

EMPLOYERS' PERCEIVED ATTITUDE TOWARDS HIRING DISABLED PERSONS AND AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE BARRIER-FREE ENVIRONMENT AT WORKPLACE IN SELANGOR AND FEDERAL TERRITORY

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Abstract

Employment of disabled persons is an issue in the employment practices of many corporations and organizations. It is acknowledged that disabled persons find it more difficult to be employed compared to persons with no disabilities. Thus this study sets out to investigate the practices in the employment of the disabled by business corporations in Malaysia, mainly the attitude of employers towards hiring disabled persons from the aspect of dependability, productivity and acceptance towards the disabled. This study has found that slightly more than fifty percent of the corporations surveyed do not hire disabled persons. Among the reasons given by the employers include communication difficulties, disabled persons deemed not efficient as compared to able employees, unsuitable nature of work and higher cost incurred by organization. In general, employers of the private limited corporations tend to be slightly more positive in their attitude and willingness to hire disabled persons compared to the employers of the public listed corporations. These include their willingness to motivate and assist disabled persons with their employment. On a general scale, majority of the employers in public listed corporations have less than positive attitude towards hiring disabled persons for various reasons which are described in this study.

Keywords: Disabled persons, employers, perceived attitude, corporations, barrier-free environment

1. INTRODUCTION

Employment of disabled persons has been an issue in the employment practices of many organizations. It is acknowledged that disabled persons find it more difficult to be employed compared to persons with no disabilities. Every year individuals with various categories of disabilities continue to experience significantly high rates of unemployment as well as under-employment. For instance, in the United Kingdom, Barnes (1998) revealed evidence that the number of employers in the UK who ignore the The Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944 has increased dramatically since the 1950s, while no public sector employer meets the quota. Along the same line in the United States, Blanck (1995) found that five years after the American Disabilities Act came into force, the employment status of most persons with disabilities had not changed, with few of those who were previously unemployed having found a job.

According to the Department of Social Welfare Malaysia, its voluntary registration system for disabled persons totaled approximately 108,000 people as of June 2002 compared to 98,452 as of the end of 2000 (Table 1). Out of 98,452 disabled persons who were registered with the Department of Social Welfare as of 2000, approximately 5,000 have been employed. This is only 5% of the total number of registered disabled persons, which is alarmingly very small (Table 2).

Table 1: Registered disabled persons according to types of disabilities

Types of Disabilities	Number	Percent
Physical disability	33,559	34.1
Mentally Impaired	33,275	33.8
Hearing Impaired	17,692	17.9
Visually Impaired	13,743	13.9
Multiple Disability	183	0.2
Total	98,452	100.0

Source: Department of Social Welfare, Malaysia (2000)

Table 2: Registered disabled persons in the workforce according to types of disabilities

Types of Disabilities	Percentage of disabled persons in the workforce
Hearing impaired and mute	80.7
Physically disabled	17.7
Sight impaired	1.6
Mentally disabled	0

Source: Official Website of the Ministry of Human Resources, Malaysia (2006)

In the employment of disabled persons, there are four important characteristics of barrier-free environment that should be taken into consideration before one can declare that it is a barrier-free zone. These are:

- Safety

A certain place can be considered safe when it is free of danger. There are many places when they can be considered safe by disabled persons, but, on the other hand, they often impose danger for this group. Such obstacles include staircase and curbs.

- Accessible

One can enter or leave a certain building with ease through elevators or ramps. Often, it is found that most of the facilities provided are not conducive or suitable for disabled persons.

- Usability

All facilities, which are provided for disabled persons should be used with ease and to the fullest.

For example, toilets which are small and narrow and steep ramps may not be used to the fullest even though the facilities have been provided for them.

- Affordability

This means -having means to do something with ease and comfortø

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Given the debates in the literature addressing the various issues on the employment of the disabled persons (Smith *et al.*, 2002; Barnes, 1992), this research sets out to further investigate the issues and employment practices of the disabled by major corporations in Malaysia. Issues on employment of disabled persons were highlighted by the YB Datuk Seri Dr Fong Chan Onn, former Minister of Human Resource during his welcome address note at the Symposium for the Disabled in 2001. The outcome of the study is also expected to be useful to The Ministry of Human Resources in terms of providing more incentives for the employers to hire more persons with disabilities. Specifically this research will have the following objectives:

- To determine employersøperceived attitudes towards hiring disabled persons.
- To determine employersø perceived attitudes on the dependability, productivity and acceptance towards the disabled persons.

