 2021; Sherbin & Rashid, 2017). Diversity equals representation, while inclusion integrates diverse potentials, encourages their participation, and fosters the competitive edge of diversity (Sherbin & Rashid, 2017). Inclusion involves group members' high-level sense of belonging and own value of uniqueness in the organization (Afsar et al., 2021; Shore et al., 2011). Yet, as a nascent issue, an inclusion paradigm of social minorities in the workplace has been scarcely pictured (Brimhall et al., 2017).

Inclusion of disability in the workplace has been growingly addressed by government policies and organizational initiatives in the last decade (Swain et al., 2013). It has become a vigorous imperative for organizations to initiate effective disability inclusion programs to realize a win-win solution. Not only could organizations fulfill productive and competitive diversity, but also people with disabilities (PWDs) become equally recognized and appreciated for their potentials.

According to the World Report on Disability (2011), over 15% of global populations live with disability. Working-age persons with disabilities are an untapped workforce. For the last decade, PWDs have been treated as dependents needing assistance (Bualar, 2014). The traditional practice of including people with disabilities is based on a paternalistic paradigm. We understand the paternalistic paradigm as a model of attitude towards a person who is incapable of independent existence and self-development and therefore needs protection, care, and control.

However, PWDs possess unique potentials. Adjustment to disabilities is not a mysterious or trouble-free process; it demands extraordinary adaptive and interactive abilities for PWDs to obtain a significant level of success. Extant studies have highlighted that PWDs facilitate improved productivity and economic benefits

in organizations despite the expense of accommodation (Solovieva et al., 2011). Managers without related experience feel hard to recognize specific potentials of PWDs and establish the compelling strategies for disability inclusion in workplaces (Baldrige et al., 2015; Bonaccio et al., 2020). One of the ways to effectively include employees with disabilities is to involve them in mentoring activities. This new role of a mentor will allow an employee with disabilities to get out of the relationship of paternalism and become a leader and role model for their colleagues.

Because of differentiated experience, education and norms, PWDs and people without disabilities could be recognized as two social groups that possess respective cultural traits (Wilson et al., 2017). The group of PWDs co-constructs their commonly shared social knowledge, cultural identities, and group affiliation. In addition, these two groups structure their own in-group favoritism and stay stable to a certain degree (Efferson et al., 2008). Disability inclusion may lead to adjustment issues for both PWDs and individuals without disabilities, which is similar with what expatriates face in cross-cultural contexts. Therefore, disability inclusion in workplaces requires from employees the use of cultural intelligence (cultural quotient or CQ); this refers to the competence to function and interact successfully in culturally diverse contexts (Earley & Ang, 2003), and is cited as a vital competitive element of top managers (Dogra & Dixit, 2019). A recent study has highlighted that benign inclusion and intercultural interactions are related to individuals' CQ development (Alexandra et al., 2021).

Our idea is to abandon the paradigm of paternalistic attitudes towards inclusion. This study aims to describe the phenomenon of inclusion as a constructive intercultural interaction between people with blindness and people without disabilities. As participants of such interaction, people with disabilities:

- a) carry differ cultural traits;
- b) behave differently when interacting with non-disabled colleagues;
- c) enhance organization's competitive advantages by their activities; and
- d) help employees and managers learn new competencies, such as attention to weak signals, openness to new experiences, and the ability to interact with people from a different culture.

Thus, this article proposes a new role for people with disabilities in Russian organizations. Successful blind people act as mentors and share their unique knowledge with top managers and the talent pool. Specifically, blind mentors train non-blind peers to acquire the practices used by blind people, and therefore to identify cross-cultural differences in interactive behavior between blind people and their non-disabled colleagues. In this article, we show that mentors with disabilities help leaders and experts to develop managerial competences more successfully.

Disability Inclusion Strategy: Involving PWDs in Mentoring Activity

Building on existing literature, disability is interpreted more as a social and cultural phenomenon than purely an individual pathological phenomenon. The World Report on Disability (2011) defines disability as the impairments, limitations and restrictions that a person faces in the course of interacting with their environment—physical, social, or attitudinal. The social model towards disability, which developed in the early 1970s,

has posited disability as a socially-created product rather than individual failings (Barnes, 2019; Harpur, 2012). In view of the social model, a social-oppression model underlined that disability is socially-construed unfair treatment towards people with disabilities (Swain et al., 2013). Disability inclusion has been advocated there from (Vornholt et al., 2018). Accordingly, there had been an increase in the employment of PWDs in the workplace.

