



Talent management and employees with disabilities: A systematic literature review in the context of COVID-19

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TALENT MANAGEMENT AND EMPLOYEES WITH DISABILITIES: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW IN THE CONTEXT OF COVID-19

Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this literature review is, first, to understand how employees with disabilities in the context of COVID-19 have been studied under the talent management (TM) approach; second, to explore what we know about the predictors and outcomes that have been linked to TM practices in that area; and third, to identify gaps in our understanding and provide insights for future research.

Design: This paper presents a systematic literature review (SLR) based on 38 academic sources published in high-impact indexes from 2020 to 2023.

Findings: The existing research shows COVID-19 as a crucial context that led organizations to more precarious and segmented TM practices, which had negative consequences for employees with disabilities, both at the individual level (reduced satisfaction and income, and increased health issues), and the organizational level (increased unemployment, turnover, and discrimination as well as declining performance and productivity).

Originality: This paper provides essential contributions to the field of TM in the relatively unexplored context of employees with disabilities since the emergence of COVID-19. Our literature review suggests there is significant room for developing and implementing adjusted TM strategies and practices to foster effective inclusiveness, accommodations, and supportive work environments for employees with disabilities. From this evidence, a number of key avenues for future research and key implications for academics and practitioners are provided.

Keywords: talent management; employees with disabilities; disability; systematic literature review; COVID-19.

TALENT MANAGEMENT AND EMPLOYEES WITH DISABILITIES: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW IN THE CONTEXT OF COVID-19

1.- INTRODUCTION

Talent management (TM) is an area of interest for both practitioners and the academic community as it is recognized as a strategic partner in achieving successful business strategies (Chatterjee *et al.*, 2023; Kaliannan *et al.*, 2023; Luna-Arocas *et al.*, 2020). Specifically, within TM-related literature, one broad category of study revolves around how organizations attract, recruit, retain, and reward this specific section of the workforce (Lewis and Heckman, 2006). This perspective centers on managing and promoting the equitable treatment of employees, irrespective of their hierarchical positions within the organization. In this vein –and focusing on a distinct segment of the workforce– managing individuals who have disabilities has emerged as an increasingly relevant subject for practitioners and scholars alike (Cavanagh *et al.*, 2017; Schloemer-Jarvis *et al.*, 2022).

Employees with disabilities are now being recognized as a valuable workforce asset, particularly in light of the anticipated decline in the working-age population (Vornholt *et al.*, 2018). According to the World Health Organization (2023), approximately 16% of the global population has a disability, and this figure is expected to grow due to the rising prevalence of non-communicable diseases and greater life expectancy. The imperative of seamlessly integrating individuals with disabilities into the workforce has thus become a paramount concern for organizations worldwide, underscoring the pivotal role of human resource (HR) areas in fostering vocational inclusion (Schloemer-Jarvis *et al.*, 2022). However, scholars consider that mainstream

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3 practices for managing people have yet to adequately grapple with the intricacies
4 surrounding disability in the workplace (Cavanagh et al., 2017). Consequently, there is a
5 growing call among scholars to foster research collaboration between TM and inquiry
6 into specific disabilities and contexts in order to delve deeper into this subject (Beatty et
7 al., 2019; Vornholt et al., 2018).
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15 Regarding specific contexts, organizations navigating the COVID-19 pandemic
16 seem to have adopted a more precarious and segmented TM system, deepening divisions
17 among employee groups in terms of HR practices (Aguinis and Burgi-Tian, 2021; Brown
18 and Ciciurkaite, 2023). Employees with disabilities faced unique challenges during this
19 period, including health risks, increased reliance on technology, workplace
20 accommodation issues, and mental health implications (Brown and Ciciurkaite, 2023;
21 Chan et al., 2021; Hyseni et al., 2022; Jashinsky et al., 2021; Maroto et al., 2021). They
22 were also disproportionately affected by changes in employment conditions, including
23 those under either permanent or temporary contract (Hyseni et al., 2022). Moreover, some
24 employers perceived TM practices for employees with disabilities to be more challenging
25 and potentially costly due to the adjustments required for their accommodation during the
26 pandemic (Bryan et al., 2022). The pandemic and the post-pandemic era have therefore
27 resulted in organizations adopting a more unstable and segmented TM system (Brown
28 and Ciciurkaite, 2023), disrupting the “open talent economy” (Orel et al., 2022, p. 1526)
29 and exacerbating divisions across employee groups in terms of TM practices (Aguinis
30 and Burgi-Tian, 2021). Considering this context, focusing on inclusive work
31 environments for individuals with disabilities was (and still is) a crucial challenge.
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54 While prior research noted that practices for managing people with disabilities are
55 less interconnected (Schloemer-Jarvis et al., 2022), and with most studies focusing
56 mainly on profitability rather than on the actual inclusion of people with disabilities in
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3 the workforce (Lindsay *et al.*, 2018), the impact of the pandemic on employees with
4 disabilities brings forth more challenges. The specific impact of the pandemic varies
5 depending on factors such as the nature of people's disability, the accessibility of their
6 work environment, available support systems, and/or how their employers respond. In an
7 effort to fully grasp and so address the intricacies surrounding disability in the workplace
8 within the critical context of the COVID-19 pandemic, we thus aim to conduct a
9 systematic literature review (SLR) that provides a comprehensive understanding and that
10 extracts valuable insights from TM research pertaining to employees with disabilities in
11 the context of COVID-19.
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23 We argue that fostering greater alignment between scholars in the fields of TM
24 and disability research –particularly in the context of COVID-19– can yield significant
25 benefits for several reasons. Firstly, individuals with disabilities possess diverse and
26 distinct natures and characteristics –which are by no means uniform (Wong *et al.*, 2022).
27 In broad terms, a disability is defined as a condition that is significantly impaired in
28 comparison to the typical standard of an individual or group (Ayuningtyas *et al.*, 2022).
29 Consequently, effectively managing individuals with disabilities necessitates alternative
30 practices that qualitatively differ from standard HR practices within organizations.
31 Tailored strategies and practices are needed to address the expectations and requirements
32 of this specific target group, both in terms of attracting them to the organization and
33 subsequently motivating and retaining them. However, our understanding of these TM
34 practices and their effective contexts is currently limited. There remains a significant level
35 of ambiguity regarding the interplay of factors that contribute to high performance and
36 well-being when studying employees with disabilities.
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55 Secondly, there is global contextual support for advancing the rights and interests
56 of individuals with disabilities. The inclusion of persons with disabilities is explicitly
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3 addressed within the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (United Nations General
4 Assembly, 2015), leading to increased awareness and focus on disability inclusion in
5 employment as part of the broader diversity agenda. However, research on disability
6 awareness still lags behind studies exploring other dimensions of diversity, such as gender,
7 race, and ethnicity (Beatty *et al.*, 2019). Providing evidence-based findings is therefore
8 crucial for TM practitioners vis-à-vis promoting equitable treatment and opportunities for
9 individuals with disabilities.
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19 Lastly, scholars have emphasized the need for further research on TM in specific
20 contexts (Gallardo-Gallardo and Thunnissen, 2016). Understanding context as external
21 conditions that can impact TM systems, the global crisis triggered by COVID-19 remains
22 a critical item on the agenda for both TM and disability research. The crisis has compelled
23 organizations to adopt more innovative and effective TM approaches. Furthermore, some
24 employers perceived TM practices for employees with disabilities as being more
25 challenging and potentially risky during the pandemic due to the possible additional costs
26 associated with accommodating these employees (Bryan *et al.*, 2022). Consequently, it is
27 crucial to focus on TM experiences in critical contexts by fostering inclusive work
28 environments for individuals with disabilities, as this poses an important challenge and
29 can result in elevated levels of “employee morale, job satisfaction, and retention for all
30 employees, regardless of disability status” (Jashinsky *et al.*, 2021, p. 319). However, TM
31 strategies for employees with disabilities in the context of COVID-19 remain limited and
32 fragmented (Schloemer-Jarvis *et al.*, 2022). Providing integrative reviews can thus
33 contribute to offering valuable informational resources for both academics and
34 practitioners.
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56 In line with these concerns, this paper aims to conduct a systematic review of peer-
57 refereed published research to offer a comprehensive overview of previous findings
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3 concerning TM and employees with disabilities in the context of COVID-19. To achieve
4 this, we address the following research questions: (1) How has disability been
5 conceptualized in TM research since the inclusion of COVID-19 as a contextual factor
6 for studying employees with disabilities? (2) How has TM been studied in relation to
7 employees with disabilities in the context of COVID-19? (3) What do we currently know
8 about the factors influencing TM for employees with disabilities in this context? (4) What
9 are the resulting outcomes? (5) What future research directions can be proposed based on
10 previous studies on TM focused on employees with disabilities since the emergence of
11 COVID-19? To address these questions, we conduct a systematic review of literature,
12 examining 38 published research articles from high-impact indexed sources from 2020 to
13 2023. Overall, this paper represents a valuable contribution by synthesizing the
14 significant literature base in this crucial area, and it highlights key directions for future
15 researchers in advancing the field of TM through an inclusive research agenda.
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33 The subsequent sections provide a comprehensive overview of the review
34 methodology, including detailed information on article selection and data extraction. We
35 then present the findings for each of the five research questions, which encompass the
36 definitions used to refer to employees with disabilities and the types of disabilities
37 explored, the primary TM practices investigated, and the factors and outcomes associated
38 with implementing TM practices for people with disabilities. Finally, we identify
39 underexplored areas that require further attention in future research, and we present a
40 concluding summary.
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54 **2.- REVIEW SCOPE AND CODING INFORMATION**