- To compare employers' perceived attitudes towards disabled persons between public listed and private limited corporations.
- To investigate the barrier-free environment at workplace.
- To identify reasons for the employment of disabled persons.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Issues on Employers' Attitudes Towards Disabled Persons

Employers play a critical role in addressing the high unemployment rate experienced by disabled persons. A number of researchers have identified employer attitudes toward disabled persons as an important factor in the staggering unemployment rate of disabled persons (Blanck, 1998; King, 1993). For instance, Unger (2002) and Gilbride *et al.* (2003) in their research revealed that even though a majority of employer representatives may agree with the idea of hiring disabled persons, this agreement may not transfer to a willingness of employers to consider disabled persons as job applicants for their own companies. In Malaysia, even after the government had decided to allocate some perks for the disabled and even promised a better access to jobs for them (The Star, September 2003), the concern among the disabled persons to be employed without further scrutiny still remains.

Several studies have explored employers' attitudes towards individuals with disabilities in the workforce according to the type or severity of the disability (Fuqua *et al.*, 1984; McFarlin *et al.*, 1991; Thakker, 1997). The results indicated that employers expressed greater concerns over employing persons with mental or emotional disabilities than employing persons with physical disabilities. Fuqua *et al.* (1984) examined eight areas of disability in a mail survey sent to randomly selected urban employers. The disability areas included blindness, cerebral palsy, paraplegia, emotional problems, epilepsy, amputation, deafness, and mental disabilities. Employers expressed the greatest concern toward employing individuals with mental disabilities and blindness and were least concerned about hiring individuals with epilepsy. Although McFarlin and colleagues (1991) found that attitudes toward workers with disabilities tended to be more positive with respect to turnover, absenteeism, and work performance, their results contrast with other reported

findings (Fuqua *et al.*, 1984; Johnson *et al.*, 1988). For example, over two thirds of the executives in the study conducted by McFarlin *et al.* agreed with statements indicating that workers with disabilities perform as well as and have lower turnover rates than their counterparts without disabilities, whereas findings from other studies revealed employers' concerns with the productivity or performance of workers with disabilities (Fuqua *et al.*, 1984; Johnson *et al.*, 1988).

Findings regarding the social skills of workers with disabilities and their ability to interact or get along with coworkers were also inconsistent in studies investigating different types of disabilities. In some instances, employers expressed little concern with coworker acceptance or the ability of workers with disabilities to interact with coworkers (Fuqua *et al.*, 1984; McFarlin *et al.*, 1991). In contrast, employers did express concerns regarding the social skills of workers with mental, emotional, or communication disabilities and the workers' ability to function as part of a team (Johnson *et al.*, 1988). Employers were least concerned with the ability of persons with physical disabilities to socialize with coworkers and work as part of a team.

Existing findings from research on employers' attitudes towards disabled persons generally can be categorized in three areas: organizational characteristics, respondent characteristics, and worker characteristics (Blanck, 1998; Thakker, 1997; McFarlin *et al.*, 1991; Shafer *et al.*, 1987). Commonly analyzed organizational characteristics include such factors as type of industry, size of workforce, and geographic location of business. Respondent characteristics are attributes of the organizational representative surveyed or interviewed, such as job title, previous experience or contact with disabled persons, length of time with the organization, level of education attainment, and gender. Worker characteristics focus on factors associated with a disabled person, such as type and severity of disability, gender, and job title (Fuqua *et al.*, 1984 and Johnson *et al.*, 1988). In their studies, employers did express concerns regarding the social skills of workers with mental, emotional, or communication disabilities and the workers' ability to function as part of a team. Employers were least concerned with the ability of persons with physical disabilities to socialize with coworkers and work as part of a team.

Issues on attitude of employers towards the disabled were also highlighted by the former Minister of Human Resource Malaysia, Datuk Seri Dr Fong Chan Onn, in a Symposium for the Disabled (2001). He mentioned that the disabled will have greater access to skills training and even opportunities to operate their own businesses. However, he was aware that there were still some employers who were prejudiced against disabled workers. Other issues were also highlighted in the print media relating to the former Minister of Women, Family and Community Development, Datuk Seri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil's experience into the difficult world of disabled persons. She said, "All I know is that at the end of it all, I really felt like crying." (The Star, May 2005).

