Assistive Technology and Employability of the Divyangjan: A Study with Special Reference to Bangalore IT Companies

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Abstract

Implementation of Assistive Technology (AT) in the work environment has greatly enhanced the employability of Divyangjan (individuals with disabilities) by bringing in inclusivity and accessibility. This research analyses the contribution of assistive technology towards increasing work opportunities for Divyangjan workers in Bangalore's IT industry. It also investigates the level of AT adoption in the IT industry, the categories utilised, and challenges encountered in their implementation. The study also examines the views of employers and employees on the effectiveness of AT in enhancing work efficiency, job satisfaction, and career development. The research employs a mixed-methods approach, integrating surveys and interviews among HR professionals and IT managers in order to capture a holistic perspective of AT's influence. Central areas of concentration are the applications of screen readers, speech-to-text software, ergonomic hardware, AI-based assistive solutions, and workplace accommodations. The study reveals that, although most IT firms in Bangalore have been successful in incorporating AT, high costs, unawareness, and insufficient training are the areas where the journey has been bumpy. It concludes that with a sound policy framework, higher investment in AT, and greater corporate initiatives, the gaps are filled and a more inclusive work environment for the IT sector can be established. Recommendations are policy improvements, better training schemes, and company incentives for the widespread use of assistive technology. In doing so, Bangalore's IT sector can create a model for workplace accessibility and inclusiveness.

Keywords: Assistive Solutions, Assistive Technology, Bangalore, Corporate Policy, Disability Inclusion, Employability, Inclusive Employment, IT Sector, Workplace Accessibilit

Introduction

In recent years, the advancement of technology has played a vital role in enhancing workplace accessibility for People with Disabilities (PwDs), known as Divyangjan in India. The employment rate of Divyangjan in India is still quite low, despite legal frameworks such as the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act, 2016, that mandate workplace accessibility. Assistive Technology (AT) can be a key solution in bridging the gap by improving the employability of people with disabilities by increasing accessibility, efficiency and independence in workplaces, thus reducing workplace barriers, and fostering an inclusive environment.

Assistive technologies are the types of equipment and software that promote accessibility, independence, and productivity for those with disabilities. The *World Health Organisation* (World Health Organization, 2011, p. 10) defines assistive technology as "*any device or system that allows individuals to perform tasks they would otherwise be unable to do or increases the ease and safety with which tasks can be performed.*" The application of these assistive technologies in workplaces would aid people with disabilities to maximise their employability, particularly in the IT sector. Being renowned for its innovative culture, the IT sector has huge potential to adopt AT and build a more diverse workforce.

Bengaluru, also referred to as the Silicon Valley of India, hosts several IT companies and startups that are gradually adopting diversity and inclusion. Being a centre for technological innovation, the city provides an ideal place to study how AT can improve workplaces to be more accessible and inclusive. India's booming AI sector, backed by massive investments

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and a $250-billion IT industry, is accelerating the development and adoption of AI-powered assistive solutions (Time, 2024). With increasing importance on diversity and inclusion, most IT firms have already begun embracing assistive technologies such as screen readers, ergonomic hardware, AI-driven assistive applications, speech-to-text utilities and accessible web interfaces. These enable people with disabilities to become more efficient in their work, overcoming the barriers of employment and facilitating job retention and career development in the long run.

However, despite the promising potential of ATs, there are several challenges. The adoption of AT is hampered by high implementation costs, insufficient training programs, employer ignorance, and other infrastructure constraints. A lot of companies also struggle to integrate AT into their present workflows and to make their employees fully utilise the benefits. Moreover, Small and Medium-Sized businesses (SMEs) may also lack the resources which are necessary to implement AT effectively.

The purpose of this study is to investigate how Assistive technologies can improve the employability of Divyangjan in Bengaluru's IT sector. The research aims to offer valuable insights into the benefits and barriers of AT implementation by examining the extent of AT integration, the types of technologies used, and the perspectives of both employers and employees.

Literature Review

Many academic fields have examined the role that AT plays in improving the employability and workplace accessibility of people with disabilities (Divyangjan). Existing studies highlight the ability of AT to remove barriers to employment, but, due to several structural, financial, and societal issues, adoption of these technologies is still uneven. This literature review investigates global and Indian perspectives on AT in the workplace, discusses employer and employee perspectives, and examines the barriers and best practices that affect AT adoption in Bangalore's IT industry.