Nevertheless, the improved employment quota is not sufficient to reap the benefit of well-qualified disability inclusion. As it has already been indicated, disability inclusion should consist of three elements: (a) involvement in activities, (b) maintaining reciprocal relationships, and (c) sense of belonging (Hall, 2009). The majority of disability inclusion paradigms applied by organizations only expect the involvement of PWDs in the organizations. Scarce attention has been paid to establishing reciprocal relationships, raising the sense of belonging for PWDs, and involving PWDs in managerial decision-making. Furthermore, unique competences of PWDs as well as the effective collaboration between PWDs with colleagues without disabilities, have been underestimated in the traditional paternalistic disability inclusion paradigm.

To go further, it demands a transformative disability inclusion paradigm. There are several issues of the traditional disability inclusion paradigm, which have been increasingly addressed in the last five years.

On the one hand, PWDs barely perceive their own sense of belonging and uniqueness (Purc-Stephenson et al., 2017). It is ubiquitous that in spite of being employed, PWDs still confront stigma and distrust of their competences (Baldrige et al., 2015). The image of PWDs as constant dependents has somehow been the norm (Bualar, 2014). What is worse, occasionally PWDs have been employed only for special human resource quota, but not expected to perform productively and benefit the organization. PWDs are struggling to prove they are a competent and reliable workforce (Purc-Stephenson et al., 2017). In addition, few extant studies reveal the phenomenon of “false admiration”, which refers to the condition that disabled professionals are praised for the routine tasks of their jobs, just because they live with disabilities (Dorfman, 2016). These explicit and implicit unfair treatments towards PWDs served as unspoken barriers, which countered the effective disability inclusion. Accordingly, it is vital for the transformative disability inclusion paradigm to exert uniqueness of PWDs, weighing squarely with the contribution of PWDs to organizations, and discover competitive performance from productive intercultural cooperation between PWDs and their colleagues without disabilities (Romani et al., 2019). In particular, for blind people, extraordinary abilities have been developed to successfully adjust to blindness physically, attitudinally, and socially. This uniqueness of a blind workforce and its effect on an organization are encouraged and need to be highlighted in a disability inclusion paradigm.

Though the majority of top managers hold prospective attitudes to the inclusion of blind people, above half (54.5%) of managers and experts in organizations are lacking the specific knowledge of a workforce with disabilities and the interactive experience with this group of employees (Onabolu et al., 2018). Without previous knowledge and interactive experience, managers and professionals find it hard to

value the competence of PWDs and fail to set effective inclusion strategies. Pertaining to difficulties confronted by managers and professionals, this article shows that they could be realized by involving successful PWDs in a mentoring role. Few studies have involved successful blind people in managerial activity and highlighted the significant role of successful blind mentors for career development of youths with disabilities (Silverman & Bell, 2020). Successful blind people should be allowed and encouraged to assist top managers and professionals with developing a productive disability inclusion paradigm. What's more, the extraordinary talent of mentors may enable managers to acquire competitive managerial abilities through this effective interaction.

Based on these theoretical assumptions, we propose to consider how successful blind people can be involved in mentoring activities in organizations, and to investigate the positive impact of such mentoring on the cross-cultural communication skills of top managers and professionals.

Extraordinary Competences and Interactive Behaviors of PWDs

In order to interconnect with their environment, blind people need adaptive and interactive skills and competences.

Firstly, it is necessary but complicated for blind people to embrace the external environment (Hehir et al., 2015; Zaborowski, 1997). Through this struggle, blind people gradually form their own sets of strategies to accept differences and adapt to dynamic contexts. Blind individuals have an ability to adapt to differences and variations, which is an ability that is essential for top managers who are open to diversity and ready for change management (Richard et al., 2019).

Secondly, numerous studies have highlighted that people with blindness possess extraordinary tactile and auditory perception skills and cognitive capacities including memory and language as a result of functional sensory rehabilitation and adaptive neuroplastic changes of the brain (Föcker et al., 2012). Simultaneously, extant studies show that blind people have an increased social awareness in order to interact properly with individuals around them (Halperin et al., 2016; Oleszkiewicz, 2021). Given the dynamic environment, acute sensory sensitivity towards weak external informative signals is critical for top managers and professionals, which contributes to their managerial activities such as adapting to changing conditions, interacting with a diverse number of employees, situational awareness processing, and structural planning (Petrie & Swanson, 2018). Hence, it is reasonable to envisage that the involvement of successful blind people in mentoring activities will facilitate new interactive behaviors, all of which will inevitably benefit diversity management skills.