3.2 Issues on Accessibility of Disabled Persons

Access is one of the central concerns for persons with disabilities in Malaysia. Issues concerning accessibility for persons with disabilities are broad. Even though it is important to highlight some of those issues, we have however limited the scope to the current study, that is, accessibility of disabled persons within the context of built environment at workplace.

In Malaysia, there were several studies conducted on issues concerning accessibility to public buildings, facilities and transport for persons with disabilities. This includes studies by Abdul Rahim (2005, 2008) and Yaacob *et al.* (2007) that focused on the various facilities and accessibility of the aged and disabled persons in built environment at various locations in Malaysia, among them include the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), University of Malaya, and various public places in Kuala Lumpur and Selangor, Malaysia. They discovered that there are still major obstacles faced by disabled persons as a result of inaccessible entrances to buildings, pedestrian walkway and parking spaces.

The studies were concerned with promoting public places and institutions of higher learning to have a comfortable, accessible, and barrier-free facilities and pedestrian network to all users. The results were found to favoured positively towards providing all the necessary facilities for the disabled.

On the participation of disabled persons in higher education, according to Rosenthal (2000), the number of students with disabilities continuing their education to the tertiary level is increasing rapidly. The development of legislation and policy for the disabled persons such as the American With Disabilities Act of 1990 has provided much help and mobility access of the disabled persons in the campus. However, a study by Schein *et al.* (2001) found that only 37% of all American campuses were fully accessible, while the rest have partial or limited accessibilities. Among the major accessibility problems mentioned were lack of accessibility in bathrooms, recreation areas, and lack of signage, lack of emergency evacuation equipment, lack of ramps and curb cuts.

Hurst (1992) also reported that many institutions still make inadequate provision for potential students with disabilities. Not only that provision given to them was inadequate and unsatisfactory, they were also denied access to higher education, a tendency which equate to their physical barrier and access. Aripin *et al.* (2004) in their study on the facilities and accessibilities of persons with disability in institutions of higher learning in Malaysia and Singapore found that many higher learning institutions are not well equipped with the facilities for the disabled. Out of the five universities assessed, University of Malaya was rendered the best in providing the facilities and accessibilities to the disabled as it met 70% of the criteria listed for accessibility.

4. RESEARCH DESIGN

The study begin with an exploratory search of related literature specifically on other studies related to employers' perception and attitudes towards disabled persons in the workforce according to the type or severity of the disability. Some informal interviews were conducted between researchers, employers (local and foreign) and persons with disabilities to help provide some initial ideas and understanding on their perceptions toward persons with disabilities. Observations were made at several business premises where persons with disabilities are hired.

This study used quota sampling to select the sample units which comprised of corporations in Selangor and Federal Territory listed in the *Bursa Malaysia*. The population list consist of 309 corporations of which 215 are listed in the main board and 94 in the second board. The number of corporations by sector of industry is shown in Table 1. Using quota sampling, the sample

units were selected from each sector of industry. Questionnaires were distributed to 176 corporations comprising 122 main board and 54 second board companies which were selected as sample units. All questionnaires were addressed to either the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or Chief Operating Officer (COO) of each corporation. They were given up to two weeks to complete the questionnaire upon which a follow-up letter will pursue at the end of the second week if questionnaires are not returned. About 25% of the corporations returned the questionnaire within the stipulated period. However, only 14% were found to be complete and these were used in the analysis.

5. DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Questionnaires were used to gather information on the profile and characteristics of respondents. Attitude and perception constructs were included to measure respondents' attitude towards hiring persons with various disabilities. Semi-structured questionnaire via the interview technique was also used to elicit information from respondents which otherwise could not be obtained through the structured questionnaire alone. The questionnaire comprised seven sections: (A) Profile of organization, (B) Willingness to hire disabled persons, (C) Attitude towards hiring disabled persons, (D) Attitude towards dependability, productivity and acceptance towards disabled, (E) Adherence to disability discrimination legislations, (F) General information, and (G) Profile of employers.

The questionnaires collected were edited and information gathered was coded into a form suitable for analysis. The coding process involved identifying and classifying each response from the questionnaire with a numerical score in order to allow the data to be processed using the Statistical Package for Social Scientist (SPSS) applications. Among the descriptive analysis display were frequency and percentage tables, multiple response tables, contingency tables, and graphical analysis such as box plot. Other descriptive analysis include the computation of mean or median scores of attitude constructs and rank order scores. The descriptive analysis performed is consistent with many other studies on employers' attitude towards disabled persons which was attributed to data collected from a limited number of employers, rendering a number of statistical inference procedures inappropriate (Unger, 2002).