Assistive technologies range from simple tools like ergonomic keyboards to complex AI-driven solutions such as speech recognition software, adaptable workstations, and brain-computer interfaces (Borg *et al.*, 2019). According to the research of Gillespie-Lynch *et al.* (2020), AT contributes largely to employment efficiency, independence, and workplace inclusion for Divyangjan. AT also offers improved job satisfaction, mental health, and the opportunity for career advancement; therefore, in conjunction with these, it improves performance and productivity (Lang *et al.*, 2021). Concerning the IT industry, the key assistive technologies are: screen readers and Braille displays for visually impaired employees (Patterson & Hollier, 2018); AI-powered chatbots and workplace automation for neurodivergent individuals (Shinohara *et al.*, 2021); Speech-to-text software and voice recognition software for employees who are mobility impaired (Berner & Alves, 2021), to name a few. Despite these advantages, many IT firms continue to resist proper AT integration, thus causing a decrease in accessibility and productivity gaps (Ladner, 2015).

Many multinational companies and associations have shown best practices in using AT technologies. Several large corporations (e.g., Microsoft, Google, IBM) are increasingly formalizing accessibility efforts; such business-level commitment to assistive technology reflects the broader advantages of AT in boosting inclusion, productivity, and employee satisfaction (Marinaci et al., 2023). Organisations in which AT training is mandatory report higher rates of adoption and greater confidence levels in their users (Cullen *et al.*, 2020). Certain countries, like the U.S., U.K., and Canada, grant financial incentives to organisations that invest in AT solutions (Schur *et al.*, 2013).

The European Accessibility Act (2019), as described by Mont (2021), has made inclusive workplaces mandatory, and this has led to increased integration of AT in IT firms. While the global strategies have shown to be successful to date, a similar policy-driven approach has not been adopted in India yet (Mukherjee, 2021).

Though the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act came about in 2016, India, which has around 26 million differently-abled persons (Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India, 2011), still has barriers when it comes to the employment of Divyngjan. Research shows that the employment rate for PwD in India is only 34% while the global average stands at 50% (ILO, 2020).

Indian IT organisations are interested in adopting AT, but according to a study supported by Mukherjee, S. (2021), they lack formal rules, financial incentives, and implementation roadmaps. In the minds of many small-to-medium enterprises in the IT industry of Bangalore, AT is seen as an unnecessary expense instead of being a requisite (NASSCOM Foundation, 2022). Because of the financial problems that most industries perceive, many Indian firms shy away from investing in tailor-made solutions for accessibility (Amaltas Consulting, 2020). More than 60% of HR professionals in Bangalore's IT sector were not aware of the AT choices available for employees with disabilities, according to a 2019 survey by Khetarpal (2019). Implementation of the RPWD Act, 2016, is still lax and scarce penalty measures for non-compliance (Mukherjee, 2021). The above dilemmas necessitate effectively structured legislation,

incentives, and the education of employees to increase AT adoption in Bangalore's IT sector.

In support of AT development, some Indian NGOs such as Mitra Jyothi and Anuprayaas have taken steps to promote accessible technology for the visually impaired, but their reach is limited (Anuprayaas, 2023; Mitra Jyothi, n.d.). Reports by Best Startup India (2023) also note the rise of accessibility-focused startups in Bengaluru, yet highlight the funding and policy support gap. Secondary sources, such as NASSCOM Foundation (2022) and Aspire Circle (2022), underline that despite awareness efforts, many companies are stuck at the pilot or CSR stage of AT implementation. Media voices also contribute to shifting societal perspectives. Bhattarai (2025), in a feature article, highlights how focusing on the person rather than the disability helps challenge prevailing stereotypes in India.

It is the employer's attitude that determines the adoption and effectiveness, given that AT is not an independent actor. Research, however, highlights that although employers appreciate inclusion, they usually do not know how to effectively incorporate AT (Cullen *et al.*, 2018). The study by Baldridge and Veiga (2016) divides employers into the following three categories:

Proactive Adopter: This includes companies that invest in AT by being proactive and having policies on disability inclusion adequately structured.

Reactive Implementers: They include companies that make AT introductions upon laws or employee demand.

