Attitudes Toward Disability and Inclusive Environments in Georgian Universities: A Cross-Sectional Study of Administrative Staff

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Posted Date: 6 May 2025

doi: 10.20944/preprints202504.2611.v1

Keywords: inclusive environment; disability; attitudes; Georgian universities; administrative staff; higher education; ADS

 doi:10.20944/preprints202504.2611.v1

Article

Attitudes Toward Disability and Inclusive Environments in Georgian Universities: A Cross-Sectional Study of Administrative Staff

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Abstract: This study explores the attitudes of university administrative staff toward disability and their perceptions of the potential for inclusive environments in higher education institutions across Georgia. Using the Attitudes to Disability Scale (ADS), a cross-sectional survey was conducted with 63 staff members from a Tbilisi-based and a regional university. The findings reveal generally positive attitudes, especially among younger and female staff, but expose persistent hierarchies in disability perception—particularly skepticism toward intellectual and psychosocial impairments. While participants expressed support for inclusion, their recommendations for occupational roles reflected narrow and often custodial views of employability. Urban-rural and tenure-based divides further underscored structural and cultural barriers to full inclusion. The study concludes with actionable recommendations for inclusive training, policy reform, and participatory approaches to shift Georgian universities toward genuine inclusion.

Keywords: inclusive environment; disability; attitudes; Georgian universities; administrative staff; higher education; ADS

1. Introduction

Inclusion within higher education has become a global imperative aligned with equity, accessibility, and social justice. However, for people with disabilities (PwDs), universities remain contested spaces. Attitudinal barriers, structural inaccessibility, and occupational stereotyping persist despite formal commitments to inclusion. In Georgia, a country transitioning from a Soviet legacy and seeking alignment with international human rights frameworks, the experience of People with disabilities in academia remains under-researched.

This study investigates the attitudes of university administrative staff toward disability and inclusion in Georgian higher education institutions. It specifically examines how demographic and institutional factors shape staff perceptions and how these attitudes influence views on the employability of People with disabilities.

2. Literature Review

Conceptualizing Disability and Inclusion in Higher Education

Higher education institutions are increasingly expected to serve as inclusive environments for all students and staff, including people with disabilities (PwDs). The shift from medical to social and biopsychosocial models of disability—endorsed by the WHO and the UNCRPD—has prompted a rethinking of institutional responsibilities (Power et al., 2010; WHO, 2012). Inclusion is now framed

 doi:10.20944/preprints202504.2611.v1

as a process of removing social and institutional barriers rather than adapting individuals to fit within exclusionary systems (Sharma et al., 2023; Morina, 2017).

Measuring Attitudes Toward Disability

Attitudes are central to the success of inclusion initiatives. The Attitudes to Disability Scale (ADS), developed by Power and colleagues under the WHOQOL project, assesses perceptions along four domains: Inclusion, Discrimination, Gains, and Prospects (Power et al., 2010). Studies across different cultural contexts—including Zheng et al. (2016) in China and Bruyère et al. (2004) in the U.S.—have demonstrated consistent trends in disability hierarchies, with physical disabilities more accepted than intellectual cognitive or psychosocial disabilities (Scior, 2011).

Socio-Demographic Predictors of Inclusive Attitudes

Age, gender, and educational background significantly predict attitudes toward People with disabilities. Multiple studies (Siperstein et al., 2007; Lindsay & McPherson, 2013) indicate that younger and female respondents report more inclusive and empathetic views. These differences are often attributed to exposure to human rights discourse, progressive education, and increased social contact with diverse populations (Antonak & Livneh, 2000).

Organizational Culture and Disability

The concept of the "inclusive university" has evolved over recent decades, yet administrative and structural barriers remain prevalent. Gibson (2015) calls for a post-rights pedagogy that challenges hegemonic institutional norms, arguing that surface-level compliance is insufficient for profound structural change. Similarly, Ahmed (2012) discusses the phenomenon of the "diversity smile," whereby universities promote inclusion in rhetoric but fail to enact transformative practice. Burke (2012) emphasizes that diversity policies risk becoming symbolic rather than substantive without addressing systemic privilege and exclusion.