56 In order to acquire a thorough understanding of our knowledge regarding TM with
57 specific focus on employees with disabilities in the context of COVID-19, we perform an
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3 SLR, which involves a structured approach, using a predefined protocol to guide data
4 collection and analysis, facilitate clear and open reporting, and so enable replication of
5 the study (Kraus *et al.*, 2022). In order to ensure methodological rigor, we adhere to the
6 guidelines proposed by Tranfield *et al.* (2003), and in line with those offered by previous
7 systematic reviews on business and management research (Kraus *et al.*, 2020; Lozano-
8 Reina and Sánchez-Marín, 2020; Sauer and Seuring, 2023). Specifically, we conduct a
9 comprehensive search across business and social science databases to identify relevant
10 publications. Using a Boolean search approach, we specifically target terms in the title,
11 abstract, and keywords of publications (see Table 1 for a description of databases and
12 terms) considering the period 2020-2023.
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31 The search initially identified 2,232 publications written in English. We removed
32 sources if they met one of the following conditions (Danvila-del-Valle *et al.*, 2019): (1)
33 publications outside the defined quality threshold (*JCR and/or SJR*)¹; (2) duplicated
34 publications; (3) publications that did not include employees with disabilities in the
35 context of COVID-19 as an essential part of their subject of analysis; (4) publications
36 where TM was not discussed either directly or indirectly; (5) opinion pieces and column
37 articles; and (6) publications from fields with no clear relationship to TM (i.e., medicine,
38 neuroscience, environmental science). As a result, we were left with 61 publications in
39 the sample. In order to assess their relevance and suitability for the review topic, two
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54 ¹ The evaluation of a paper's quality often involves using metrics that analyze the impact factors employing
55 specific algorithms (Caputo *et al.*, 2022; Durach *et al.*, 2015; Keupp and Gassmann, 2009; Lozano-Reina
56 and Sánchez-Marín, 2020; Martineau and Pastoriza, 2016). One commonly used index is the Journal
57 Citation Reports (JCR), which allows journals to be assessed and compared based on their impact factors.
58 This index uses citation data from scholarly and technical journals within the Web of Science, provided by
59 Clarivate Analytics. Another publicly accessible portal—the Scimago Journal Rank (SJR)—adopts a similar
60 method to evaluate and compare journals. It incorporates information from the Scopus database,
administered by Elsevier B.V.

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3 authors conducted a thorough examination of the contents of these publications. After
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5 careful evaluation, 38 publications were identified as the foundation for this review. For
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7 a detailed list of the publications included, please see Appendix A.
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10 After identifying the publications, we tested the precoding with a small set of
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12 articles in order to align concepts. We then coded the rest of the articles individually, and
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14 finally we discussed them. Specifically, we used an excel data extraction sheet in which
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16 we coded the following information. First, we collected various descriptive elements for
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18 each source, which encompassed author(s), year of publication, journal, methodology
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20 (approach, sample, data, and country), paper goal/purpose, and main results. Second, we
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22 identified the definitions used to refer to employees with disabilities and the types of
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24 disabilities. Third, we coded the TM practices to identify how TM had been studied.
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26 Fourth, we coded both external and internal predictors to identify those factors that
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28 influence the implementation and execution of TM practices for people with disabilities.
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30 Fifth, in order to identify the outcomes linked to TM focus on employees with disabilities,
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32 we coded the type of outcomes according to the level of analysis (i.e., social level, firm
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34 level, group level, or individual level). In this way, we construct a database consisting of
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36 articles that explore this particular research area. To maintain consistency in the coding
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38 process, two authors independently coded each article, and subsequent discussions were
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40 held until a consensus was reached –in line with procedures used in previous studies
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42 (Gregoire *et al.*, 2011; Lozano-Reina and Sánchez-Marín, 2020; Nolan and Garavan,
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44 2016).
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54 **3.- RESULTS**

55 **3.1.- General sample characteristics**

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58 Bearing in mind that this literature review focuses on how COVID-19 impacted
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3 TM for employees with disabilities, the timeframe in which the 38 articles were published
4 extends from 2020 to 2023. Considering this time frame, two articles were published in
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6 2020, 12 articles in 2021, 19 articles in 2022, and five articles in 2023². Despite this short
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8 time frame, the issue can be considered a “hot topic” for two main reasons: (i) the number
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10 and diversity of published articles in these three years, and (ii) the large number of
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12 citations these articles have received in the period covered by this literature review, and
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14 which reached 375 citations³. All of the articles in question have been published in a wide
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16 range of journals –spanning both science and social science. The journals with the largest
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18 number of publications are *Journal of Occupational Rehabilitation* (N=4), *Journal of*
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20 *Vocational Rehabilitation* (N=3), and *Journal of Cancer Survivorship* (N=2). The rest of
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22 the journals (including some related to TM issues such as *The Career Development*
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24 *Quarterly*, *International Journal of Training and Development*, *British Journal of*
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26 *Learning Disabilities*, or *Employee Relations: The International Journal*) only include
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28 one publication on this topic.
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35 Moreover, as regards the approach adopted by each paper, most articles take an
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37 empirical approach (N=33) while a few take a theoretical or conceptual approach (N=5)
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39 (see Appendix A for further information). Among the empirical studies, most have a
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41 quantitative approach (N=20), with others adopting a purely qualitative approach (N=11),
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43 and a few having a mixed approach (N=2). While most quantitative studies are based on
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45 cross-sectional survey designs, data from qualitative studies are often obtained from
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47 [structured or semi-structured] interviews and focus groups. Beyond these approaches, it
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49 is worth highlighting the following qualitative techniques used for other papers: (i)
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51 interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) (Voermans *et al.*, 2023); (ii) participatory
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57 ² In order to assess the year each article was published, we take the year in which the volume and issue in
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59 the journal was assigned.

60 ³ The citation count was obtained from the software “Litmaps” (see <https://www.litmaps.com>), and data were updated to 10 September 2023.

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3 research methodology (de Castro *et al.*, 2023); and (iii) the multiple probe design
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5 (Downey *et al.*, 2022). Finally, as regards theoretical or conceptual papers, it is worth
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7 highlighting bibliographic content analysis (Cruz-Morato *et al.*, 2021) as well as another
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9 article based on a causal loop diagram approach (Ayuningtyas *et al.*, 2022).
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12 As for topics, the studies included in this literature review address determining
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14 factors and/or outcomes related to TM practices for people with disabilities in the context
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16 of COVID-19 (described in detail in sub-section 3.3). In addition, most specifically focus
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18 on examining people (mostly employed people) with a wide variety of disabilities (N=18).
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20 Another group of papers is based on general population surveys (e.g., Current Population
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22 Survey from the USA, or the Labour Force Survey from the UK) which then draw
23
24 comparisons between people with and without disabilities (N=13). Finally, a small
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26 number of studies focus on the role played by HR managers and staff who support
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28 employees with disabilities (N=2) (McMahon *et al.*, 2020; Randall *et al.*, 2022). As
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30 regards geographical regions, the USA and the UK are the countries with the most
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32 research activity (N=22, where six studies used samples from the UK and 16 from the
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34 USA). The remaining studies (N=8) are based in other European countries (Spain,
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36 Germany, Sweden, Turkey, and the Netherlands) or Asia (Israel), and Africa (Egypt and
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38 Kenya).
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3.2.- Disability conceptualization

50 The conceptualization of people with disabilities used by most authors seems quite
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52 similar. Two of the most widely employed definitions are those provided by the
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54 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the World Health Organization (WHO).
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56 While ADA defines disability as broadly referring to “anyone who is substantially limited
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58 in a major life activity” (Shinall, 2022, p. 1155), the WHO points out that disability is
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3 referred to as “the outcome or result of complex relationships between an individual’s
4 health condition and personal factors, and of the external factors that represent the
5 circumstances in which the individual lives” (Mousa, 2022, p. 878). A disability can thus
6 be defined as any [cognitive, intellectual, physical, sensory] condition that is significantly
7 impaired relative to the usual standard of any individual. Among these, physical
8 disabilities –defined as any conditions that affect a person’s mental health and cognitive
9 functioning , mobility, dexterity or stamina that may limit daily living activities (Wong
10 *et al.*, 2022)– and psychological disabilities –defined as any limitation of a person’s
11 physical functioning, mobility, dexterity or stamina that may limit daily living activities
12 (Wong *et al.*, 2022)– tend to be the most widely studied.
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26 Beyond this general conceptual framework, there are important nuances that
27 should be considered in this context –as shown in Table 2. While most articles in this
28 literature review focus on narrower definitions of disability (i.e., only including one
29 specific type of disability within their empirical design) (N=16), another group of papers
30 consider wide definitions of disability that encompass a range of impairments (N=7).
31 More specifically, papers aligned with a more extended definition of disability encompass
32 any individual who may suffer visual, hearing, emotional, cognitive, and mobility
33 impairments, and activity limitations (e.g., difficulty with self-care, and difficulty going
34 outside alone). For their part, studies that draw on a more restricted group of employees
35 with disabilities, only tend to focus on employees with one specific type of disability
36 (e.g., physical, intellectual, developmental, or learning disability).
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56 Finally, other papers focus on another type of disability which we classify as
57 “other health conditions” (N=10), as shown in Table 2. Among these, autism and cancer
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3 are two types of disabilities that have been considered by previous papers and which are
4 of great relevance. Autism –a lifelong neurodevelopmental condition– is characterized by
5 a range of impairments that encompass deficits in communication and social interaction
6 across various contexts. These are accompanied by restricted repetitive patterns of
7 behavior, interests, or activities, as well as sensory sensitivities (Goldfarb *et al.*, 2022).
8 Moreover, cancer may be considered as a kind of invisible disability, such that certain
9 countries (e.g. the USA) tend to cover employees who are currently battling cancer, who
10 are in remission, or who have a history of cancer (Hyseni *et al.*, 2022).
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24 **3.3.- Talent management practices for employees with disabilities in the** 25 **context of COVID-19** 26 27