One of the critical shortcomings with the existing research on employers' perceptions toward workers with disabilities is that the majority of the studies surveyed employer representatives who were responsible for hiring or supervising but did not necessarily have actual, firsthand

experience in working with employees with disabilities. This is consistent with several other studies (McFarlin *et al.*, 1991; Johnson *et al.*, 1988).

6. RESULTS

The distribution of corporations surveyed in each sector and type of corporation are shown in Table 2 and Table 2, respectively. The highest representation (29.2%) came from the manufacturing sector, followed by the service sector (20.8%) and the hospitality sector (16.7%). The other corporations are more or less equally distributed among the sectors. Table 2 shows a slightly higher representation of the public listed corporations compared to the private limited.

Table 1: Sector of Industry

Sectors	Number of Corporations	Percentage
Manufacturing	7	29.2
Service	5	20.8
Hospitality	4	16.7
Transportation	2	8.3
Utilities	1	4.2
Communication	1	4.2
Food	1	4.2
Government	1	4.2
Others	2	8.3
Total	24	100.0

Table 2: Type of Corporations

	No. of corporations	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Private limited	10	41.6	25.0
Public Listed	14	58.3	100.0
Total	24	100.0	

It was found that the majority of the corporations do not employ disabled persons. About 41.7% corporations have less than five disabled employees, 4.2% have between six and ten disabled employees, and 54.2% did not have any disabled employee at all.

They were also asked of their future intention to hire disabled persons. About 40% of the corporations indicated their intention to hire persons with disability while 60% indicated otherwise. Thirty-eight percent did not give any response at all.

Table 3: Types of disabilities that are rendered employable

Types of Disabilities	Highly Employed	Employable	Least Employable
Physical	5 (50.0)	5(50.0)	-
Mental	1(16.7)	1(16.7)	4(66.7)
Emotional	1(25.0)	-	3(75.0)
Learning	1(33.3)	-	1(33.3)
Deafness	1(50.0)	-	1(50.0)
Epilepsy	1(33.3)	-	2(66.7)
Psychiatric	1(25.0)	-	3(75.0)
Musculoskeletal	1(20.0)	3(60.0)	1(20.0)
Skin conditions/ allergies	1(20.0)	3(60.0)	1(20.0)
Hearing problems	1(16.7)	-	5(83.3)
Chest and breathing problem	2(40.0)	1(20.0)	2(40.04)

Figures in parentheses () indicate percentage.

The companies were also asked to identify the types of disabilities that are rendered employable. Table 3 shows that persons with hearing and mental problems are least employable while those with physical disability are highly employable among the types of disabilities.

6.1 Attitude Towards Hiring Disabled Persons

Figure 1 shows the distribution of employers' willingness to hire disabled persons between public listed and private limited corporations. It shows that employers of the private limited corporations show more willingness to hire disabled persons compared to employers of the public listed. For the perceived mean score attitude towards persons with disability, Figure 2 shows that up to 75% of the employers have slightly less than positive attitude towards disabled persons. Comparing between public listed and private limited corporations, in general, employers of the public listed corporations had a much lower mean score attitude towards disabled persons compared to employers of the private limited corporations (Figure 2).