Thirdly, successful blind people have a high level of ambiguity tolerance. Ambiguity tolerance refers to the way an individual or group perceives and processes information about ambiguous situations or stimuli when confronted with an array of unfamiliar, complex, or incongruent messages. Ambiguity tolerance has been cited as a crucial quality for leadership, business planning and managerial skills (McLain et al., 2015; Pathak et al., 2009). In particular, ambiguity tolerance is positively related to performance in the global workplace and cross-cultural settings (Herman et al., 2010).

Based on these extraordinary competences, people with blindness are believed to use different interaction modes compared to colleagues without blindness during any cooperation. Extant literature has pointed out that individual differences could shape the specific cooperation signals (LePine & Van Dyne, 2001). Hence, the response to signals received by individuals with and without blindness to any current situation will differ during their cooperation.

Thus, the first hypothesis that this study is going to address is as follows.

- H1: There exist distinct interactive behaviors during cooperation between individuals with blindness and individuals without disabilities.

It is reasonable to believe that individuals with blindness are more sensitive to weak interactive signals than individuals without blindness and establish implicit interactive frameworks with considerable differences. This leads us to our second hypothesis, which is as follows.

- H2: There is a qualitative difference in the response to weak interactive signals between individuals with blindness and individuals without disabilities during any cooperation.

Inclusion Paradigm and Cultural Intelligence Development

Cultural intelligence (CQ) enables the capability to identify and appreciate cultural differences, to function and interact successfully in culturally diverse contexts (Earley & Mosakowski, 2004). It allows a person to open up to diversity and helps them improve their intercultural communication skills (Kadam et al., 2021; Min et al., 2020). CQ has been considered as an indispensable quality of managers and experts in the current environment (Dogra & Dixit, 2019).

Thomas and colleagues (2012) defined that CQ consists of three aspects such as cultural knowledge, cross-cultural skills, and meta-cognition CQ. This article adopts its most popular multidimensional structure comprising four aspects of CQ: (a) meta-cognitive CQ (awareness and understanding of cultural diversity and regulation of cultural knowledge); (b) cognitive CQ (cultural knowledge); (c) motivational CQ (drive and efficacy to engagement in culturally diverse contexts); and (d) behavioral CQ (appropriate verbal and non-verbal behaviors in culturally diverse contexts) (Ang et al., 2007; Earley & Ang, 2003; Earley & Mosakowski, 2004). It has been postulated that metacognitive CQ as well as behavioral CQ are crucial for intercultural competency (Rose et al., 2010; Van der Horst & Albertyn, 2018). Moreover, evidence shows that meta-cognitive and motivational CQ shape behavioral CQ (Gooden et al., 2017).

It has been identified that individual CQ could be enriched by involving participants from different cultures in collaborative activities (Alexandra et al., 2021). Apart from it, improved CQ from one cross-cultural context is going to be consistent with other intercultural situations. As it has been described in this article, interactions between PWDs and people without disabilities resemble intercultural interactivity. Thus, blind mentors' interactions with sighted mentees, may mentees' CQ. Building on it, this article poses hypothesis H3.

- H3: The inclusion paradigm to involve successful blind individuals as mentors in organizations, which encourages the development of managers' and experts' CQ.

Method

Qualitative Research Design

In order to examine the hypotheses, this study attempts to inquire into and compare interactive signals respectively applied by the workforce with and without blindness when engaged in productive cooperation. The qualitative research design was selected because it allows studying complex objects and approaching it from different angles (Rahman, 2017), and therefore in our study it has an advantage over the quantitative method. The study also includes various in-depth vignettes such as individuals' feelings, views, experiences, and related behaviors. For those reasons, focus groups and in-depth interviews have been elected as means of verification.

Focus groups have several advantages. Firstly, they enable participants to discuss perceptions, thoughts, opinions and feelings (Krueger & Casey, 2000). Secondly, they involve interactions which yield more open and honest views (Morgan, 1997; Tharbe et al., 2020; Wilkinson, 1998). Thirdly, focus groups serve as a suitable method to explore newly emerging research questions (Wilkinson, 1998). Thereby, in order to reach our target groups and collect as much information and details as possible, this study methodologically relies on the methods of focus groups and in-depth interviews with both mentors and mentees.