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29 COVID-19 explicitly affected employees with disabilities, since they faced more
30 specific challenges during this time compared to their peers (e.g., health risk and
31 vulnerabilities, increased reliance on technology, issues regarding workplace
32 accommodations, mental health implications, etc.) (Brown and Ciciurkaite, 2023; Chan
33 *et al.*, 2021; Hyseni *et al.*, 2022; Jashinsky *et al.*, 2021; Maroto *et al.*, 2021), all of which
34 impact TM practices. In fact, employees with disabilities are disproportionately affected
35 by changes in employment conditions, including those experienced in contract and
36 temporary work (Hyseni *et al.*, 2022). In addition, some employers see TM practices for
37 employees with disabilities as being more challenging and potentially risky during the
38 pandemic –since they may encounter additional costs associated with making the
39 necessary work adjustments required to accommodate these employees (Bryan *et al.*,
40 2022). For this reason, paying attention to TM practices by creating work environments
41 that are inclusive of individuals with disabilities is an important challenge and should lead
42 to higher levels of “employee morale, job satisfaction, and retention for all employees,
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3 regardless of disability status” (Jashinsky *et al.*, 2021, p. 319).
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6 Whatever the case, the impact of the pandemic on employees with disabilities is
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8 by no means uniform. People with disabilities have unique circumstances, and the specific
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10 impact varies depending on factors such as the nature of their disability, the accessibility
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12 of their work environment, available support systems, and/or the responses of their
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14 employers. Considering this scenario, TM practices can be analyzed through the changes
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16 experienced in the following policies: job designs, recruitment and selection,
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18 performance appraisal, training, communication, career development, and benefits –all of
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20 which have an impact on TM practices for employees with disabilities– (see the central
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22 part of Figure 1).
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26 Insert Figure 1 about here
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32 Firstly, *job designs* for people with disabilities are primarily influenced by
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34 accommodation issues (Rumrill *et al.*, 2021). The pandemic forced individuals to adapt
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36 their working environments to meet their specific needs and made it easier to
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38 accommodate employees with disabilities. The required accommodations –considered as
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40 a “continuous improvement process” (Rumrill *et al.*, 2021)– are an opportunity for greater
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42 flexibility and inclusivity in the workplace since certain physical barriers that might have
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44 otherwise hindered employees with disabilities were eliminated. Although these
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46 accommodations are often a legal right for employees with disabilities, the evidence
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48 reports low rates of access to pandemic-relevant accommodations –partially due to
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50 occupational segregation (Shinall, 2022). In this context, companies are more likely to
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52 implement inclusive and accessible accommodations for employees when they have
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54 disability management specialists who possess the necessary knowledge and expertise to
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56 effectively manage job accommodations (Chan *et al.*, 2021) and when they take a
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3 proactive approach (Adams *et al.*, 2021).
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5 Secondly, *recruitment* and *selection* policies also impact TM practices for people
6 with disabilities. In terms of hiring policies, companies need to provide disability
7 inclusion training for their HR recruiters, ensuring they are equipped to effectively recruit
8 and select qualified individuals with disabilities (Chan *et al.*, 2021). In addition, other
9 hiring strategies –such as clearly and assertively conveying the firm’s commitment to
10 hiring people with disabilities or posting a statement of commitment to hiring people with
11 disabilities on the firm’s website –may prove essential (Chan *et al.*, 2021). In fact, Bezyak
12 *et al.* (2020) found a positive correlation between disability inclusion strategies and hiring
13 intention.
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26 Thirdly, *training* policy is also highlighted. In an effort to foster a more inclusive
27 post-pandemic workplace, companies have recognized the need to educate employees,
28 managers, and leaders about disability-related issues and inclusive practices. The
29 literature reports that disability inclusion training is positively related to the inclusion of
30 people with disabilities (Iwanaga *et al.*, 2018). It is thus essential for firms to incorporate
31 “work and disability” as a topic within their diversity and inclusion training (Chan *et al.*,
32 2021), extending the focus so as to educate employees across the organization about the
33 experiences and needs of individuals with disabilities in the workplace. Moreover, digital
34 skills –in other words, the ability to effectively use technological devices (de Castro *et*
35 *al.*, 2023)– became crucial after the onset of the pandemic. This was particularly
36 significant for individuals with learning disabilities, as remote work became a viable
37 option, although they did require additional avenues through which to acquire and
38 enhance their digital skills (de Castro *et al.*, 2023). In sum, these training actions should
39 tend to promote disability awareness, foster empathy, and endow employees with the
40 knowledge and skills needed to create an inclusive work environment.
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3 Fourthly, other studies focus on *performance appraisal* and *career planning and*
4 *development* policies. In the context of [post-]pandemic performance appraisal policies,
5 it has become increasingly important to set annual targets and to assess performance so
6 as to meet the application and employment goals of individuals with disabilities (Chan *et*
7 *al.*, 2021). Moreover, career and vocational professionals are crucial because they have a
8 unique advantage in helping individuals with disabilities to effectively manage the
9 employment, mental health, and physical health consequences stemming from COVID-
10 19 (Jashinsky *et al.*, 2021).
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21 Lastly, the design of compensation policies (specifically related to health care
22 benefits) has also been affected after the COVID-19 pandemic. These healthcare benefits
23 for employees with disabilities are so important due to “the prohibitive costs of doctor
24 visits, hospitalizations, and prescription drugs” (Jashinsky *et al.*, 2021, p. 316), and they
25 seek to cover access to specialized care, mental health support, insurance coverage and
26 policy changes, as well as workplace health and safety measures. Adams *et al.* (2021)
27 state that rehabilitation professionals can effectively support people with disabilities by
28 empowering them to advocate for themselves, offering adaptive home therapeutic
29 equipment, and helping to identify a range of employment skill sets. Nevertheless, few
30 studies have paid attention to such issues up to now.
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47 **3.4.- Factors and outcomes influencing talent management practices for** 48 **employees with disabilities in the context of COVID-19** 49 50