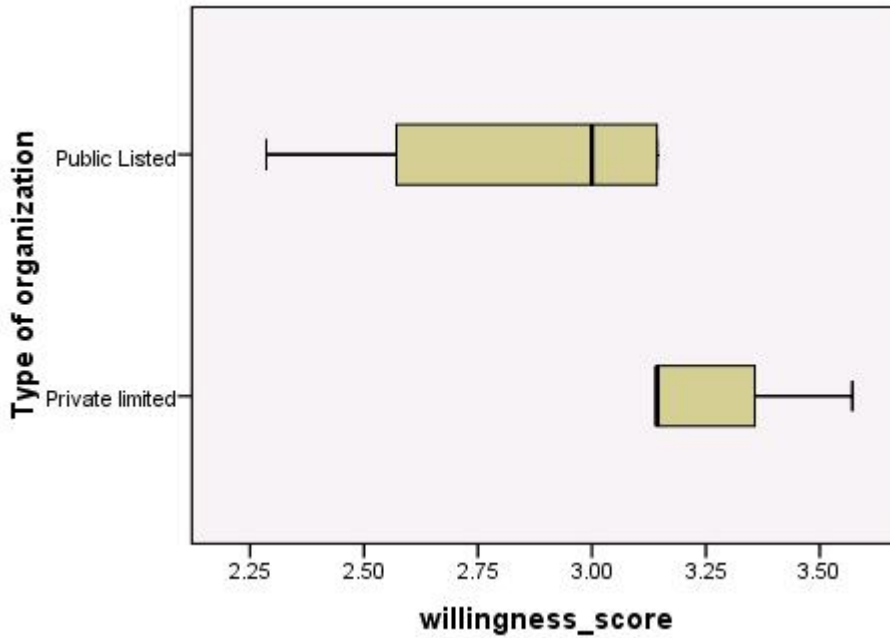


Figure 1: The distribution of employers' perceived mean scores attitude towards disabled persons

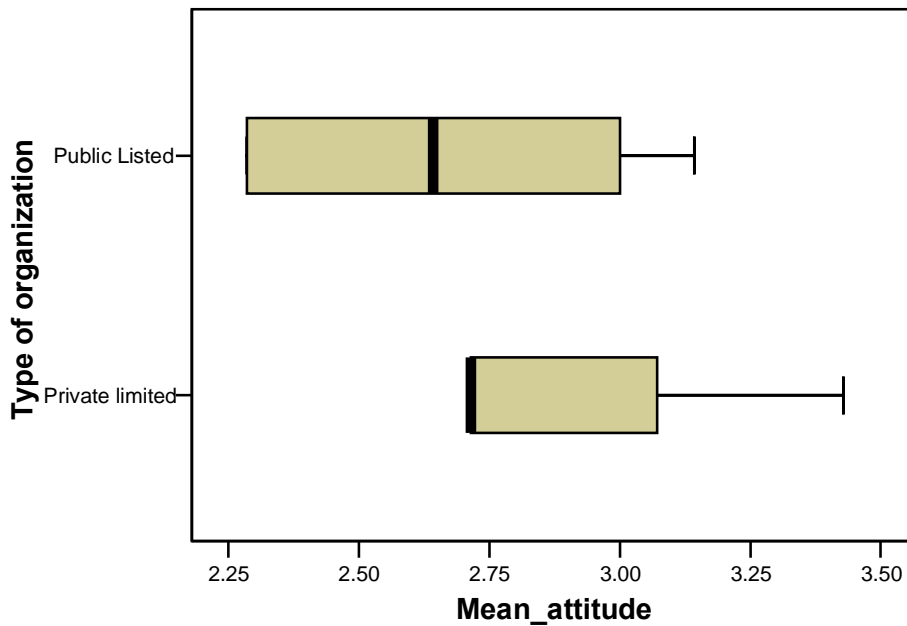


Figure 2: Comparison of employers' perceived mean scores attitude towards disabled persons between public listed and private limited corporations

Among these employers, a slight majority were inclined towards providing moral support and give preferential treatment to disabled persons over other able employees (Table 4).

Table 4: Perceived mean scores attitude of employers towards disabled persons

No.	Items	Mean Scores
1.	Necessary to provide moral support to the disabled persons.	3.85
2.	Give preferential treatment to disabled persons over others.	3.15
3.	Absenteeism among disabled persons is a problem.	2.77
4.	Not responsibility of company to provide facilities for disabled person at the work place.	2.54
5.	Employing disabled person affect company's productivity.	2.46
6.	Company experiences labor turnover problem with disabled persons.	2.38
7.	Disabled are only employed for unskilled rather than skilled jobs.	2.38
8.	Give preferential treatment to disabled persons over others.	2.38

On the employers' attitude towards dependability of disabled persons, more perceived that the disabled persons are able to follow instructions as good as the rest of the employees and that they can complete their work without much assistance from the other employees (Table 5). The employers perceived the other dependability items in moderation.

The distribution of perceived attitude towards dependability of disabled persons shows that the mean score is comparable between employers of public listed and private limited companies (Figure 3). Up to 75% of the employers in both employers categories were neutral in their attitude towards dependability of the disabled persons.