Participants and Procedures

Focus groups are typically formed of eight to ten participants so as to achieve productive feedback (Wilkinson, 1998). In this study, the first focus group was conducted among 10 employees with visual deficits (5 female, 5 male) from Russian organizations, such as schools, institutes, companies, and social organizations. They were aged from 35 to 52 years old. These participants included Russians and Kazakhs; all were Russian speakers. All of them had a higher education and had more than 5 years of experience of working with colleagues without disabilities. The second focus group was carried out among 8 managers and experts (4 female, 4 male) from Russian organizations, which hire employees both with and without blindness. These organizations included companies, institutes, and social enterprises such as libraries, art galleries and factories, travel agencies and institutes. The proportion of employees with and without disabilities in their organizations equaled 1:1. Managers and experts were from 38 to 56 years old. All of them were Russian with a higher education and had more than 5 years of managerial experience with a blind workforce. All of these directors have directly interacted with their subordinates with visual impairments.

The in-depth interviews have been conducted with 5 highly competent blind experts (3 male, 2 female) as mentors and their 8 mentees (4 male, 4 female) without disabilities. All mentors and mentees were from 35- to 57-year-old. All of them have higher education. All blind mentors work in social enterprises or government offices as directors or consultants in handling inclusion of disabilities. They are equipped with sufficient inclusion work experience. And 8 mentees work at Russian public or private companies as managers. They had more than 10 years of work experience

and work as middle or senior managers. Thus, each of them has an experience to be either a blind mentor or a mentee of a blind mentor. Blind mentors delivered several workshops to teach mentees to focus on non-visual environmental signals and to interact with blind colleagues more effectively. Besides, all mentees are interested in disability inclusion and participation in the mentoring.

All focus groups and interviews were conducted in Russian via Zoom¹. First, the host explained to participants the objective of the focus group. Then, to motivate participants to be more open, the host briefly outlined the successful work experience of participants at their companies and invited them to share their opinions concerning inclusive interaction. Participants were asked to answer the host's questions one by one. They were invited to be open and honest also adding to other participant's opinion what they might like to add. At the same time, they were asked not to correct other participants and argue with them. All these mandates were needed to provide a comfortable environment, on the one hand, and focus on details, on the other hand.

These three online meetings were conducted separately and with three non-overlapping groups of participants. The focus groups were carried out in December, 2020 and with 15-day intervals between them. Each focus group lasted around 2 hours.

The first focus group with a blind workforce covered 2 questions:

Remember the situations when you started to cooperate with a co-worker without a disability. Maybe, you interacted with him/her to solve a common task or to accomplish projects together. To do this, you should build productive cooperation. Please, finish the following statements:

- a) *"To support productive interaction with a co-worker without disabilities, I behave as follows."*
- b) *"To support productive interaction with me, my co-worker without disabilities usually behaves as follows."*

The second focus group with organizational managers and experts involved 3 structural questions.

- a) *"Characterize the behaviors demonstrated by employees in their interactions with their blind colleagues during their cooperation in your organizations."*
- b) *"Name the criteria of effective intercultural cooperation between blind employees and employees without disabilities."*
- c) *"Describe the benefits obtained from the cooperation with blind individuals in your organization."*

Each in-depth interview with mentors or mentees lasted around 1 hour. The same 2 questions were addressed to participants of the first focus group and to blind mentors during the in-depth interviews to analyze their managerial and mentoring experiences with mentees. In-depth interviews were conducted in May, 2021.

Moreover, 2 additional questions are asked to mentored managers and experts in the course of in-depth interviews.

- a) *"Characterize interactive behaviors during mentoring activities with blind mentors."*

¹ Zoom is a trademark of Zoom Video Communications, Inc.

- b) *“Describe benefits which were obtained from the mentoring activities with blind mentors.”*

All focus groups and in-depth interviews data were recorded, then collected and analyzed.