51 The main determining factors and outcomes influencing TM practices for
52 employees with disabilities in the context of COVID-19 are shown in Figure 1.
53 Determining factors can be classified into internal and external. Outcomes can be
54 classified into individual, organizational, and social outcomes.
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3 Internal determining factors. Current literature notes that communication
4 strategies, managerial support, and teleworking are the most influential factors
5 concerning TM practices for employees with disabilities in the context of COVID-19.
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7 First, firms seek to create environments that value and support employees with disabilities
8 by implementing inclusive and accessible communication strategies, thereby enabling
9 them to fully contribute their skills and talents, even after COVID-19. Insofar as these
10 strategies potentially affect the design of TM practices, senior leadership tends to clearly
11 convey its commitment to employ people with disabilities (Chan *et al.*, 2021). In another
12 context, Cruz-Morato *et al.* (2021) show the importance of orienting corporate social
13 marketing (which is often focused on the general public) towards people with disabilities.
14 Effective communication strategies can thus foster an inclusive and supportive work
15 environment, thereby enabling employees with disabilities to thrive.
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30 Second, managerial support is particularly important for employees with
31 disabilities since it favors the creation of an inclusive work environment, enhances
32 employee engagement and promotes the success and advancement of employees with
33 disabilities (Chan *et al.*, 2021). In other words, managerial support for employees with
34 disabilities proves key to managing talent practices. Despite these advantages, the
35 literature is not conclusive on the matter, and employees with disabilities report
36 significantly less organizational support compared to employees without disabilities
37 (Gignac *et al.*, 2021). In addition, Remnant (2022) highlights that –in the field of
38 employees with cancer– this support is often temporary and that its negotiation tends to
39 be subjective and discretionary, which generates a source of insecurity and uncertainty
40 for this group of employees.
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55 Third, remote work –or teleworking– has brought both opportunities and
56 challenges in the field of TM practices for employees with disabilities. It can be defined
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3 as “work for an organization that workers perform primarily outside of a shared office
4 environment, which must include the use of information and communication technologies”
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6 (Lecours *et al.*, 2023, p. 376), and its use skyrocketed after the COVID-19 pandemic.
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8 Beyond constituting a work accommodation for people with disabilities (related to job
9 design, as stated in sub-section 3.3), it can also be seen as a determining factor, since it
10 affects the design of policies related to TM. In fact, this is a more relevant factor for
11 employees with disabilities since they “are more likely to work in jobs that are not
12 amenable to working from home” (Shinall, 2022, p. 1147). Teleworking should be linked
13 to the implementation of several flexible working arrangements that can enhance work
14 participation of employees with disabilities (Martel *et al.*, 2021). Moreover, employees
15 with learning disabilities who work remotely need more opportunities to learn digital
16 skills (de Castro *et al.*, 2023). Whatever the case, the implications of working remotely
17 are still unknown for such employees (Goldfarb *et al.*, 2022).
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33 External determining factors. Norms and regulations are the main external factor
34 impacting TM practices for employees with disabilities. In a pandemic context,
35 regulations can be of two types: on the one hand, health regulations that seek to prevent
36 the spread and infection of the virus, such as distance and hygiene regulations
37 (Kordsmeyer *et al.*, 2021); and, on the other hand, labor regulations that tend to guarantee
38 and protect the working conditions of employees with disabilities (Capuano, 2022; Jones
39 and Feeney, 2022). Labor regulations focus on ensuring employment equality and non-
40 discrimination, accessibility and accommodation, as well as workplace culture and
41 sensitization, all of which tend to impact TM practices. More specifically, Capuano (2022)
42 suggests implementing legal reforms and policy measures aimed at improving the
43 alignment between individuals with disabilities and their work environments. His
44 proposed solutions have the potential to mitigate the emergence of inequalities in the post-
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3 pandemic work landscape. Similarly, Jones and Feeney (2022) examine the factors that
4 determine whether USA courts are prone to consider COVID-19 as a “disability”, since
5 this would grant affected employees certain legal protections in their workplaces.
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10 Individual outcomes. The main outcomes at the individual level highlighted by
11 the literature are employee satisfaction and engagement, employee incomes, employee
12 performance, and mental health. First, adequate TM practices –which prioritize inclusion,
13 equal opportunities, accommodation, support, and communication–help to increase levels
14 of satisfaction and engagement for employees with disabilities in the context of COVID-
15 19. This can be achieved by creating an environment in which employees feel valued,
16 supported, and empowered, such that organizations can then harness the full potential of
17 their diverse workforce. However, there is no common agreement, since certain authors
18 such as Goldfarb *et al.* (2022) report a significant decrease in the satisfaction of
19 employees with disabilities regarding their work-related psychological needs for
20 competence and autonomy after shifting to remote work.
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35 Second, the literature agrees that the income of employees with disabilities has
36 been negatively affected after the COVID-19 pandemic (Ayuningtyas *et al.*, 2022; Schur
37 *et al.*, 2020), which has tended to translate to a loss of individual performance
38 (Kalogiannidis and Papaevangelou, 2021). Going further, wage disparities continue to
39 persist despite the fact that the increased availability of home-based work may have
40 created more employment opportunities for employees with disabilities, (Schur *et al.*,
41 2020). These wage disparities reflect the specific vulnerability experienced by employees
42 with disabilities, whose wage conditions tend to be worse than those of employees
43 without disabilities.
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55 Lastly, mental health is possibly one of the most widely studied outcomes within
56 this context, and includes a wide array of problems such as anxiety, stress, depressive
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3 symptoms, or altered sleep patterns (Cook *et al.*, 2022). Employees with disabilities tend
4 to feel and experience greater health concerns (Gignac *et al.*, 2021), which tend to
5 translate to a significant deterioration in mental health (Goldfarb *et al.*, 2022). COVID-
6 19 has also made people with disabilities more “emotionally affected” (Kröönström *et*
7 *al.*, 2022). These mental health issues can be influenced by more precarious TM practices
8 (Brown and Ciciurkaite, 2023) and by other pandemic-related factors, such as lower
9 social connections (Voermans *et al.*, 2023).

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12 Organizational outcomes. The main outcomes at the firm level are turnover,
13 productivity, employment rate, and employment contract conditions. First, employee
14 engagement in [formal and informal] learning negatively impacts turnover intentions for
15 people with disabilities (Randall *et al.*, 2022), such that appropriate TM design practices
16 tend to increase disabled employee retention. In addition, organizational support also
17 plays an important role in reducing this turnover intention (Randall *et al.*, 2022). Second,
18 firm productivity can be negatively affected if we consider that –as mentioned above–
19 employees with disabilities are more prone to experience reductions in their income and
20 in their performance (Kalogiannidis and Papaevangelou, 2021; Rumrill *et al.*, 2021),
21 which ends up having a negative impact on the business.

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24 Third, employment rate and contractual conditions are two other organizational
25 outcomes that are substantially influenced. In terms of employment rate, employees with
26 disabilities have experienced an increase in unemployment since the outbreak of the
27 pandemic (Houtenville *et al.*, 2021). There are several factors that could contribute to the
28 unemployment of this group. One possible reason is that employees with disabilities were
29 more likely to be temporarily away from work due to their disability (Bryan *et al.*, 2022;
30 Jones, 2022). Another reason is that these employees may not have the option to work
31 from home, leading to furloughs or layoffs instead (Schall *et al.*, 2021). In a similar vein,
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3 contractual conditions of employees with disabilities have also been substantially altered
4 (Gignac *et al.*, 2021). Specifically, many employees with disabilities experienced drastic
5 changes in the number of hours worked (Schall *et al.*, 2021; Taylor *et al.*, 2022), to which
6 is added the greater likelihood of them working in ‘shutdown’ industries (Jones, 2022) –
7 which are precisely the most adversely affected by the pandemic.
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14 *Social outcomes.* TM practices for employees with disabilities help to mitigate
15 discrimination, which causes companies to remain vigilant and to constantly assess and
16 address potential biases or discriminatory practices that may arise. In this sense, Jones
17 (2022) evidences that the established measures of inequality –including measures related
18 to the disability employment and pay gap– helped to curb the impact of the pandemic,
19 which highlights the importance and effectiveness of such measures. Companies can thus
20 help to reduce discrimination and can create equal opportunities for employees with
21 disabilities by prioritizing inclusivity, providing the necessary accommodations, and by
22 fostering a supportive and respectful work environment.
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38 **4.- MAIN CONCLUSIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE** 39 40 **RESEARCH**

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43 The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted the work experience for the vast
44 majority of employees, forcing companies worldwide to substantially adapt work
45 organization and job design (Collings *et al.*, 2021). During this pandemic and post-
46 pandemic period, organizations’ TM strategies faced major challenges in a volatile,
47 uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) context of hiring freezes, layoffs, pay cuts,
48 remote work, and high employee stress (Aguinis and Burgi-Tian, 2021). In addition, this
49 exceptional situation has led to increased fractures across employee groups within
50 organizations regarding TM practices, especially considering employees with disabilities
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3 compared to those without disabilities (Chan *et al.*, 2021).
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6 Highlighting the importance of considering the differential impact of TM
7 practices on employees with disabilities (Maroto *et al.*, 2021) and the challenges and
8 assumptions about physical workplaces, virtual workforces, and work flexibility derived
9 from COVID-19 (Lopez-Cabrales and DeNisi, 2021), this SLR brings fresh insights into
10 how organizations respond to employees with disabilities from a TM perspective.
11 Recognizing that TM strategies for employees with disabilities in the context of COVID-
12 19 are very limited and widely dispersed among disciplines (Schloemer-Jarvis *et al.*,
13 2022), carrying out an integrative review can provide valuable informational resources
14 for academics and practitioners.
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18 Taking the above into consideration, this SLR reveals TM practices regarding
19 employees with disabilities that have been subject to examination by recent research in
20 the context of COVID-19. Specifically, we explore across this literature the different
21 definitions and conceptualizations of disabilities in a work environment before then
22 moving on to examine predictors and outcomes linked to TM practices for employees
23 with disabilities. We obtain a key understanding of TM practices vis-à-vis employees
24 with disabilities during the pandemic, and we highlight ongoing gaps in the configuration
25 of these practices beyond COVID-19. We thus structure this section, first, by discussing
26 our findings regarding the various TM practices reviewed and, second, by identifying the
27 themes and topics to emerge when reviewing the literature and which might provide
28 insights for future research.
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53 **4.1. Discussion of main findings**

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55 Our findings point to several TM strategies and practices that organizations
56 introduced in an effort to adapt the work environments of employees with disabilities to
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3 the challenges that emerged from COVID-19. First, job designs have been the most
4 strongly influenced TM areas, where organizations have significantly adapted their
5 working accommodations –such as flexplace and flextime, remote work, or schedule
6 modifications (Rumrill *et al.*, 2021). Second, TM practices linked to adapted practices of
7 recruitment, selection, and training to help integrate those with disabilities have also had
8 a significant impact during the pandemic (Bezyak *et al.*, 2020). Third, training actions
9 and practices have also become crucial for individuals with learning disabilities in order
10 to develop digital knowledge and skills that allow an effective and inclusive work
11 environment to be created (de Castro *et al.*, 2023). Fourth, career and vocational
12 professionals have played a unique role in assisting employees with disabilities to manage
13 employment, mental health, and physical health consequences –both during and after the
14 pandemic (Jashinsky *et al.*, 2021). Similarly, healthcare benefits can help to cover these
15 needs, in addition to those geared towards providing adequate rehabilitation programs
16 and equipment to empower employees with disabilities in their jobs (Adams *et al.*, 2021).