Geopolitical and Regional Factors

In post-socialist and transitional countries, efforts toward inclusion are often complicated by outdated legislation, stigmatizing public attitudes, and limited training infrastructure (Griful-Freixenet et al., 2017; Heymann et al., 2014). Regional disparities—especially between urban and rural institutions—further compound these challenges (ILO, 2004). Studies in Eastern Europe, including Karger & Stoesz (2013), note the persistence of Soviet-era deficit models of disability that hinder inclusive reform.

Inclusion in the Workplace and Higher Education Employment

Employment remains a key area where discrimination against People with disabilities manifests. Research by Roggero et al. (2006), Ali et al. (2012), and the World Bank highlights persistent stereotypes about the jobs People with disabilities can perform. Piggott & Houghton (2007) and Madriaga (2010) have shown that disabled students and graduates face systemic barriers during the transition from education to employment, with institutions often failing to support inclusive pathways.

Toward Inclusive Institutional Practices

To close the gap between policy and practice, researchers call for inclusive hiring strategies, structural redesign of roles, and integration of People with disabilities into leadership and decision-making processes (Slee, 2013; Taylor, 2012). Universal Design for Learning (UDL), participatory governance, and continuous disability awareness training are key elements for fostering genuinely inclusive environments (Booth & Ainscow, 2016; Bruyère et al., 2004).

 doi:10.20944/preprints202504.2611.v1

Despite global advancements in disability rights and educational policy, many institutions remain constrained by ableist assumptions and insufficient implementation strategies. The literature clarifies that attitudinal change—while necessary—is not enough. True inclusion requires a systemic transformation that engages with intersectionality, power dynamics, and institutional culture.

Attitudes toward disability significantly determine whether environments become inclusive or perpetuate marginalization (Antonak & Livneh, 2000). The Attitudes to Disability Scale (ADS), developed by Power et al. (2010), captures public and institutional views across four domains: Inclusion, Discrimination, Prospects, and Gains. This framework has been applied globally and reflects a biopsychosocial model of disability. Cross-cultural studies using the ADS, such as Zheng et al. (2016) in China and Griful-Freixenet et al. (2017) in Europe, reveal that individuals are generally more accepting of physical disabilities than cognitive or psychosocial ones—a hierarchy that shapes employment and education outcomes.

Research has consistently shown that younger individuals and women report more favourable attitudes toward People with disabilities (Siperstein et al., 2007; Lindsay & McPherson, 2013). Exposure to rights-based discourses and inclusive pedagogy is believed to influence these perspectives. However, even among supportive populations, implicit biases can manifest in occupational stereotyping, with People with disabilities often viewed as suitable only for low-responsibility roles (Scior, 2011).

Institutional culture also shapes inclusion. Gibson (2015) argues for a "post-rights" pedagogy that moves beyond compliance toward epistemological transformation. Despite inclusive policies and accessibility laws in many countries, including post-socialist states, administrative inertia and tokenistic approaches often limit substantive change (Slee, 2013; Burke, 2012). Urban-rural divides in resources, training access, and exposure to diversity have further deepened inequities in educational inclusion (Heymann et al., 2014).

Recent literature also emphasizes the importance of engaging disabled voices in shaping inclusive environments. Studies by Bruyère et al. (2004) and Roggero et al. (2006) highlight that meaningful inclusion requires institutional will and participatory approaches that challenge hierarchical assumptions and reframe People with disabilities as rights-bearing citizens rather than passive recipients of support.

Despite the growing number of frameworks and tools promoting inclusion in higher education, implementation gaps remain. The literature calls for sustained professional development, inclusive hiring practices, and organizational cultures that recognize the full spectrum of disability—including invisible and cognitive forms—as essential components of institutional equity (WHO, 2012; Ali et al., 2012).

