

Digital Employment of Disabled People: Empirical Study from Shanghai

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Abstract : Across the globe, ICTs are influencing employment both as an industry that creates jobs and as a tool that empowers disabled people to access new forms of work, in innovative and more flexible ways. The advancements in ICT and the number of apps and solutions that support persons with physical, cognitive and intellectual disabilities challenge traditional biased notions and offer a pathway out of traditional sheltered workshops. As the global leader in digital technology innovation, China is arguably a leader in the use of digital technology as a 'lever' in ending the economic and social marginalization of the disabled. This study investigates factors that influence adoption and use of employment-oriented ICT applications among disabled people in China and seeks to integrate three theoretical approaches: the technology acceptance model (TAM), the uses and gratifications (U&G) approach, and the social model of disability. To that end, the study used data from self-reported survey of 214 disabled adults who have been involved in two top-down 'Internet + employment' programs promoted by local disabled persons' federation in Shanghai. A structural equation model employed in the study demonstrates that the use of employment-oriented ICT applications is affected by demographic factors of gender, categories of disability, education and marital status. The organizational support of local social organizations demonstrates significant effects on the motivations of disabled people. Results from the focus group interviews particularly suggested that to maximize the positive impact of ICTs on employment, there is significant need to build stakeholder capacity on how ICTs could benefit persons with disabilities.

Keywords : disabled people, ICTs, technology acceptance model, uses and gratifications, the social model of disability

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