Non-Adopters: They include companies that do not adopt AT on the grounds of cost or intuitively assume production loss. Employees who have access to AT show high job satisfaction and demonstrate positive indications of career advancement and engagement in the workplace (Lang *et al.*, 2020). However, some employees report that older AT tools fail to integrate with enterprise systems, limiting their actual utility (Shinohara *et al.*, 2021).

The literature review describes the positive impact that assistive technology has on employment, especially in intensive areas like IT. However, there exist a lot of gaps regarding the understanding of its real-time use, employer attitudes towards it, and the policies about this technology in India, especially in the IT sector of Bangalore. This study aims to fill this gap by bringing out the level of usage of assistive technology among the employees in Bangalore's IT industry, as well as identifying possible areas for business action or policy improvement.

Research Methodology

This study uses a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative primary data from HR managers with qualitative secondary data from published literature. The goal is to assess the employability of Divyangjan in Bangalore's IT industry through Assistive Technology (AT). Primary data was collected using structured questionnaires sent to HR professionals from various IT companies who were engaged in diversity and accessibility initiatives (Purposive Sampling). Initially, the sample size was aimed at 100, but the final sample included 78 valid responses. The survey presented both Yes/No questions and 5-point Likert-scale questions. These questions measured awareness, implementation, challenges, and perceived outcomes related to AT. Secondary data was gathered to add to the HR responses and to capture the perspectives of Divyangjan employees, since they were not directly surveyed. The secondary sources include peer-reviewed research articles, reports from NASSCOM Foundation and Aspire Circle, CSR policy documents, and publications from NGOs such as Anuprayaas and Mitra Jyothi. Thematic analysis was performed on these secondary data sources using inductive coding to find recurring patterns and themes about challenges, policy gaps, and the impact of assistive technology on employee outcomes.

Objectives of the study

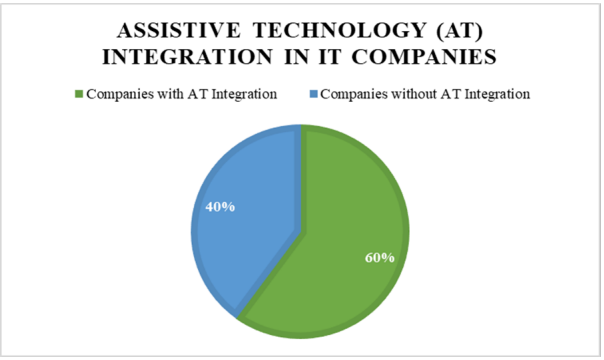
- To study how assistive technology helps improve the employability of Divyangjan in IT companies in Bengaluru.
- To find out the availability and use of assistive technologies that IT firms provide to support Divyangjan.
- To recognise the major challenges that Divyangjan experience in securing and sustaining jobs in the IT industry.
- To evaluate organisational policies and practices related to workplace inclusion and AT implementation.
- To assess how assistive technology affects the workplace experience and performance outcomes, specifically job satisfaction and productivity, for employees with disabilities.

Data analysis and Interpretations

Adoption of Assistive Technology in Bangalore's IT Sector

The survey revealed that approximately 60% of the IT firms in Bangalore have actively implemented Assistive Technology (AT) as part of their inclusion strategy for persons with disabilities (Divyangjan) (Figure 1). This highlights a growing corporate awareness toward accessibility and inclusive employment practices. HR managers stressed that

Figure 1: AT Integration in IT Companies.



Source: HR Survey, 2025

Figure 2: Most Common Assistive Technologies in Use

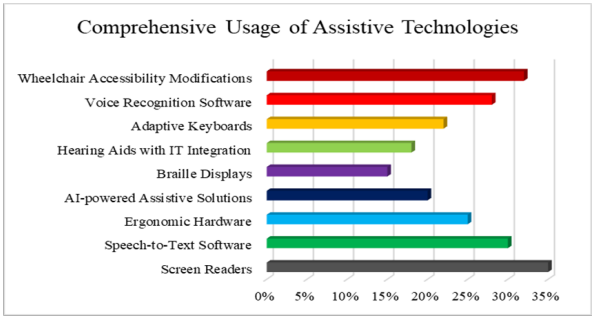


Figure 2: *Most Common Assistive Technologies in Use* (Source: Primary Data – HR Survey, 2025)

Source: Primary Data – HR Survey, 2025

AT allows employees with disabilities to contribute meaningfully in IT job positions, resulting in enhanced workforce diversity and participation. Firms with formal AT policies have shown higher rates of employment of PwDs, reflecting the favourable impact of technological advancement on work environment inclusivity. Secondary research also supports these findings, showing a consistent increase in corporate efforts towards accessibility, especially in reaction to India's Digital Accessibility Initiative (Aspire Circle, 2022).