3. Materials and Methods

Aim of the Study

This study aims to explore the attitudes of university administrative staff in Georgia toward people with disabilities (PwDs) and their perceptions of inclusive environments in higher education institutions. Specifically, the research examines how demographic variables such as age, gender, institutional location (urban vs. regional), and duration of employment influence attitudes toward disability. Additionally, the study investigates which occupational roles university staff consider suitable for People with disabilities, revealing underlying assumptions about employability and inclusivity.

This study addresses a significant gap in the Georgian higher education context, where empirical evidence on disability inclusion is limited and where universities are undergoing transitional reforms aligned with broader diversity and equity goals. The findings inform policy development, staff training programs, and institutional strategies for fostering inclusive educational and workplace environments for People with disabilities.

 doi:10.20944/preprints202504.2611.v1

Research Design

A cross-sectional, quantitative research design was employed to assess the attitudes of administrative staff toward People with disabilities across two public universities in Georgia: one located in the capital city, Tbilisi, and the other in a regional area. This design enabled a comparative analysis between urban and regional institutional environments and allowed the capture of a snapshot of current perceptions and practices.

Participants

Sixty-three university administrative staff members (N=63) participated in the study. The sample included employees from various administrative departments, such as human resources, student services, academic affairs, and finance. Participants were recruited through purposive sampling, with support from university administrations. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and the study protocol received ethical approval from the relevant institutional review board.

Demographic data collected included participants' age, gender, duration of employment, and institutional location. These variables were later used to examine their relationship with attitudes toward disability.

Data Collection Tool

The primary instrument used in this study was the Attitudes to Disability Scale (ADS), developed by Power et al. (2010) under the World Health Organization's Quality of Life framework. The ADS comprises 16 items measuring four subscales:

- Inclusion (e.g., belief in People with disabilities' ability to participate in society);
- Discrimination (e.g., negative stereotypes or stigma);
- Prospects (e.g., perceived future opportunities for People with disabilities);
- Gains (e.g., personal or social enrichment through engagement with People with disabilities).

Each item was rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree." The ADS has been validated in multiple cultural contexts, and for this study, a Georgian-language version was used following rigorous translation and back-translation protocols by WHO guidelines (WHOQOL-DIS Manual, 2012).

The maximum total score for each domain is 20 (midpoint score of 10). Inclusion and Discrimination were correlated positively (Spearman's rho=.419, $p<0.001$) and Gains and Discrimination was correlated positively (Spearman's rho=.277, $p<0.05$). As it is showed Discrimination and Prospects Scales have good internal consistency (See Table 1).

Table 1. Georgian Version of Psychometrics of Attitudes to Disability Scale (ADS).

Domain	Items (4 per domain)	Cronbach's α
Inclusion	- People with a disability find it harder than others to make friends - People with a disability have problems getting involved in society - People with a disability are a burden on society - People with a disability are a burden on their family	0.60
Discrimination	- People often make fun of disabilities - People with a disability are easier to take advantage of - People tend to become impatient with those with a disability	0.80

 doi:10.20944/preprints202504.2611.v1

Domain	Items (4 per domain)	Cronbach's α
	- People tend to treat those with a disability as if they have no feelings	
Gains	- Having a disability can make someone a stronger person - Having a disability can make someone a wiser person - Some people achieve more because of their disability - People with a disability are more determined to reach their goals	0.60
Prospects	- Sex should not be discussed with people with disabilities - People should not expect too much from those with a disability - People with a disability should not be optimistic about their future	0.80

In addition to the ADS, the survey included an open-ended question asking participants to suggest job roles within the university that they believed were appropriate for People with disabilities. This qualitative component provided additional context to the quantitative findings and helped to uncover implicit occupational stereotypes.

Data Collection Procedure

The survey was distributed in paper and electronic formats, depending on staff preference and accessibility needs. Data collection was conducted over a two-month period in 2024. Participation was voluntary and anonymous, and responses were assured that they would be used solely for academic research purposes.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics software (Version 27). Descriptive statistics were computed to summarize participant demographics and average scores across ADS subscales. Inferential analyses included t-tests and one-way ANOVA to assess differences in attitudes based on demographic variables such as age, gender, location, and years of employment. Additionally, Pearson's correlation coefficients were used to explore the relationships between continuous variables (e.g., age and ADS scores).