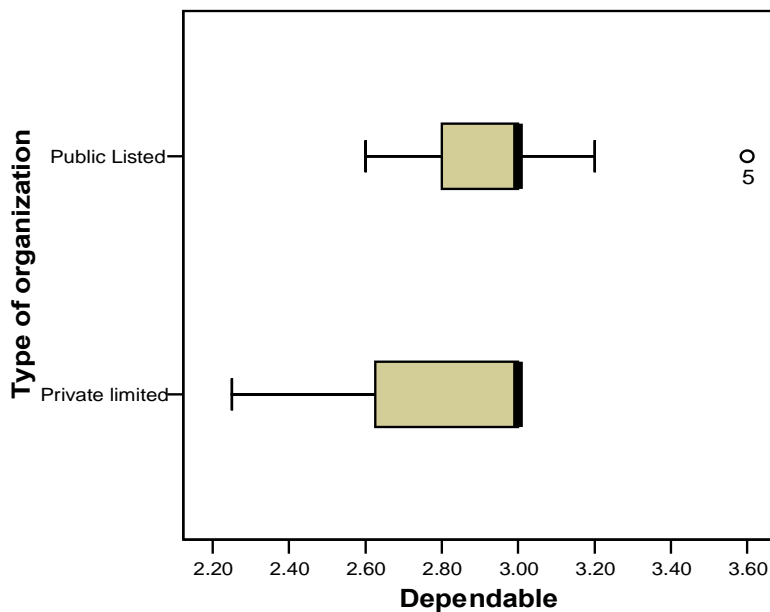


Figure 3: Comparison of employers' perceived mean scores attitude towards disabled persons (dependability) between public listed and private limited corporations

Table 5: Perceived mean scores attitude toward disabled persons (dependability)

No.	Perception toward disabled persons (dependability)	Mean Scores
1.	Disabled person can understand instructions better than the rest of the employees	2.67
2.	Disabled person following instructions are as good as the rest of the employees	3.25
3.	Disabled person perform work better than the rest of the employer	2.75
4.	Disabled persons can complete work without assistance from other employees	3.27
5.	Disabled persons are more determined to solve problems compared to the rest the of employees	2.83

On their attitude towards the productivity of disabled persons, the employers tend to agree less that disabled persons are able to produce as much work as the rest of the employees, that they have high motivational level than the rest of the employees, that they are more receptive to new ideas than the rest of the employees, that they have high degree of positive thinking than the rest of the employees and that they are more creative than the rest of the employees (Table 6).

Comparing between public listed and private limited companies, up to 75% employers of the public listed companies responded with a much lower perceived mean score attitude

compared to employers of the private limited companies. This indicates that the great majority of employers of the public listed companies have less than positive attitude with regards to the productivity of disabled persons (Figure 4).

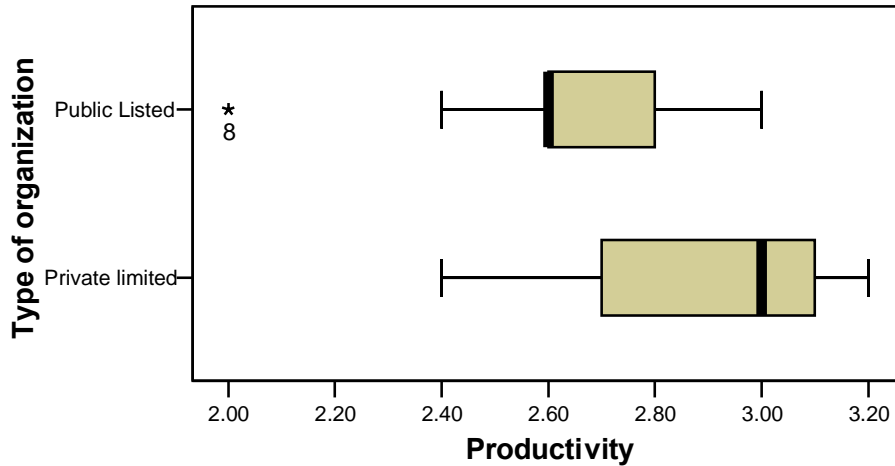


Figure 4: Comparison of employers' perceived mean scores attitude towards disabled persons (productivity) between public listed and private limited corporations

Table 6: Perceived mean scores attitude towards disabled persons (productivity)

No.	Perception Of Employees With Disabilities (Productivity)	Mean Scores
1.	Disabled persons are able to produce as much work as the rest of the employees	2.83
2.	Disabled persons have high motivational level than the rest of the employees	2.83
3.	Disabled persons are more receptive to new ideas than the rest of the employees	2.67
4.	Disabled persons showed high degree of positive thinking than the rest of the employees	2.67
5.	Disabled persons are more creative than the rest of the employees	2.42

Employers also tend to less than agree that the disabled persons can adhere to work safety rules better than the rest of the employees (Table 7). On the other hand, employers tend to agree that disabled persons are able to interact effectively with the other employees and that they are usually accepted as part of the team. They also disagree that the existence of disabled persons may portray negative image upon the organization (Table 8).