Availability and efficiency of assistive technologies are different across organisations, with the most common one being screen readers (35%), followed by Wheelchair accessibilities (32%), speech-to-text software (30%), Voice Recognition Software (28%), Ergonomic hardware (25%), Adaptive Keyboards(22%) and AI-based assistive solutions (20%) are also being implemented to improve accessibility as shown in Figure 2. HR managers stated that over 75% of their organisations have seen employee productivity and engagement levels improve as a result of these technologies.

Challenges Faced by Divyangjan in the IT Industry

While primary data shows moderate adoption, secondary data reveals that Divyangjan face systemic and cultural challenges beyond infrastructure. Six key themes were extracted (Table 1) using thematic analysis of reports from Aspire Circle, Anuprayaas, NASSCOM Foundation, and academic journals.

This thematic analysis reveals that challenges are not merely physical or technical, but deeply structural and attitudinal. A mix of infrastructure gaps, policy inaction, and social stigma creates a complex barrier for sustained employment of Divyangjan in the IT sector. These insights triangulate well with both primary HR responses and secondary literature, showing that while awareness is growing, execution is lagging.

Implementation of AT in Organisations

Regardless of these developments, there are still challenges in making it accessible on a universal scale. As shown in Figure 3, budgetary limitations are an obstacle, with 45% of the participants identifying the cost of implementing ATs as prohibitively high. Also, 50% of the HR managers indicated that additional awareness and training sessions would be necessary to ensure the best use of assistive devices. The absence of workplace modifications is still an issue, as stated by 55% of the participants. However, organisations which have successfully enforced AT policies have noted increased retention rates of Divyangjan, further affirming the significance of systematic inclusion strategies.

Corporate Policy and Awareness

In corporate policy and initiatives, 40% of IT firms have introduced disability sensitivity training, and 35% have done accessibility audits to identify gaps and fill them for inclusivity in workplaces. Awareness levels among HR teams are also mixed, with 30% highly aware, 50% somewhat aware, and 20% in need of training (Figure 4). These observations match secondary data, which indicate that top IT companies in India are using the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act, 2016, as a tool to enhance their policies of inclusion (Saksham & FICCI, 2022). Startups in the domain of AT are also becoming central facilitators, allowing companies to mainstream inclusive technologies (Best Startup India, 2023).

The data also indicates moderate engagement in disability-specific hiring. As shown in Figure 5, only a portion of IT companies actively recruit PwDs or maintain accurate records of currently employed

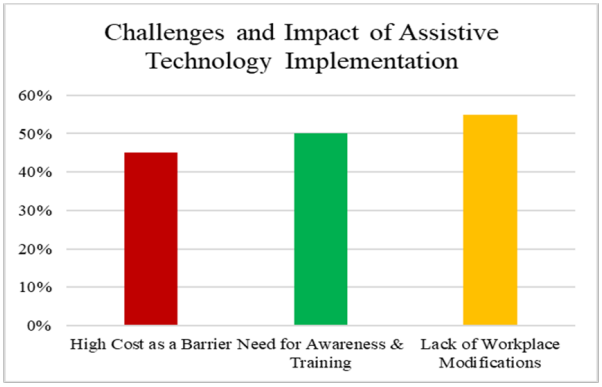
Table 1: Thematic analysis of challenges faced by Divyangjan in IT employment