Results

The information collected from two focus groups and in-depth interviews has been analyzed. We gathered all the participant's responses given by employees with and without disabilities, in order to facilitate effective intercultural interaction. According to the differences in visual and verbal explicitness of signals during the interaction, individual interactive behaviors have been labeled in two separate categories, such as strong signals and weak signals. The strong-signal interactive behaviors use interactive strategies which are more interpersonal, and visual or verbally recognized, while weak-signal interactive behaviors are more implicit. In addition, based on the three-factor model of intercultural effectiveness posed by Hammer, Gudykunst, and Wiseman (1978), both strong interactive signals and weak interactive signals are categorized into three aspects:

- a) related to mental adjustment or emotion;
- b) related to communication; and
- c) related to interpersonal relationships.

Finally, three categories of interactive behaviors are respectively listed as strong-signal and weak-signal interactions, such as emotion and mental aspects (2 items), interpersonal relation (2 items), and communication (4 items).

For example, pertaining to strong-signal emotional and mental facets during intercultural interaction, blind employees mostly do not correct their partner's error explicitly, while employees without disabilities prefer to mention it immediately to improve the effectiveness of intercultural interaction. And, both groups of employees express positive emotions such as friendliness and warmth, with smiles and so on, to promote effective interaction. When it comes to strong-signal interpersonal relations, blind employees would rely on their co-workers to complete the task more efficiently. While employees without disabilities hardly ever depend on their employees with disabilities and got used to the paternalistic interaction in daily work. As for weak-signal interactive facets, compared with employees without disabilities, blind employees were afraid to show their weakness all the time and had higher stress or weakness during handling tasks. Blind employees prefer to feel their uniqueness rather than PWDs inclusion in comparison to employees without disabilities.

The data were then estimated by applying the content-analysis approach. The analysis of Interactive behaviors' results is presented in Tables 1 and 2, and comparisons are presented in Table 3 and 4.

Table 1 shows similarities and differences in explicit interactive behaviors of workforce, with and without blindness, during intercultural cooperation. Both the workforce with blindness and without disabilities manifested positive emotions to facilitate productive intercultural cooperation. Furthermore, the both groups have

explicit communication skills to use clear statements for issues, well-structured explanations, and active voice behaviors during the cooperation. Employee voice behavior is defined as promotive behavior that emphasizes expression of constructive challenges in order to improve and recommend modifications to standard procedures even when others disagree, which is an extra-role behavior of interpersonal communication (LePine & Van Dyne, 2001; Van Dyne & LePine, 1998). Whereas, differences also have been underlined. Individuals with blindness use implicit reactions to point out colleagues' mistakes and give feedback to colleagues' performance more often than people without disabilities during the intercultural cooperation. People without disabilities try to avoid dependence on and support from individuals with blindness during their cooperation. To a certain extent, these distinct interactive behaviors reflect not completely an equal disability inclusion paradigm in organizations. Consciously and unconsciously, both individuals with blindness and without disabilities were shaped and got used to former disability dependent inclusion. If individuals with blindness directly point out the colleague's mistakes or giving him negative feedback felt, they feel uncomfortable, guilty and stressed.

Table 1
Content-units "Strong Signals of Behavior"

Categories	No.	Content-units	Used by non-blind person	Used by blind person	Difference
Emotion and mental facets	1	explicit emotional reactions	positive	positive	no
	2	attitude towards partner's error	react immediately	implicit	yes
Inter-personal relation	3	balancing dependence and independence	rigidity in role identification during cooperation	flexible role change between dependence to independence	yes
	4	support	not ready to receive help from PWDs	mutual support	yes
Communication	5	statement	explicit and clear	explicit and clear	no
	6	explanation	well-structured and expanded	well-structured and expanded	no
	7	feedback	positive or negative	non-judgemental	yes
	8	voice behavior	explicit expression	explicit expression	no

Table 2 shows similarities and differences in implicit interactive behaviors during cooperation between individuals with blindness and without disabilities. Generally, it is evident that individuals with blindness behave differently using implicit interactions more often than individuals without disabilities. Thus, H2 is confirmed. In particular, individuals with blindness feel more stressed feeling themselves weak or wrong during the cooperation. Moreover, individuals with blindness appreciate if their uniqueness is recognized, while individuals without disabilities favor the sense of belonging to organizations. These differences still reflect the worries about "false

inclusion” of blind individuals. Communication behaviors vary a lot, individuals with blindness show a competitive capacity for information processing, its holistic perception and attention to details. This differentiation may be explained by the typical information processing strategies of individuals with blindness. For instance, when hearing lots of instructions, many individuals without disabilities customarily write down the key points to aid information processing while blind individuals are used to memorizing and absorbing information on the spot. Additionally, individuals with blindness are more sensitive to intonation and voice strength during interactions. Compared with individuals without disabilities, blind individuals could keep listening for a long while maintaining high effectiveness and higher tolerance of ambiguity during intercultural communication.

