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Regulatory Misalignments Undermining Disability Rights: UGC Guidelines vs RPwD Act in Indian Academic Libraries

Gursharan Singh

M.Ed. Special Education (Multiple Disabilities)
National Institute for Empowerment of Persons with Multiple Disabilities,
Chennai, Tamil Nadu
gursangrur123@gmail.com

Abstract

Despite the RPwD Act, 2016—which mandates enforceable accessibility rights in higher education—implementation hinges on coherent translation into institutional regulations. University libraries, critical for academic participation, reveal how disability legislation operationalizes within higher education governance. Yet UGC frameworks fail to consistently convert RPwD statutory obligations into enforceable library provisions, creating ambiguity that risks rendering mandated rights discretionary and undermining equitable knowledge access for persons with disabilities.

This study employs qualitative policy alignment analysis, comparing UGC 2022 Accessibility Guidelines against RPwD Act, 2016, via a novel seven-dimensional matrix: physical accessibility, accessible resources, assistive technologies, reasonable accommodations, digital accessibility, staff training, and accountability. Findings show alignment in only 3/7 dimensions—RPwD Sections 25/40 mandate accessible formats and technologies, yet UGC addresses physical access partially while omitting assistive technology and digital standards entirely.

Grounded in rights-based governance, this study advances scholarship by introducing a replicable matrix, quantifying 57% regulatory misalignment, and proposing targeted reforms: library-specific UGC mandates, mandatory audits, and staff upskilling to bridge statutory rights to practice.

Keywords: *Inclusive library services, RPWD Act 2016, UGC guidelines, policy misalignment, accessibility matrix*

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