Table 7: Perceived mean scores attitude towards disabled persons (safety at work)

No.	Perception Of Employees With Disabilities (Safety at Work)	Mean scores
1.	Disabled persons can affect work safety	2.75
2.	Disabled persons adhere to work safety rules better than the rest of the employees	2.92

Table 8: Perceived mean scores attitude towards disabled persons (acceptance)

No.	Perception Of Employees With Disabilities (Acceptance)	Mean scores
1.	Disabled persons are able to able to interact effectively with other employees	3.25
2.	Employees accept disabled persons as part of the team	3.58
3.	Existence of disabled employees may portray negative image upon the organization	2.00

Employers were also asked about their adherence to disability discrimination legislations. A slight majority of the employers (57.2%) claimed that their organization has provided equal opportunities and participation for the disabled persons. On the other hand, 53.2% and 38.4% respectively, agreed that their organization has not provided user-friendly environments to disabled persons and that many new buildings do not have the facilities and amenities for the disabled persons.

Table 9: Reasons for not hiring disabled persons

		Responses		
		N	Percent	Percent of Cases
Reasons for not hiring	Nature of work not suitable for disabled persons	14	22.6	82.4
	Workplace not conducive for disabled persons	13	21.0	76.5
	Employing disabled tarnish the image of the company	12	19.4	70.6
	Employing disabled incur bigger cost	12	19.4	70.6
	Others	11	17.7	64.7
	Total	62	100.0	364.7

Among the reasons given by employers for not hiring disabled persons include unsuitable nature of work for the disabled persons and non-conducive workplace. Others stated that hiring disabled persons may tarnish the image of the company as well as incur a bigger cost to the organization (Table 9). On the other hand, less than half of the employers stated that among the reasons for hiring disabled persons are that the disabled persons have the right attitude towards work and also due to their corporate social responsibility towards the public.

7. INVESTIGATION INTO BARRIER-FREE ACCESS AT WORKPLACE

7.1 Local Scenario on Barrier-Free Access

Based on the 2002 Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons Forum in Osaka, Japan, in terms of legislation pertaining to barrier-free access for persons with disabilities, Malaysia is well advanced. It was more comparable to some developed countries than to other developing countries in the region. By the time Malaysia had signed the "Proclamation on the Full Participation and Equality of People with Disabilities in the Asia-Pacific Region" on 16 May 1994, the Uniform Building By-Law 34A (UBBL) had passed through Parliament in almost all states of West Malaysia. This by-law stipulated that, "*all new public buildings must be provided with access for the disabled persons*". The by-law also referred to two Malaysian Standards that provided for the necessary codes of practices for new buildings, to facilitate features for access into, out of and within the buildings. The requirement for buildings built before this law had also been gazetted, stating that existing facilities should be upgraded to comply with the standards within a three year period.

It is clearly much easier for local government authorities to enforce controls for new development, as planning approval is dependent upon the inclusion of such access features as lifts, ramps, and accessible toilets. A significant problem exists however, for buildings constructed before the new law was introduced. Many have so far failed to renovate their facilities to the required standards.

Part of the reason for this may be confusion among local government technical personnel as to the exact requirements of the new by-law. Results of surveys done by the Ministry of Housing and Local Government indicated that there is a *“lack of understanding of the requirements of by-law 34A UBBL among the technical officers at the local authorities”* and that *“commitment from the council or its top management towards this issue needs to be strengthened or emphasized”*.



Figure 5: Ramps at Wisma MCA

Figure 5 shows that Wisma MCA has renovated the interior and included facilities for the physically disabled such as this internal ramp to enable them to get to the next floor and to the nearest lift. Sturdy and thick railings are built for the old and frail citizens. However the pathway is slightly narrow for the wheelchair bound persons to manoeuvre themselves up to the next floor.