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35 As regards the factors influencing TM strategies and practices for employees with
36 disabilities, our integrative review points to several important insights in the context of
37 the pandemic. On the one hand –and with regard to internal factors– results indicate that
38 communication strategies, managerial support, and teleworking have been crucial factors
39 in TM practices for employees with disabilities, both during and after the COVID-19
40 pandemic. Organizations have created inclusive and accessible communication strategies
41 to support employees with disabilities, thus enabling them to more effectively contribute
42 their skills and talents (Chan *et al.*, 2021). Managerial support and trustworthy leadership
43 have proven key to building this inclusive environment and to enhancing employee
44 engagement, although employees with disabilities often report less organizational support
45 than expected compared with other employee groups (Gignac *et al.*, 2021; Remnant,
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3 2022). In addition, remote work has been clearly prioritized for employees with
4 disabilities, as they often work in jobs not suited to remote work (Shinall, 2022). Although
5 remote work has boosted several flexible working arrangements for such employees in
6 an effort to enhance their integration and effectiveness (Martel *et al.*, 2021), the literature
7 has highlighted a significant number of shortcomings in terms of providing opportunities
8 for furthering digital competence learning (de Castro *et al.*, 2023). External factors that
9 determine TM practices for employees with disabilities have also been seen to play a key
10 role during the pandemic. Particularly important are those related with labor regulations.
11 Research has highlighted those specific norms in areas of employment equality and non-
12 discrimination, and accessibility and accommodations –as well as workplace
13 sensitization– have significantly improved the ability of individuals with disabilities to
14 adjust to their work environments (Capuano, 2022; Jones and Feeney, 2022).

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31 Furthermore, our SLR identifies important outcomes linked with TM practices –
32 at an individual, organizational, and social level– for employees with disabilities in the
33 context of the pandemic. At the individual level, TM practices have led to a downturn in
34 the satisfaction of people with disabilities after shifting to remote work, due to a failure
35 to cater to their requirements for competence and autonomy related to their jobs (Goldfarb
36 *et al.*, 2022). Similarly, TM has not responded to the pandemic’s impact on the income
37 of employees with disabilities. This has negatively affected individual performance, with
38 the subsequent effect on compensation and incentives reduction as well as pay disparities
39 (Ayuningtyas *et al.*, 2022; Schur *et al.*, 2020). These effects are also related to the
40 significant increase in mental health problems reported by employees with disabilities
41 (Goldfarb *et al.*, 2022), who are more vulnerable to the COVID-19 context of uncertainty
42 (Kröönström *et al.*, 2022) –problems that cannot be resolved by TM practices. At an
43 organizational level, the scant adaptation of TM practices for people with disabilities has
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3 negatively impacted employee engagement, with the subsequent harmful effect on
4 employment (Houtenville *et al.*, 2021), contractual conditions (Gignac *et al.*, 2021),
5 turnover (Randall *et al.*, 2022), individual performance, and firm productivity
6 (Kalogiannidis and Papaevangelou, 2021; Rumrill *et al.*, 2021). Those aspects have also
7 brought undesirable consequences at a social level, with research highlighting the rising
8 inequality in terms of work discrimination practices and pay gaps (Jones, 2022) related
9 to employees with disabilities.

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19 In sum, COVID-19 has led organizations to a more precarious, unstable, and
20 segmented TM system (Brown and Ciciurkaite, 2023), which has had negative
21 consequences for employees with disabilities, both at the individual level (reduced
22 satisfaction, income, and compensation, increased work-related mental issues), as well as
23 at the organizational and social levels (increased unemployment, turnover, and
24 discrimination, declining performance and productivity). Since individuals with
25 disabilities possess a unique nature and characteristics –and are by no means a uniform
26 group (Wong *et al.*, 2022)– effective TM strategies and practices should pay particular
27 attention to adjusting to their specific physical and psychological work environment
28 needs and requirements.
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There is thus significant room for developing and implementing adjusted TM
strategies and practices so as to foster effective inclusiveness, accommodations, and
supportive work environments for employees with disabilities. Some of the most
substantial aspects in this direction will be addressed in the following section, where we
identify the themes and topics that emerged from our literature review and which offer
interesting potential for future research.

4.2. Avenues for future research

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3 The post-pandemic context provides attractive avenues for research regarding TM
4 strategies and practices for employees with disabilities. Based on the SLR findings, our
5 proposal for future research directions aims to deepen our understanding of how TM can
6 adapt to the unique characteristics and challenges faced by these employees. By
7 addressing the following research gaps, organizations can tailor and enhance their TM
8 approaches to create more inclusive work environments for individuals with disabilities.
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12 *Virtual accommodation strategies.* Pursuant to the widespread adoption of remote
13 work during the pandemic, organizations have had to ensure that employees with
14 disabilities have the necessary accommodations to work effectively from home (Rumrill
15 *et al.*, 2021). This may include providing assistive technologies, flexible work hours, and
16 virtual communication tools to ensure accessibility and inclusion. As remote work and
17 virtual communication become more prevalent, it is essential to investigate effective TM
18 strategies and practices so as to provide accommodations in virtual work environments
19 (Adams *et al.*, 2021). Future research could explore the interrelation between TM and
20 innovative technologies, tools, and practices in order to ensure accessibility and inclusion
21 for employees with disabilities in remote settings, also taking into consideration the
22 differences between alternative workplace arrangements (e.g., remote work, telework,
23 telecommute, working from home, distributed work, virtual work) (Schäfer *et al.*, 2023).
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44 *Flexible job design and work policies.* COVID-19 has underscored the importance
45 of flexibility and adaptation in work environments. Offering flexible job design options,
46 as well as flexible labor practices such as part-time schedules, reduced hours, or
47 alternative work arrangements, can support employees with disabilities who may require
48 additional flexibility due to their physical or mental limitations (Martel *et al.*, 2021).
49 Further exploration is needed to understand what role adaptable job designs and flexible
50 work policies can play in supporting employees with disabilities –both during and after
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3 the pandemic (Goldfarb *et al.*, 2022). Research could investigate the effectiveness of TM
4 practices such as flexible work arrangements, reasonable accommodation policies, and
5 adaptable inclusion initiatives in fostering the integration and success of employees with
6 disabilities.
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12 *Technological accessibility support.* As remote work and reliance on digital tools
13 have increased because of the pandemic –and indeed still continue to grow– (Kraus *et al.*,
14 2023), organizations should ensure that the technologies being used are understandable
15 and accessible to employees with disabilities (Iwanaga *et al.*, 2018). This may involve
16 selecting accessible platforms and software, providing training on skills related to
17 accessibility, and accommodation of individual needs for technology-related tasks (de
18 Castro *et al.*, 2023). Future research should focus on enhancing TM practices aimed at
19 fostering technological accessibility for employees with disabilities. This includes
20 studying the accessibility features of digital tools, developing guidelines and training
21 programs for designing inclusive technology, and evaluating the impact of skills-related
22 accessible technology on work outcomes and employee experiences. This may, in turn,
23 influence the entrepreneurial abilities of employees with disabilities, to which future
24 studies might also pay more attention (Klangboonkrong and Baines, 2022).
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42 *Mental health assistance.* The pandemic has had a significant impact on
43 individuals' mental health worldwide –especially those with disabilities (Cook *et al.*,
44 2022; Gignac *et al.*, 2021). Given the heightened mental health challenges that emerged
45 during the pandemic and the need for organizations to prioritize mental health support for
46 their employees (Bryan *et al.*, 2022), it would prove valuable to investigate the specific
47 mental health needs and experiences of employees with disabilities from a TM approach
48 (Brown and Ciciurkaite, 2023). Research could explore the impact on the well-being and
49 productivity of employees with disabilities of TM practices for promoting mental health
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3 support and mental health interventions –such as employee assistance programs, mental
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5 health counseling, or work-life balance plans.
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8 *Discrimination and vulnerabilities.* The COVID-19 pandemic and the associated
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10 workplace changes have had a significant impact on the vulnerability of individuals with
11
12 disabilities, which has entailed potential implications in terms of inequalities and
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14 discrimination (Kröönström *et al.*, 2022). Compared to regular employees, disabled
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16 workers usually have to cope with health vulnerabilities, limited access to
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18 accommodations, disruption in support programs, increased job insecurity, and
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20 communications and information barriers in their work environment (Brown and
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22 Ciciurkaite, 2023; Jones, 2022). Further research should explore how these potential
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24 inequalities affect the behaviors and outcomes of employees with disabilities and to what
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26 extent TM practices can help mitigate discrimination and foster equal opportunities for
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28 these individuals in organizations.
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33 *Intersectionality and fit strategies.* Future research should focus on the
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35 intersectional experiences of employees with disabilities, considering how other physical
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37 identities (such as gender, race, or ethnicity) as well as psychological identities (such as
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39 personal experiences, self-perceptions, and attitudes) interact with the specific nature of
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41 their disabilities in the context of post-pandemic organizations (Wong *et al.*, 2022).
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43 Further investigation can provide insights into the appropriate challenges involved in TM
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45 strategies and practices (Bryan *et al.*, 2022) which the various identities and disabilities
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47 of individuals in organizations must face up to. It would be interesting to know to what
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49 extent developing adjusted and intersectional TM practices that consider the unique needs
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51 of employees with disabilities might help to create a more inclusive and supportive work
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53 environment.
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58 *Bundling practices and long-term impact assessment.* The combined use of TM
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3 practices as part of a robust system can be considered a strategic necessity for employees
4 with disabilities (Schloemer-Jarvis *et al.*, 2022). For example, recruiting and selecting
5 inclusively without promoting, evaluating, and compensating based on these inclusive
6 criteria would send a contradictory message to these employees and would have negative
7 consequences for equality and effectiveness. As our review shows, since TM practices
8 for employees with disabilities are mostly researched in isolation rather than in an
9 interconnected manner, future research should integrate TM as a system in order to
10 identify the role of bundled practices for managing specific diversity categories of
11 employees with disabilities (Hoque *et al.*, 2018). In addition, further research is needed
12 in order to examine the long-term effects of TM strategies on employees with disabilities
13 –both during and after the pandemic. This could include studying the lasting impact on
14 employment rates, performance and productivity, career progression, and overall well-
15 being. Longitudinal studies can provide insights into the post-pandemic outcomes of TM
16 and can identify areas where targeted support is required.