Table 2
Content-units “Weak Signals of Behavior”

Categories	No.	Content-units	Used by non-blind person	Used by blind person	Difference
Emotion and mental facets	1	stress for self-weakness	Accepting mistakes	high stress for self-error and avoid powerlessness	yes
	2	awareness of inclusion	sense of belonging	preference for own uniqueness	yes
Inter-personal relation	3	attachment	pursuing safe attachment	pursuing safe attachment	no
	4	personal lasting bonds	expectation for social lasting bonds	expectation for social lasting bonds	no
Communication	5	information processing	perceive information with aids	absorb information attentively	yes
	6	intonation and voice strength	normally	more sensitive	yes
	7	listening	difficulties to keep attention for long while	more carefully	yes
	8	tolerance of ambiguity	normally	higher tolerance	yes

Comparisons of explicit and implicit interactive behaviors, differences versus similarities between individuals with blindness and individuals without disabilities have been laid out in Table 3 and Table 4.

Table 3
Results of Content-units Calculation

	N of signals used by non-blind person	N of signals used by blind person	Differences
Strong signals	8	8	4
Weak signals	8	8	6
Total	16	16	10

Table 4
Frequency of Differences in Interactive Behaviors

	Differences	Similarities	Sum	Frequency of differences
Strong signals	4	4	8	50%
Weak signals	6	2	8	75%
Sum	10	6	16	62.5%

Thus, during intercultural cooperation, implicit interactive modes used more frequently by individuals with blindness. Hence, H1 and H2 are both confirmed. Considering the small sample (10 participants for the first focus group, 8 participants for the second group, and 5 mentors, 8 mentees for the interview, in total 31 participants) and methods applied, we only used descriptive statistics.

The information about the effect of the inclusion paradigm on managers' and experts' CQ development was collected through the second focus group as well as in-depth interviews with mentored managers and experts. Responses have been analyzed by four facets of CQ conceptualization such as meta-cognition, cognition, motivation and behaviors according to proportion. We follow criteria from self-report CQ Scale by Ang, Van Dyne and Rockstuhl (2015), and the short form for CQ by Thomas et al. (2015). If one respondent mentions more than one facet of CQ, all facets mentioned have been calculated. The share of each description is measured in relation to the total number of responses (see Table 5).

Table 5
CQ Development through Inclusion Paradigm

CQ Facets	No.	Descriptions	Count	Frequency
Meta-cognition	1	"I tried to learn and consciously expanded my knowledge about blind individuals when I was mentored by outstanding blind individuals."	4	16%
	2	"I aimed to check and consciously examined the accuracy of my knowledge about blind workforce when I was mentored by blind mentors."	3	12%
Cognition	3	"I learned new rules for non-visual expression when interacting with blind individuals, for example, how to introduce myself in a blindness-friendly way."	1	4%
	4	"I realized the importance of intonation and proper voice strength during mentoring activities with blind mentors."	1	4%
Motivation	5	"I feel more confident when socializing with individuals from a different cultural background."	4	16%
	6	"I gradually start to enjoy interacting with PWDs and individuals from other cultures."	3	12%
	7	"I believe I could also deal with stress of adjusting to other cultures after the cooperation with blind individuals."	4	16%
Behavior	8	"I changed my verbal behaviors during interactions with blind individuals, for example, I adjusted my intonation, I increased my voice strength."	3	12%
	9	"I adapted the rate of my speaking during interactions with blind individuals."	2	8%

Table 5 reveals the managers' and experts' CQ development mentioned during the focus group discussion and in-depth interviews. During the focus groups and interviews, the participants were not asked directly about the development of CQ. We gathered their answers about the "effectiveness of intercultural cooperation" as well as the answers about the "benefits from disability inclusion and the new inclusion paradigm to be mentored by successful blind individuals". Based on these answers, we selected answers related to CQ development according to the items of CQ scales (Ang et al., 2007, 2015; Thomas et al., 2015). In sum, 28% of the responses involved the development of meta-cognitive CQ, 8% of the responses involved the development of cognitive CQ, 44% of the responses involved the development of motivational CQ, and the remaining 20% of the responses involved the development of behavioral CQ in interactions with blind individuals. Therefore, hypothesis H3 is supported, which proves that interactions and mentoring activities with blind individuals encourage the CQ development of organizational managers and experts. Moreover, motivational CQ and meta-cognitive CQ increased more than behavioral and cognitive CQ, which is highly consistent with the existing evidence.