Figure 6: Toilet for the disabled at MRCB, Shah Alam



Figure 7: Basement lift at MRCB, Shah Alam

Figure 6 shows that MRCB building has allocated several toilets for the disabled. However, the basement lift is not meant for the wheelchair bound users because the door opening is too narrow and was not constructed according to the specification for disabled persons (Figure 7).

Figure 8 shows the front pathway to Darul Ehsan building which is wide and spacious. It has a wide entrance and it is made accessible to all disabled persons. Wheelchair users can easily manoeuvre themselves in and out of the building because of the automatic sliding door, flat surface and absence of curbs in front of the main entrance.



Figure 8: Front Pathways at Darul Ehsan building in Shah Alam

8. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

In general, employers' perceived attitudes and willingness towards hiring disabled persons indicate that the employers' position on this matter is far less than positive. More than half of the corporations surveyed do not hire disabled persons. Of those corporations that do hire disabled persons, the great majority are major corporations with annual turnover of more than RM15 million. The study revealed that employers of the private limited corporations showed a slightly more positive attitude towards the disabled persons than employers of the public listed corporations.

On the dependability of disabled persons, employers have a slight positive attitude towards disabled persons who are able to follow instructions and able to complete their work without much assistance from the other able employees. These results are consistent with McFarlin's (1991) study where he revealed workers with disabilities perform as well as their counterpart. On the productivity of disabled persons, employers have far less than positive attitude towards disabled persons with regards to their ability to produce as much work as the rest of employees, that they have high motivational level, that they are more receptive to new ideas, that they have high degree of positive thinking and that they are more creative than the rest of the employees. These results were supported by Fuqua *et al.* (1984) and Johnson *et al.* (1988) studies relating to the employers' concerns with the productivity or performance of workers with disabilities. Comparing between employers in public listed and private limited corporations, majority of the employers of the public listed corporations have far less than positive attitude towards hiring disabled persons compared to employers of the private limited corporations. Employers mainly

perceived the dependability of disabled persons in moderation. On the acceptance of employers towards disabled persons, they tend to agree that disabled persons are able to interact effectively with the other employees and that they are well accepted as part of the team. They also disagree that the existence of disabled persons may portray negative image upon the organization.

The type and severity of disability may affect the extent to which persons with disabilities are hired. Employers expressed greater concern with hiring individuals with mental or emotional disabilities than individuals with physical disabilities. This finding is supported by Johnson *et al.* (1988) who revealed that employers were more concern with the social skills of workers with mental or emotional disabilities. These findings may have direct implications in terms of the willingness of applicants or workers with hidden disabilities to disclose them during job applications. Among the main reasons given for not hiring disabled persons include unsuitable nature of work for the disabled and non-conducive work environment at workplace.

Even though the sample is small as a result of some non-response errors and the limitation to render generalization on the entire population, however, this study has provided us with some insights into the employment of disabled persons by some major corporations. Even though these corporations have performed their corporate social responsibilities by employing the disabled persons, more need to be done by the relevant authorities to encourage the others to provide such employment, thus ensuring that the skills and talents of the disabled persons are not wasted.

8. RECOMMENDATION

The government needs to further strengthen policies and the implementation of strategies that will eventually produce a pool of highly skilled disabled persons who are innovative and creative and possess intellectual capacity. For example, the educational grants quantum and amount awarded to disabled persons who are studying at institutions of higher learning should be increased. This incentive would motivate more disabled persons to seek tertiary education thus making them more marketable for employment in the job market. The development and supply of this pool of human resource will then motivate companies to hire disabled persons.

Employers' neutral stand towards the employment of disabled persons as well as the laws governing their employment imply that more incentives from the government need to be introduced to encourage employers to adhere to the laws as well as in employing these group of unfortunate human resource. For example, more tax breaks or exemptions should be given as incentives to employers who hire disabled persons.

The government can also impose mandatory employment of disabled persons, as well as stringently impose the Uniform Building By-Law 34A (UBBL) upon public companies. It should be made mandatory upon public companies to provide disabled friendly amenities and infrastructure for the disabled to access the work place. This should be made a prerequisite for public companies to be listed on Bursa Malaysia. This would further encourage Corporate Social Responsibilities (CSR) to be practiced by public companies.

To conclude, this research has provided some insights into the employment of disabled persons by some public companies in Malaysia. Even though these companies have shown their social responsibilities by employing this group of unfortunate human resource, more need to be done by the relevant authorities to encourage others to provide such employment, thus ensuring that the skills and talents of the disabled persons will help the nation to realize Vision 2020.

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