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Needless to say, every disabled employee is unique. Their needs and abilities are very diverse and cover a wide range of situations and personal typologies. The above TM strategies should therefore be adjusted to reflect this diversity. Embracing and implementing a wide array of specifically adjusted TM policies thus implies empowering HR managers as well as strengthening HRM departments' financial resources so as to put them into practice effectively. By adopting these adjustments and by maintaining a flexible and inclusive mindset, organizations can effectively support the diverse needs of disabled employees, and thereby create a more inclusive and equitable workplace that considers the dignity of each and every person.

4.3. Implications for talent management practice

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3 Following the aim of this integrative review vis-à-vis providing managerial advice,
4 we now outline some suggestions for TM practice in the post-pandemic context for
5 employees with disabilities. As regards companies and HR managers, four main practical
6 implications can be highlighted. First, although the COVID-19 crisis accelerated the
7 adoption of remote and flexible work-related practices, their implications are still
8 unknown (Goldfarb *et al.*, 2022). In this sense, there are two main challenges. Firstly,
9 organizations should consider implementing more flexible practices (e.g., flex-place,
10 remote work, flex-time, schedule modifications, natural support) that allow employees
11 with disabilities to perform their duties effectively, [being vigilant to prevent these more](#)
12 [flexible work arrangements leads to excessive workloads](#) (Stamm *et al.*, 2023). In
13 addition, in those cases where certain flexible arrangements already existed prior to the
14 pandemic, the existence of disability-inclusive practices should be re-evaluated so as to
15 ensure the firm's commitment to an ability-diverse workforce (Schloemer-Jarvis *et al.*,
16 2022). Secondly, companies should be willing to provide reasonable accommodation to
17 these employees (regardless of whether they work from home or not). This may include
18 accommodations in the physical environment, providing specific equipment and
19 technology, or modifying tasks and responsibilities as needed. These accommodations
20 pose a major challenge for employees with disabilities since they often occupy positions
21 in which it is difficult to make such accommodations (Jones, 2022; Shinall, 2022).
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47 Moreover, it is essential to promote greater awareness and specific training in the
48 workplace with regard to the inclusion of people with disabilities. This is due to the
49 context that employees with disabilities operate in, which "often provides the most
50 challenging barrier to overcome, including the (unconsciously) biased behavior of
51 coworkers and superiors" (Schloemer-Jarvis *et al.*, 2022, p. 89). For this reason,
52 employers and employees in general should receive adequate information and training to
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3 understand the needs and capabilities of their peers with disabilities (Iwanaga *et al.*, 2018),
4 thereby fostering a more inclusive work environment and learning to work effectively
5 with all team members. In this sense, organizations –and specifically HR managers–
6 should revamp their TM practices so as to ensure they are effectively inclusive and
7 promote equal opportunities for employees with disabilities. This may involve reviewing
8 recruitment processes, performance reviews, and career progression plans in order to
9 remove bias and foster an inclusive work environment. Adequate adaptation of these
10 policies would translate to better outcomes at the individual level (greater employee
11 involvement, engagement, performance) and at the organizational level (greater
12 productivity).

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26 In addition, with the increase in remote work and the reliance on digital tools, it
27 is critical to ensure digital accessibility for all employees with disabilities (de Castro *et*
28 *al.*, 2023). In this regard, companies should make sure these employees have access to
29 the necessary tools, software, and assistive technologies to perform their jobs effectively
30 from remote locations. For instance, this could mean adopting accessible technologies –
31 such as screen reading software, adapted keyboards, video captioning, and accessible
32 websites. In this context, virtual training programs and e-learning platforms can be used
33 to provide accessible and inclusive learning experiences (Randall *et al.*, 2022). These
34 initiatives can help employees to improve their skills, maintain productivity, and support
35 their career advancement.

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49 Companies should also implement health measures to protect employees with
50 disabilities –following the guidelines issued by health authorities to ensure a safe work
51 environment. Among these, mental health support is particularly valuable since the
52 pandemic has had a negative impact on mental health, affecting all employees,
53 specifically those with disabilities (Cook *et al.*, 2022; Gignac *et al.*, 2021; Goldfarb *et al.*,
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3 2022). Companies should therefore prioritize mental health support for their employees
4 by offering counseling services, promoting work-life balance, and/or creating a
5 supportive and inclusive work environment. Similarly, HR managers may consider
6 implementing reintegration programs for those employees with disabilities who may have
7 been negatively affected during the pandemic. These programs can help employees adjust
8 back into the work environment, provide additional support, and facilitate their success
9 at work –especially when this group of employees have been the main victims of the
10 pandemic (Bryan *et al.*, 2022; Schall *et al.*, 2021).
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21 Policy makers can also draw several practical implications from this review. On
22 the one hand, policy makers should consider updating existing laws and regulations to
23 ensure that workplaces, digital platforms, and technologies are accessible to individuals
24 with disabilities (Capuano, 2022). Specifically, they should consider developing and
25 promoting inclusive remote work policies that provide necessary accommodations and
26 accessibility features to support employees with disabilities in remote work settings
27 (Shinall, 2022). Similarly, laws and regulations should encourage and incentivize
28 employers to adopt inclusive hiring practices that actively seek to recruit and retain
29 employees with disabilities. Policy makers should also allocate funding and resources to
30 ensure that employees with disabilities have access to the necessary assistive technologies
31 and reasonable accommodations. In addition, mental support programs can also be funded
32 (e.g., health counseling services, employee assistance programs, and/or wellness
33 initiatives).
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51 In sum, the pandemic has highlighted the importance of protecting people with
52 disabilities in the workplace. The importance of inclusiveness in forging a society –
53 coupled with the unexpected disruptions that may appear (beyond the specifics of COVID
54 19)– highlight the key role played by organizations and, particularly, how they help to
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3 achieve such a society through TM strategies. Companies and policy makers should thus
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5 prepare for these and/or other disruptive circumstances to ensure that inclusive practices
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7 are implemented to allow employees with disabilities to access job opportunities and to
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9 fully participate in the work environment. In this field, the challenge facing HR managers
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11 is “to uncover and address potential deficiencies” in TM practices so as to avoid
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13 inadvertently excluding employees with disabilities (Schloemer-Jarvis *et al.*, 2022, p. 85).
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15 For this, both organizational and managerial support (Chan *et al.*, 2021; Gignac *et al.*,
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17 2021) are vital, since this is precisely one of the determinants that influence TM practices.
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19 In addition, firms can obtain advantages by employing individuals with disabilities, “as
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21 it leads to favorable reputation effects for organizations” (Dwertmann *et al.*, 2023, p. 133).
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Management Decision

TABLES

Table 1. Criteria for inclusion

Characteristics	Inclusion criteria
Publication medium	Scientific peer-reviewed full papers with high impact index (i.e., publications included by Journal Citation Report - JCR and/or SCImago Journal Rank – SJR).
Language	English
Period	From January 2020 – until August 2023
Research design	Empirical, conceptual, or theoretical
Subject area	Business, management, and accounting
Content	Research focuses on TM issues where employees with disabilities in the context of COVID-19 are a central part of the research problem and analysis
Source	Databases: Web of Science-ISI, Scopus-Elsevier, Sage Journals, Wiley Online Library, Springer, and ProQuest
Method	Boolean search in the publication title, abstract and keywords. We used the following keywords: (employee* OR worker*) AND (disabili* OR disorder OR inclusion) AND (covid OR "SARS-CoV-2" OR pandemic)

Table 2. Definitions of disabilities

	Definition	Number of papers
Restricted definitions	Physical and/or mental disabilities	10
	Intellectual and developmental disability (IDD)	5
	Learning disabilities	1
Wide definitions	Visual, hearing, emotional, cognitive, and mobility impairments, and activity limitations (e.g., difficulty with self-care, and difficulty going outside alone)	7
Other health conditions	Depression, asthma, cancer, diabetes, obesity, bad nerves, etc.	4
	Spinal Cord Injury (SCI)	1
	Employee who has lost one or both arms	1
	Severe disability	1
	Autism spectrum disorder (ASD)	2
	Myofascial pain in neck	1