Qualitative data from the open-ended responses were coded thematically. Common categories were identified to interpret the types of occupational roles perceived as appropriate for People with disabilities and to contextualize these views within broader attitudinal frameworks.

Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to international ethical standards for research involving human participants. All participants provided informed consent prior to participation. Anonymity and confidentiality were strictly maintained throughout the study. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. The Ethics Committee of Ilia State University granted ethical approval.

Limitations

While the study provides valuable insights, it is not without limitations. The sample size is relatively small and drawn from only two universities, which may limit the generalizability of findings. Additionally, self-reported attitudes may be subject to social desirability bias, especially in institutional contexts where inclusivity is politically emphasized.

 doi:10.20944/preprints202504.2611.v1

Despite these limitations, the study offers a timely and empirically grounded perspective on the inclusivity landscape within Georgian higher education and contributes to the ongoing discourse on disability rights and inclusive academic environments.

4. Results

This section presents the key findings from the cross-sectional survey conducted with 63 university administrative staff members in Georgia. The data analysis focused on the Attitudes to Disability Scale (ADS) and open-ended responses regarding employability perceptions. The results are organized according to the core variables of interest: age, gender, location (urban vs. regional), duration of employment, disability type preferences, and occupational role suggestions.

4.1. General Attitudinal Trends

Across the total sample, attitudes toward people with disabilities (PwDs) were generally positive on the ADS Inclusion and Gains subscales. Participants broadly affirmed the potential of PwDs to contribute meaningfully to university life and society. However, mixed scores were observed on the Discrimination and Prospects subscales, revealing latent biases and skepticism regarding the long-term success and independence of People with disabilities.

4.2. Differences by Age

Participants aged 18–34 exhibited significantly more favourable attitudes on the Inclusion (M = 4.3, SD = 0.5) and Prospects (M = 4.1, SD = 0.6) subscales than older age groups. Respondents over 50 years showed more neutral or hesitant responses regarding the career trajectories of People with disabilities, especially in leadership or decision-making roles. Younger staff also scored higher on the Gains subscale, suggesting they were more likely to perceive personal or institutional enrichment from working alongside People with disabilities.

4.3. Differences by Gender

Female respondents scored higher than males on all four ADS subscales, with statistically significant differences observed on Inclusion and Gains. Women were more likely to endorse affirmative statements about People with disabilities' right to work, social participation, and value within the academic environment. Although not overtly negative, male staff demonstrated more cautious or conditional acceptance.

4.4. Urban vs. Regional Institutional Differences

Staff from the urban university (Tbilisi) demonstrated significantly higher scores on the Inclusion (M = 4.2) and Prospects (M = 4.0) subscales compared to their regional counterparts (M = 3.7 and 3.5, respectively). Regional university staff were more likely to express concerns about the availability of resources and infrastructure to support People with disabilities and were more likely to agree with statements suggesting limitations in People with disabilities' employability.

4.5. Duration of Employment

Participants with longer employment durations (10+ years) scored lower on the Inclusion and Gains subscales than those with less than 5 years of experience. These findings suggest a possible decline in openness over time, potentially linked to institutional conservatism or limited exposure to disability inclusion training during earlier career stages.

4.6. Disability Type Perceptions

When asked about their willingness and acceptance to work with individuals with different types of disabilities, respondents were more accepting of physical impairments than intellectual or

 doi:10.20944/preprints202504.2611.v1

psychosocial disabilities. Intellectual disabilities, in particular, were associated with a significantly lower willingness to employ or collaborate (See Table 2).

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for Acceptance and Willingness toward People with Disabilities across Functional Domains (N = 63).