Discussion

This article highlights the uniqueness of PWDs and puts forward the transformative disability inclusion paradigm to involve successful PWDs into organizational mentoring activities, thus achieving win-win outcomes. The study of extraordinary competences of individuals with blindness mentioned by this article shed light on exploration and recognition of PWDs' competitive advantages in workplaces.

Firstly, the article describes interactive behaviors by blind individuals and co-workers without disabilities during their intercultural interaction. Differences in interactive modes represent cultural diversity, which could bring about knowledge sharing, skill transmission and innovation. It draws attention to specific distinct interactions and strategies for utilizing diversity. On the contrary, differences may lead to misunderstandings in culturally diverse workplaces. Our findings explicate the efficiency of cooperation between people with and without disabilities from a new perspective. Building on extant literature, obstacles that hinder the effective cooperation between people with and without disabilities multidimensionally consist of lacking in motivation, cognitive biases, as well as emotional discomfort toward another social group (Baldrige & Kulkami, 2017; Beatty et al., 2019). This article adds to the information concerning differences as the obstacles to productive disability inclusion. Especially, more differences were revealed in implicit interactions rather than explicit interactions.

Secondly, as it has been revealed, during intercultural cooperation, blind employees often use different implicit emotion-related and communicative interactive modes of behavior, which were neglected by much of the previous research.

Thirdly, this article underlines the opportunity to develop managerial competences, and especially CQ, involving blind persons as mentors and encouraging them to share their knowledge and experience with mentees.

Developed CQ of managers and experts enhances their managerial skills in other unfamiliar intercultural cases. Application of our findings not only could improve programs of CQ development, but also enhance the effect of PWDs on organizational performance.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

As with any research, limitations present avenues for further research. Considering the changing disability inclusion paradigm, as a newly arrived issue, this article adopts focus groups and in-depth interviews with targeted groups to listen to their feelings and attitudes. The small sample size limits the representativeness of our findings about broader interactive differences and their effect on CQ development. It calls for further quantitative investigations with larger samples to reinforce our findings. Simultaneously, the results of this article partly subjective due to semi-structured discussions and self-reported views. Further research if potentially conducted with well-structured scales and more objective criteria will be beneficial. This study only explored how individuals with blindness are involved in mentoring activities with organizational managers and experts. Future research may expand the parameters with wider disability types and investigate in more detail the features of inclusion of people with disabilities. Ultimately, the findings of this study may have regional or cultural limitations since involved organizations and most participants are from Russia. More studies are encouraged across other nations and regions in the future.

Implications

Firstly, the new disability inclusion paradigm provided by this study emphasizes the need for changing inclusion practices in organizations. It displays a win-win inclusion practice of involving successful PWDs into mentoring activities to share their experience and optimize organizational inclusion strategies and the diversity of managerial skills.

Secondly, CQ development of organizational managers and experts is vital in the current competitive business environment. Affirmative impact of the proposed inclusion paradigm brings to light the new directions in CQ development programs.

Conclusion

The current inclusive society is aimed at productive cooperation between people with and without disabilities. This article proposes a new inclusion paradigm for workforce with disabilities in workplace and reveals the uniqueness of the workforce with blindness. According to this new paradigm, firstly, inclusion appears as an intercultural interaction between people with and without disabilities. Secondly, as participants in these interactions, people with disabilities behave differently from colleagues without disabilities and demonstrate potential that enriches organizational diversity, and brings different cultural characteristics to organizational culture. Thirdly, people with disabilities enhance the competitive intercultural advantage for organizations through their activities. Finally, this disability inclusion

helps employees and managers without disabilities acquire new competencies, such as attention to weak signals, openness to new experiences, and the ability to interact with people from a different culture. Our research shows that the changing paradigm of disability inclusion, on the one hand, allows people with disabilities to avoid excessive paternalism in the workplace, and on the other hand, opens new horizons for the professional culturally competent training of personnel for the modern organization.

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