Theme	Supporting Evidence
1. Inaccessible infrastructure	Many IT firms lack ramps, tactile signage, and accessible software. Even digital platforms like job portals are not screen-reader compatible (Anuprayaas, 2023; NASSCOM Foundation, 2022; Aspire Circle, 2022).
2. Gaps in awareness and training	HRs and team leads often lack training in disability inclusion; training sessions are rare and usually limited to CSR obligations (Mitra Jyothi, n.d.; Mukherjee, 2021; Khetarpal, 2019).
3. High cost of AT	Mid-sized firms perceive AT as expensive and outside the scope of their D&I budgets. Financial barriers reduce the likelihood of investment (Aspire Circle, 2022; Mukherjee, S. (2021).
4. Policy-practice disconnect	Although the RPWD Act mandates inclusion, enforcement is weak. Many companies have written policies but no real action plans (UNDP India, 2024; Saksham & FICCI, 2022).
5. Stigma and bias in hiring	PwDs are often stereotyped as less productive or high-risk hires, leading to exclusion even in well-meaning firms (Bhattarai, 2025; Mitra Jyothi, n.d.).
6. Lack of AT onboarding and support	Even when AT exists, PwDs often don›t receive onboarding support or skills training to use it effectively (Aspire Circle, 2022; NASSCOM Foundation, 2022).

Source: Secondary Data – Multiple Reports

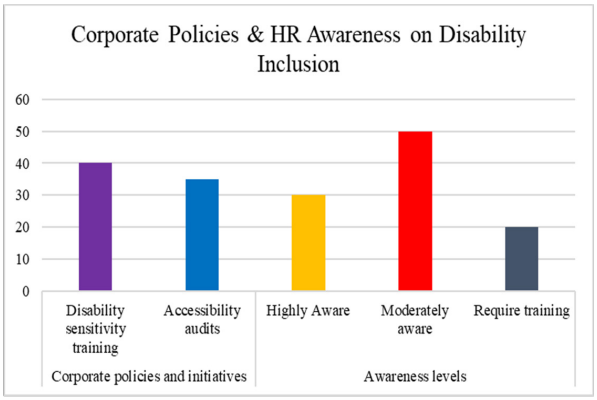
individuals with disabilities. The data shows that many organisations either do not track the number of PwD employees or do not have a clear view of their current employment status. This highlights a big difference between what policies say and how they work in practice. This aligns with findings from Mukherjee (2021), who state that compliance with the RPWD Act, 2016, is mainly symbolic in many Indian firms. While some companies make real efforts through inclusive hiring, the overall absence of structured approaches

Figure 3: Challenges in AT Implementation



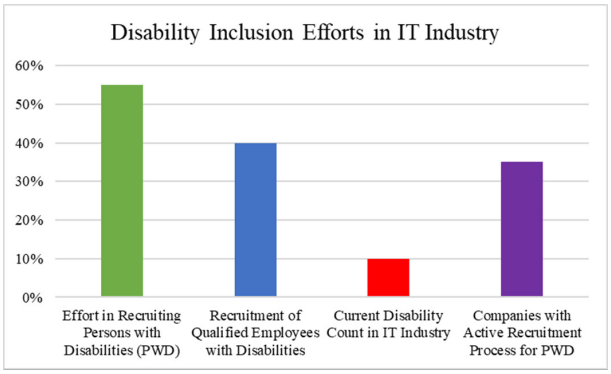
Source: Primary Data – HR Survey, 2025

Figure 4: Corporate Initiatives and HR Awareness on Disability Inclusion



Source: Primary Data – HR Survey, 2025

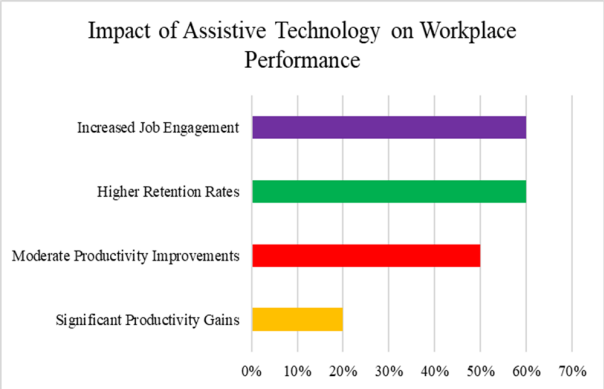
Figure 5: Disability Inclusion Efforts in IT Industries



Source: HR Survey, 2025

emphasises the need for systematic changes, corporate responsibility, and building HR capabilities in disability inclusion.