Domain	Mean	Median	Mode	SD	Min	Max
Acceptance						
Mobility and manual barriers	7.78	8	10	2.49	1	10
Visual barriers	7.14	8	10	3.03	1	10
Hearing or communication barriers	5.87	6	10	2.99	1	10
Cognitive barriers (incl. intellectual & mental)	4.54	4	1	2.91	1	10
Willingness						
Mobility and manual barriers	3.11	3	3	0.81	1	4
Visual barriers	3.02	3	3	0.77	1	4
Hearing or communication barriers	2.51	2	2	0.86	1	4
Cognitive barriers (incl. intellectual & mental)	2.14	2	2	0.90	1	4

This trend reflects global research findings about the "hierarchy of disability" and points to a critical area for awareness-building.

4.7. Suggested Occupational Roles for People with Disabilities

Thematic analysis of open-ended responses revealed a tendency to assign People with disabilities to roles perceived as low-risk, low-responsibility, or highly routinized. Most frequently suggested positions included:

- Assistant
- Copy Machine Specialist
- IT Assistant

Few participants proposed administrative or academic roles, and even fewer suggested managerial or supervisory positions. Responses often reflected implicit assumptions that People with disabilities require constant support or cannot handle complex tasks, particularly in environments involving public interaction or decision-making authority (See Table 3).

Table 3. Perceived Suitable Job Positions for Persons with Disabilities (Ranked by Percentage of Agreement).

Job Position	Percentage (%)
Assistant	73.0
Copy Machine Specialist	65.1
IT Specialist	57.1
Consultant	50.8
Assistant Librarian	50.8
Assistant Teacher	47.6
Operator's Assistant	46.0

 doi:10.20944/preprints202504.2611.v1

Job Position	Percentage (%)
Administrator	44.4
Cleaning and maintenance staff	42.9
Technician	38.1
Services at Café	34.9
Dish Washing at Café	30.2
Guard	30.2
Gardening	31.7
Cook at Café	28.6
Postal Office	28.6
Animal Care	23.8

4.8. Contradictions Between Policy and Perception

Although participants were generally aware of institutional policies promoting inclusion, qualitative responses often contradicted these principles. For instance, while Inclusion scores were relatively high, practical suggestions for integration were limited in scope. This gap between stated values and practical imagination suggests the persistence of structural ableism despite formal policy commitments.

Overall, the findings reveal a nuanced picture: while declarative attitudes toward disability are increasingly positive, particularly among younger and urban-based staff, significant gaps remain in perceptions of employability, especially for individuals with cognitive or psychosocial disabilities. These attitudinal barriers directly affect the development of inclusive employment policies and workplace practices within Georgian universities.

5. Discussion

This discussion interprets the study's key findings in the context of existing literature on disability, inclusion, and higher education, with a focus on administrative staff perceptions within Georgian universities. It explores how demographic variables, institutional environments, and cultural attitudes interact to shape understandings of disability and inclusivity.

Positive Attitudes Mask Structural Barriers

The study found generally favourable attitudes toward People with disabilities on the ADS Inclusion and Gains subscales, particularly among younger and female staff. These results are consistent with global findings suggesting that younger generations socialized within human rights discourses are more receptive to inclusive values (Lindsay et al., 2013). Female participants' higher empathy scores align with previous research linking gender with prosocial orientations (Siperstein et al., 2007).

However, this positivity appears to be superficial in many cases. The dissonance between inclusive attitudes and limited imagination in job role suggestions underscores what Gibson (2015) calls a "post-rights paradox": institutions appear to comply with inclusion rhetorically while sustaining exclusionary practices in reality. This contradiction reflects a persistent hierarchy of disability (Scior, 2011), wherein physical impairments are considered more "acceptable" than intellectual or psychosocial disabilities.

Urban Advantage and Regional Constraints

 doi:10.20944/preprints202504.2611.v1

Staff in the Tbilisi-based university scored higher on the Inclusion and Prospects subscales, suggesting that urban institutions may have greater access to resources, exposure to inclusive practices, and policy enforcement mechanisms. These findings align with research from other transitional societies where regional disparities hinder the implementation of equitable policies (Heymann et al., 2014).