Appendix A. Characteristics of articles included in the literature review

#	Authors, year, and journal	Disability	Purpose	Methodology	Main results
1	McMahon <i>et al.</i> (2020) Tizard Learning Disability Review	Intellectual disability	To analyze the well-being of staff working with individuals with intellectual disability during the COVID-19 pandemic	Approach: empirical, quantitative. Sample: 285 staff working in intellectual disability settings. Data: online survey Country: UK	Employers should need to consider the well-being of staff who work in independent living settings and with adults with challenging behavior since they often experience greater levels of personal and work-related burnout, and anxiety and depression
2	Schur <i>et al.</i> (2020) Journal of Occupational Rehabilitation	Visual, hearing, cognitive, and mobility impairments, and two activity limitations (difficulty with self-care, and going outside alone)	To assess the potential for the pandemic to improve employment opportunities for people with disabilities	Approach: empirical, quantitative. Sample: 13,114,032 employees without disabilities and 854,173 employees with disabilities. Data: three representative data sources Country: USA	Employees with disabilities are more likely to work primarily from home. While this increased availability of home-based work may create more employment opportunities for employees with disabilities, it is unlikely to erase wage disparities
3	Adams <i>et al.</i> (2021) Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation	Spinal Cord Injury (SCI)	To understand how isolation related to COVID-19 affects employment experiences for persons living with SCI	Approach: empirical, qualitative. Sample: 14 people with SCI. Data: focus group Context: USA	The major themes found were: (i) the impact of disruption in routine on physical and mental health; (ii) the importance of having the right accommodations, working from home as an accommodation; and (iii) the uncertainty of work
4	Chan <i>et al.</i> (2021) Journal of Occupational Rehabilitation	n/a	To investigate effective disability inclusion practices that are related to employing people with disabilities in the post COVID-19 job economy	Approach: empirical, quantitative. Sample: 446 HR managers and professionals. Data: cross-section survey design. Country: USA	Disability inclusion practices can be classified into two major domains: (i) leadership/executive management level disability inclusion practices; and (ii) middle-managers, supervisors, and staff level disability inclusion practices
5	Cruz-Morato <i>et al.</i> (2021) Sustainability	n/a	To analyze the possible differences between sheltered employment and the ordinary labor market	Approach: theoretical, bibliographic content analysis	The presence of labor discrimination in the regular market is evident, and Special Employment Centers (SEC) only reinforce the social stigma, hindering the labor situation of people with disabilities
6	Gignac <i>et al.</i> (2021) Disability and Health Journal	Physical, mental health, or both physical and mental health disability	To examine COVID-19-related concerns and perceptions for health, finances, and organizational support among employees with and without disability	Approach: empirical, quantitative. Sample: 3,066 employees Data: an online, cross-sectional survey. Country: Canada	Employees with disabilities reported significantly greater health and financial concerns and less organizational support than those with no disabilities. They also reported significant differences in employment conditions (e.g., more contract work, stress, unmet accommodation needs)

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#	Authors, year, and journal	Disability	Purpose	Methodology	Main results
7	Houtenville <i>et al.</i> (2021) Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation	Hearing, vision, cognitive, ambulatory, self-care, and independent living difficulty	To provide monthly employment and unemployment statistics for people with and without disabilities in the United States before and during COVID-19	Approach: empirical, quantitative. Sample: approximately 60,000 households Data: cross-sectional analysis of the Current Population Survey Country: USA	As the pandemic continued, the percentage of unemployed people with and without disabilities on temporary layoff decreased, and those looking for work increased
8	Jashinsky <i>et al.</i> (2021) The Career Development Quarterly	n/a	To discuss the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on employees with disabilities	Approach: theoretical	Suggestions are provided for supporting people with disabilities in counseling and career-related activities, both during the COVID-19 pandemic and post-pandemic
9	Kalogiannidis and Papaevangelou (2021) Journal of Social Economics Research	Employee who has lost one or both arms	To establish the impact of COVID-19 on employees who have previously lost one or both arms	Approach: empirical, quantitative. Sample: 100 employees that have previously lost one or both arms. Data: cross-sectional survey design Country: UK	The pandemic impacts the reduction of wages, reduced productivity, an increase in the number of people working from home, and discrimination against employees who have lost one or both arms
10	Kordsmeyer <i>et al.</i> (2021) International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health	Severe disability	To examine personal and work-related impacts of employees and supervisors in social firms employing a high proportion of people with disabilities during the COVID-19 pandemic	Approach: empirical, qualitative. Sample: 16 employees with a severe disability Data: semi-structured interviews with supervisors and focus groups Country: Germany	Challenges emerged for employees with disabilities due to the implementation of hygiene and distance regulations, a sudden loss of work, lack of routines, additional work, a lack of movement, social contact, and financial challenges
11	Maroto <i>et al.</i> (2021) Sociological Perspectives	Disabilities (including physical, cognitive, vision, hearing, and emotional limitations) or health conditions (e.g., asthma, cancer, diabetes, obesity)	To examine the effects of COVID-19 in employment among people with disabilities and chronic health conditions	Approach: empirical, quantitative. Sample: 1,027 respondents who reported having one or more disabilities. Data: national online survey and integrated set of virtual interviews. Country: Canada	The pandemic has not directly led to job losses for most people with disabilities. However, half of them were concerned about losing their jobs within the next year, and these concerns were more prevalent among part-time and non-union employees
12	Martel <i>et al.</i> (2021) Archnet-IJAR: International Journal of Architectural Research	n/a	To test the role of the built environment in supporting people with work-life disabilities	Approach: theoretical	Remote and flexible working arrangements may hold opportunities for enhancing work participation of people with disabilities

#	Authors, year, and journal	Disability	Purpose	Methodology	Main results
13	Rumrill <i>et al.</i> (2021) Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation	Mid-career neurological disability	To demonstrate the use of a psychometrically sound assessment instrument and resource-driven planning procedure to help employees with disabilities resume or retain their employment	Approach: empirical, qualitative. Sample: four employed people with neurological disabilities Data: structured interviews. Country: USA	Participants reported a wide range of accessibility barriers and difficulties in performing essential functions of their jobs that they believed had the potential to significantly affect their ongoing productivity
14	Schall <i>et al.</i> (2021) Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation	Intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD)	To examine the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent recession on individuals with intellectual and developmental disability	Approach: empirical, quantitative. Sample: 156 individuals with intellectual and developmental disability. Data: retrospective review of records. Country: USA	These employees were not able to work from home and experienced furlough or lay off instead. The number of hours worked monthly was also significantly affected
15	Ayuningtyas <i>et al.</i> (2022) Frontiers in Public Health	n/a	To identify causal interaction patterns that affect the inclusiveness of employees with disabilities during the pandemic	Approach: theoretical, literature review, a causal loop diagram approach	Employees with disabilities have greater vulnerability, which impacts their level of acceptance and inclusiveness at work
16	Bryan <i>et al.</i> (2022) Labour Economics	Depression, bad nerves, or anxiety; autism; severe or specific learning difficulties (mental handicap); or mental illness	To analyze gaps in labor market outcomes between mental health disabled and non-disabled people during the COVID-19 pandemic	Approach: empirical, quantitative. Sample: 33,000 responding households. Data: Quarterly Labour Force Survey. Country: UK	Disabled people were more likely to be away from work and/or more likely to be working reduced hours than people without a disability. They were also over-represented in part-time work and in caring, leisure, and other service occupations, which were disproportionately affected by COVID-19
17	Cook <i>et al.</i> (2022) Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal	Behavioral health disorders	To examine the employment experiences of people with preexisting behavioral health conditions during the COVID-19 pandemic	Approach: empirical, mixed (quantitative and qualitative). Sample: 272 adults with behavioral health conditions. Data: online survey. Country: USA	Employees were more likely to report altered eating and sleeping habits, but not greater anxiety or depression. However, those whose jobs changed were more likely to report altered sleep patterns, clinically significant anxiety symptoms, and both anxiety and depressive symptoms
18	Downey <i>et al.</i> (2022) Career Development and Transition for Exceptional Individuals	Intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD)	To determine the effects of customized literacy-based behavioral interventions (LBBIs) on the acquisition of virtual job interview skills for people with disabilities	Approach: empirical, qualitative. Sample: three participants with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Data: multiple probe design. Country: USA	LBBIs were effective for teaching and maintaining virtual job interview skills. These have implications for using LBBIs to teach virtual job interview skills to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities

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#	Authors, year, and journal	Disability	Purpose	Methodology	Main results
19	Ebuenyi <i>et al.</i> (2022) Journal of International Development	Psychosocial disability	To explore the experiences of women with psychosocial disabilities during the pandemic	Approach: empirical, qualitative. Sample: 25 women living with psychosocial disabilities who were clinically stable. Data: in-depth interviews. Country: Kenya	The pandemic worsened the work and employment experiences of women with psychosocial disabilities. Also, they did not receive any social welfare or support from the government
20	Emerson <i>et al.</i> (2022) Health & Social Care in the Community	Physical or mental health conditions	To compare the impact of COVID-19 and associated government responses among working age adults with and without disabilities	Approach: empirical, quantitative. Sample: 12,774 respondents. Data: four UK longitudinal surveys. Country: UK	People with disabilities were significantly more likely to report greater levels of stress, poorer sleep patterns, and to have less trust in the government
21	Goldfarb <i>et al.</i> (2022) Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders	Autism spectrum disorder (ASD)	To examine the implications of COVID-19 work-related changes on mental health and work-related psychological need satisfaction of autistic employees	Approach: empirical, mixed (quantitative and qualitative) Sample and data: interviews with 10 employed participants, and 23 participants answered a survey. Country: Israel	Participants who lost their jobs during COVID-19 experience a decrease in mental health. Moreover, those who transitioned to remote work from home showed a marginally significant deterioration in mental health and in satisfaction of work-related needs
22	Hyseni <i>et al.</i> (2022) Journal of Cancer Survivorship	Physical, mental, and/or emotional disability	To identify key factors that appear to drive lawyers with disabilities to disclose, or which inhibit them from disclosing their disability in the workplace	Approach: empirical, quantitative Sample: 3,590 responding lawyers Data: national survey of lawyers Country: USA	Individuals who acquired a disability at a relatively early point in life and those with more visible disabilities are more likely to disclose. However, such willingness is affected by the intersection of disability with other individual and firm-level characteristics
23	Jones (2022) Social Science & Medicine	Physical or mental disability or condition	To estimate disability gaps in pre-pandemic risk factors, as well as changes in labor market inequality	Approach: empirical, quantitative. Sample: 46,437 respondents Data: Labour Force Survey before and during the pandemic. Country: UK	Disabled employees were more likely to work in 'shutdown' industries, and in occupations with greater proximity to others and exposure to disease, leading to them having to face greater health risks
24	Kröönström <i>et al.</i> (2022) BMC Public Health	Disability is assessed through six domains: cognition, mobility, self-care, getting along, life activities, and participation	To assess long-term self-reported disability in public employees after predominantly mild COVID-19	Approach: empirical, quantitative Sample: 10,194 public employees Data: Questionnaires Country: Sweden	Being "emotionally affected" by COVID-19 was the most reported disability, which may indicate a persisting need for rehabilitation and recovery. In general, women reported a greater degree of disability than men

#	Authors, year, and journal	Disability	Purpose	Methodology	Main results
25	Kruse <i>et al.</i> (2022) Journal of Cancer Survivorship	Hearing, vision, cognitive, and mobility impairments and difficulty with self-care or going outside alone	To examine the extent to which employees worked from home because of the pandemic, focusing on differences between people with and without disabilities	Approach: empirical, quantitative. Sample: about 1,800,000 individuals per year. Data: Current Population Survey and Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System. Country: USA	Many people with disabilities benefit from working from home, and the pandemic has increased employer acceptance of these arrangements. However, the potential is limited by the current occupational distribution
26	Morimoto <i>et al.</i> (2022) Journal of Disaster Research	n/a	To review the current employment status of people with disabilities during COVID-19 and discuss the changes therein and the role of supporters	Approach: theoretical	Natural disasters (such as infectious diseases) are difficult to predict, and concrete measures must be taken daily to maintain the safety and security of people with disabilities
27	Mousa (2022) International Journal of Educational Management	Visual, hearing, speech, physical, intellectual, and/or psychological disabilities	To test the main struggles facing disabled non-academic employees in their work context	Approach: empirical, qualitative. Sample: 28 disabled non-academic employees from seven universities. Data: semi-structured interviews Country: Egypt	The main struggles facing disabled non-academic employees in public universities in Egypt before and after the spread of COVID-19 are stated and grouped into three categories (macro-level struggles, meso-level struggles, and micro-level struggles)
28	Randall <i>et al.</i> (2022) International Journal of Training and Development	Intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD)	To investigate the influence of organizational support for training and employee engagement on the turnover intentions of frontline employees battling COVID-19	Approach: empirical, quantitative. Sample: 481 direct support professionals. Data: survey Country: USA	Increased organizational support for training and employee engagement (in both formal training and informal learning activities) is associated with reduced turnover intentions
29	Remnant (2022) Employee Relations: The International Journal	People with cancer	To explore how deservingness features in how line managers and employees with cancer negotiate post-diagnosis support in the workplace	Approach: empirical, qualitative. Sample: 14 people with cancer, seven line managers, three members of occupational health and HR staff and seven staff from a UK cancer support charity. Data: semi-structured interviews. Country: UK	Post-diagnosis support for employees with cancer was negotiated in subjective, individualized ways, drawing on pre-diagnosis workplace contribution. Managerial support for employees with cancer was also influenced by post-diagnosis employee behaviors – particularly those that implied a readiness to return to work

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#	Authors, year, and journal	Disability	Purpose	Methodology	Main results
30	Shinall (2022) Indiana Law Journal	Care, vision, hearing, mobility limiting, physical, or cognitive difficulties	To compare access to the accommodations between disabled employees and non-disabled employees	Approach: empirical, quantitative. Sample: about 150 disabled individuals annually. Data: American Time Use Survey's Leave and Job Flexibilities Module. Country: USA	Disabled employees report far less access to pandemic-relevant accommodations since they are more likely to work in jobs that are not amenable to working from home, working flexible hours, and taking temporary leave
31	Taylor <i>et al.</i> (2022) Autism Research	Autism spectrum disorder (ASD)	To examine whether employment changes predicted an increase in depressive symptoms among young adults with autism spectrum disorder	Approach: empirical, quantitative. Sample: 275 young adults with autism spectrum disorder. Data: online surveys at two points. Country: USA	Over one-third reported employment changes (in particular, loss or reductions in hours or pay). Also, these employment changes predicted increased depressive symptoms among adults with autism spectrum disorder
32	Wagner <i>et al.</i> (2022) Gender, Work & Organization	Physical or mental disability or condition	To test how the pandemic has affected academic mothers with mental health and physical disabilities	Approach: empirical, qualitative Sample: 23 academic mothers with mental health and physical disabilities. Data: survey Country: USA	The pandemic magnified those issues for all academic mothers, and even more so for those with disabilities. Most participant stories had an undercurrent of resiliency as they each found creative ways to cope
33	Wong <i>et al.</i> (2022) Journal of Occupational Rehabilitation	Physical disability	To investigate the employment consequences of the pandemic as experienced by people with disabilities and employers	Approach: empirical, quantitative. Sample: 733 people with disabilities and 67 employers. Data: cross-sectional online surveys. Country: USA	The pandemic adversely affected employment of people with disabilities. For those whose employment was not affected, some expected a loss of income and worried about the economic uncertainty triggered by the pandemic
34	Brown and Ciciurkaite (2023) Work and Occupations	Psychological, physical, developmental, learning, language, and/or emotional disabilities	To examine disability-based differences in the joint significance of discrimination and work precarity during the pandemic for mental health	Approach: empirical, quantitative. Sample: 2,012 people with and without disabilities. Data: regional survey Country: USA	Precarious employment, greater discrimination, and disability independently predict depressive symptoms. Also, in the context of greater discrimination, more precarious employment is found to have greater significance for people with disabilities
35	Çiftçi and Demirhan, (2023) International Journal of Occupational Safety and Ergonomics	Myofascial neck pain	To assess the effect of workplace and ergonomic features on neck pain intensity and health issues in office employees during the COVID-19 pandemic	Approach: empirical, quantitative. Sample: 139 employees with disabilities (i.e., myofascial neck pain) Data: cross-sectional survey Country: Turkey	The health-related quality of life was worse and neck pain intensity was more severe in the working at home group than in the working in the office group, and inappropriate ergonomic features were observed in home office employees

#	Authors, year, and journal	Disability	Purpose	Methodology	Main results
36	de Castro <i>et al.</i> (2023) British Journal of Learning Disabilities	Learning disabilities	To summarize an online participatory research experience with persons with learning disabilities, which took place during the COVID-19 pandemic	Approach: empirical, qualitative Sample: eight people with learning disabilities. Data: Human rights based participatory research methodology. Country: Spain	People with learning disabilities can work remotely but need more opportunities to learn digital skills. Digital skills were very important during the pandemic and the lockdown
37	Lecours <i>et al.</i> (2023) Journal of Occupational Rehabilitation	Physical disabilities	To explore the influence of telework during the pandemic on the work experience of people with physical disabilities	Approach: empirical, qualitative. Sample: 16 employees with physical disabilities. Data: an interpretive descriptive research design (interviews). Country: Canada	The results revealed 15 factors (related to the individual, the organization, and the environment) that influence the work experience of tele-employees with physical disabilities
38	Voermans <i>et al.</i> (2023) Disability and Rehabilitation	Intellectual disability	To explore how people with intellectual disabilities lived their daily lives due to lack of access to regular work activities	Approach: empirical, qualitative. Sample: eight participants with intellectual disabilities were interviewed Data: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was employed in conducting and analyzing interviews. Country: The Netherlands	Participants experienced a prolonged lack of social connections that resulted in experiences of social isolation and feelings of loneliness. This led to different kinds of struggles. Also, participants had to maintain their sense of self-worth in the absence of work activities

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FIGURES

Figure 1. An overview of talent management (TM) practices for employees with disabilities