Figure 6: Impact of AT on Workplace Performance



Source: Primary Data – HR Survey, 2025

Impact of Assistive Technology on Employee Outcomes

The effect of assistive technology on work performance can be seen (Figure 6), with 20% of firms noticing substantial productivity gains and 50% noticing mid-level improvements. The level of job satisfaction also increased, where 60% of HR professionals reported increased job engagement and rates of retention, as well as improved employee comfort, among their employees with disabilities.

These findings are further supported by a thematic analysis of secondary sources, which yielded five dominant themes (Table 2):

Table 2: Thematic analysis of AT's impact on the satisfaction and productivity of Divyangjan

Theme	Supporting Evidence
Enhanced autonomy	AT enables self-reliance, reduces anxiety (Lang *et al.*, 2020)
Improved job satisfaction	Users feel more included and respected (NASSCOM, 2022)
Better task efficiency	Tools like speech-to-text boost speed and accuracy (Microsoft, 2022)
Psychological safety	Inclusive firms report better morale and lower stress (Mukherjee, 2021)
Access to skill development	AT facilitates upskilling via e-learning (Aspire Circle, 2022)

Source: Secondary Reports and Literature

Summary of Findings

(i) About 60% of IT companies in Bangalore have adopted assistive technology. But the distribution is uneven, as Large enterprises use it more than small and mid-sized firms.

(ii) The most common technologies are screen readers and speech-to-text software. This shows a focus on visual and motor impairments. Tools for cognitive and neurodiverse needs are less common.

(iii) Divyangjan face six common barriers when trying to get and keep jobs. These include inaccessible infrastructure, limited training, unclear internal policies, financial reasons for employers, and ongoing social stigma.

(iv) Some IT firms offer accessibility audits and disability sensitivity training. However, only a small number actively recruit or keep formal records of employees with disabilities.

(v) Using assistive technology leads to greater job satisfaction, better retention, and increased productivity. This is especially true for organisations that pair technological support with inclusive HR practices.

(vi) Even with the RPWD Act, 2016, many firms show inconsistent or only symbolic compliance. This is especially common in firms without internal enforcement or specific accessibility budgets.

Suggestions

(i) All IT firms with 50 or more employees should conduct annual audits in line with the RPWD Act and publish inclusion performance in their CSR reports.

(ii) Organisations must create structured onboarding programs for Divyangjan that include hands-on training with assistive technology tools specific to different disability types.

(iii) Policymakers should offer targeted tax incentives or financial grants to small and mid-sized enterprises that invest in assistive technology and inclusive infrastructure upgrades.

(iv) IT firms are encouraged to partner with accessibility-focused startups to integrate assistive features—such as text-to-speech, voice commands, and alternative navigation—into their mainstream project management and workflow systems.

(v) Companies should work with NGOs such as Anuprayaas and Mitra Jyothi to organise awareness sessions, build internal resource centres, and provide regular training on disability inclusion and workplace etiquette.

(vi) National and regional employment platforms should be upgraded to become assistive technology-friendly, enabling screen reader compatibility, voice command navigation, and accessible filtering options for job-seeking individuals with disabilities.

Limitations and Scope for Further Study

(i) The research is based on the perspectives of HR managers as primary information, but inputs from Divyangjan could offer a more inclusive perspective.

(ii) The research is specific to Bangalore's IT sector; Expanding it to other cities or sectors can give more in-depth insights about AT usage.

(iii) Assistive technology is continuously evolving, and the results may need to be revised as more and more effective tools are introduced.

(iv) Although policies are in place, their actual effectiveness and long-term influence on workplace inclusion need further research.

Conclusion

Thematic insights underscore that assistive technology has a tangible positive impact on job satisfaction, task efficiency, retention, and psychological safety when supported by inclusive hr practices. However, compliance with the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016 remains inconsistent, especially among small and mid-sized enterprises. To go beyond mere symbolic inclusion, the study suggests specific actions. These actions include structured onboarding for Divyangjan, mandatory accessibility audits, financial support for small and medium-sized businesses, and partnerships with NGOs and startups. A more effective approach is to combine technology, policy enforcement, and commitment from organisations. This combination is key to making inclusive employment not just a legal requirement but a lasting reality. By addressing both technological and attitude barriers, Bangalore's IT sector could establish a national standard for accessibility and inclusion.

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