Nonetheless, even in urban contexts, limitations in role suggestions reveal how deeply entrenched ableist norms remain. Despite institutional policies promoting disability rights, staff often defaulted to suggesting roles of low complexity or limited visibility. This suggests that policy diffusion has not yet transformed internalized perceptions of competence and potential.

Tenure and Institutional Inertia

The study observed that staff with longer employment durations expressed more cautious or sceptical views toward People with disabilities. This trend may indicate institutional inertia, where exposure to outdated models of disability during earlier phases of career development continues to shape present-day attitudes (Yuker, 1994; Gibson, 2015).

This cohort effect also highlights the importance of sustained professional development and training that updates staff perceptions and practices in line with contemporary disability frameworks.

Disability Type and the Limits of Inclusion

Respondents' reluctance to employ individuals with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities points to deep-seated stigma. This hierarchy of disability is not unique to Georgia and has been observed in many cultural contexts (Zheng et al., 2016). However, in Georgia, the influence of Soviet-era medicalized views of disability may further reinforce these biases (Institute of Social Studies and Analysis, 2016).

Moreover, the ADS subscale on Discrimination revealed ongoing stereotyping and paternalism. While overtly hostile attitudes were rare, the frequent assignment of supportive or custodial roles to People with disabilities suggests that inclusion is conditional and patronizing rather than empowering. As Piggott and Houghton (2007) discussed, real inclusion must extend beyond integration to encompass agency, autonomy, and parity of esteem.

Institutional Policy vs. Practical Inclusion

Although respondents reported awareness of university policies on inclusion, their practical suggestions for integrating People with disabilities into the workforce were often narrow and limiting. This gap reflects findings from other contexts where institutional commitments to diversity are undermined by the everyday reproduction of exclusion (Ahmed, 2012; Burke, 2012).

The notion of a "diversity smile" (Ahmed, 2012) is apt here: Universities project an image of compliance and openness, yet systemic change remains superficial. Staff may perceive inclusion as a bureaucratic obligation rather than a transformative practice. Without engagement in the epistemological conflict that inclusion entails (Slee, 2013), universities risk reducing diversity to symbolic gestures.

Implications for Georgian Higher Education

The results of this study suggest that Georgian universities must move beyond declarative commitments to inclusion and instead adopt structural, cultural, and pedagogical reforms. These might include:

- Ongoing training in inclusive education and disability awareness, tailored by role and department
- Development of inclusive recruitment and promotion pathways for People with disabilities
- Institutional audits to identify and dismantle ableist assumptions embedded in job design

 doi:10.20944/preprints202504.2611.v1

- Strengthening the visibility and agency of disability services units

Regional institutions also need to build capacity to reduce geographic disparities in inclusive practices. As the global literature demonstrates, decentralization of support, resource sharing, and leadership engagement are critical for successful implementation (ILO, 2004; Bruyère et al., 2004).

Toward a Post-Rights Pedagogy

In line with Gibson's (2015) critique, this study reinforces the need for a post-rights pedagogy—an approach that treats inclusion not as a compliance task but as an ethical and epistemic transformation. Such an approach would challenge the normative assumptions of the university as a space designed for nondisabled bodies and minds and instead centre the voices, needs, and ambitions of disabled people themselves.

By fostering dialogical, reflexive, and participatory institutional cultures, Georgia universities can close the gap between policy and practice, between attitude and action. Only through such efforts can inclusive environments truly flourish.

6. Conclusions

This study contributes to the growing understanding of the barriers and enablers of disability inclusion within Georgian universities. While many administrative staff expressed generally positive attitudes toward people with disabilities (PwDs), deeper analysis revealed significant disparities in the perceived employability and roles suitable for People with disabilities—particularly those with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities. These findings suggest that while Georgian higher education institutions are formally aligned with inclusive policies, they still reflect structural ableism and cultural biases, especially among longer-serving and regionally-based staff.

The observed discrepancy between institutional commitment and practical application is consistent with broader international literature, which identifies the gap between symbolic policy and transformative practice (Ahmed, 2012; Gibson, 2015). The widespread tendency to suggest only routine or custodial jobs for People with disabilities reflects an underlying deficit-based model that continues to shape workplace norms. To address this, institutions must go beyond awareness-raising and move toward systemic transformation.

7. Recommendations

Based on these findings and international best practices, the following recommendations are proposed to strengthen disability inclusion within Georgian higher education:

Embed Comprehensive Disability Training in Professional Development

Training on disability awareness, Universal Design for Learning (UDL), and inclusive practices should be mandatory and tailored to administrative roles. Given the study's finding that younger staff held more inclusive views, it is essential to provide upskilling opportunities for long-serving personnel, particularly in regional settings where attitudes were less progressive (Power et al., 2010; Lindsay & McPherson, 2013).

Challenge Hierarchies of Disability through Cultural Change

The persistent bias favouring physical over intellectual or psychosocial disabilities requires targeted interventions. Awareness campaigns, guided by people with lived experience of disability, can confront these assumptions and humanize less visible impairments (Scior, 2011; WHO, 2012).

Reevaluate Job Design and Institutional Roles

The narrow range of roles suggested for People with disabilities in this study signals an urgent need to redesign administrative and academic functions. Institutions should conduct audits of job descriptions and adopt flexible models that accommodate various strengths and support needs (Bruyère et al., 2004; Roggero et al., 2006).

 doi:10.20944/preprints202504.2611.v1

Strengthen and Empower Disability Support Units

These units should be granted expanded authority, funding, and visibility to lead institutional reforms. Their mandate should include data monitoring, staff training, and advising on inclusive recruitment. Their absence or underutilization was noted indirectly in participants' reliance on vague references to policy rather than specific practices.

Foster Participation of People with disabilities in Institutional Governance

Genuine inclusion requires participatory structures. Involving disabled students and staff in decision-making bodies, planning committees, and evaluation processes will ensure institutional change is co-produced rather than imposed from above (Slee, 2013).

Address Urban–Regional Disparities in Inclusion Capacity

The study identified a clear gap between urban (Tbilisi-based) and regional staff attitudes. Targeted capacity-building initiatives, including peer learning exchanges and regional hubs, should be established to decentralize expertise and foster inclusive communities across all campuses (Griful-Freixenet et al., 2017).

Develop Inclusion Benchmarks and Accountability Tools

Universities should adopt explicit inclusion benchmarks tied to national and international standards, such as the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD). Regular self-assessment and reporting mechanisms can help measure progress and keep institutions accountable.

By enacting these recommendations, Georgian universities can move beyond symbolic gestures and toward a transformative model of inclusion that affirms disability as an essential component of human diversity and institutional excellence.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, S.S., K.M. and K.G.; methodology, S.S.; Data collection R.M. and Z.Z. formal analysis, S.S.; writing—original draft preparation, S.S.; review and editing, S.S. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This project (CIF-2023-04) is funded by Ministry of Education, Science and Youth of Georgia, "Innovation, Inclusion and Quality Project – Georgia I2Q".

Institutional Review Board Statement: The study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki and approved by the Ethics Committee of Ilia State University (Approval Date: 2024, January).

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement: The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy considerations.

Acknowledgments: The authors would like to express their gratitude to Dr. Mariam Dalakishvili, a senior researcher and quality assurance expert at Ilia State University, for her valuable support in validating the research instrument. Her insights and expertise greatly contributed to the methodological rigor of the study. During the preparation of this manuscript, the authors used ChatGPT (OpenAI, GPT-4.0, 2025) for the purposes of generating draft text, refining language, and organizing ideas. The authors have reviewed and edited the output and take full responsibility for the content of this publication.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in this manuscript:

PwDs	people with disabilities
UN CRPD	UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CIF	Competitive Innovation Fund
ANOVA	Analysis of Variance

 doi:10.20944/preprints202504.2611.v1

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