

Determinants of Employers' Willingness to Hire People with Disabilities

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Abstract

The high unemployment rate among People With Disabilities (PWDs) is a persistent issue in many countries, resulting in their marginalization, discrimination, and increased risk of poverty. Employment is crucial for meeting basic life needs and maintaining a good quality of life. However, PWDs often face challenging environments when seeking employment. Previous research indicates that PWDs frequently encounter barriers to entering the workforce. This unemployment exacerbates their difficulties and negatively impacts their lives. This study aimed to identify the factors influencing job enrolment among PWDs. A total of 78 out of 147 completed responses from organizations under the Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation (MATRADE) were analysed using quantitative correlation analysis. The questionnaire used was adapted from the Disability Employment Policy of the U.S. Department of Labor Office. A pilot study was conducted to assess content validity. Descriptive statistics and correlation analysis were performed using SPSS 21.0. The results revealed several factors that affect employers' decisions regarding PWDs. To enhance the employability of PWDs, strategies must be implemented to raise awareness among employers, enabling them to offer suitable job opportunities aligned with the capabilities and capacities of PWDs. Continued segregation and exclusion of PWDs from the workforce could severely impact their lives and undermine the comprehensive development of human capital in a nation.

Keywords: people with disability, employability skills, employment, marketability, workforce

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Globally, one in seven individual's experiences one or more forms of disability. Over one billion People With Disabilities (PWDs) require proper medical care and health services for their conditions (WHO, 2020). Additionally, families with PWDs often face significant financial hardship and insecurity, frequently relying on government welfare support (Jinjing et al., 2019). Securing stable employment for PWDs is crucial for their financial security and social inclusion, which in turn supports their overall well-being and that of their families (Bruyère et al., 2016).

A recent report highlights the urgent need to address unemployment issues among PWDs, noting a 40.7% employment gap between PWDs and the general population. In response, the U.S. government has set a target for organizations nationwide to employ at least 7% qualified PWDs to fill vacancies (Bruyère et al., 2016). While efforts have been made to create more inclusive environments for PWDs, some individuals remain reluctant to identify as disabled, which undermines these initiatives. Therefore, it is crucial to incorporate feedback from

PWDs into government strategies to ensure mutually beneficial outcomes for all parties involved.

Sixteen out of 20 job categories are predominantly filled by non-disabled individuals, including roles in management, professional, and technical fields. As a result, PWDs are often marginalized in the job market, limiting their ability to contribute to the workforce (Erickson et al., 2017). Many PWDs face persistent unemployment, and without a reliable source of income, their living conditions can be dire. Their essential needs are frequently overlooked, amplifying their struggles.

The South African government has implemented policies aimed at safeguarding the equality and dignity of PWDs. Initially, the goal was to achieve a two percent employment rate for PWDs in specific sectors. This target has since been raised to seven percent, with an ambitious goal of ten percent by 2030. Despite these measures, the unemployment rate among PWDs remains high (Hart et al., 2018). Hart et al. (2018) also noted that many industries and private companies have failed to meet these targets, resulting in job enrolment for PWDs stagnating at around two percent or even less. Unfortunately, despite policy enhancements, the situation for PWDs has not significantly improved.

Globally, the unemployment issue faced by PWDs varies in severity from country to country. For instance, in Australia, 53.4% of PWDs were participating in the workforce as of 2015 (Krasovitsky et al., 2016). However, participation does not equate to equitable treatment, as many PWDs experience discrimination and adverse conditions at work, leading to reluctance in job participation and high attrition rates (Krasovitsky et al., 2016). Conversely, in some developing nations, limited job opportunities contribute to significantly low incomes for PWDs. For example, in one province in India, 22% of PWDs were illiterate and struggled to secure employment (Sandhya et al., 2017). Additionally, 75.5% of PWDs in this region ranked at the lowest socioeconomic levels, with those with hearing impairments particularly facing exclusion from social inclusion and essential health determinants.

The registration of PWDs in Malaysia has seen a significant increase, reflecting improved outreach and awareness. From 468,520 in 2018, the number of registered PWDs grew to 663,100 by 2023, as reported by the Department of Statistics Malaysia (2023). Despite this growth, this figure is still estimated to represent only a fraction of the actual PWDs population in the country. The PWDs can be categorized into seven types of disability, namely learning disabilities, physical disabilities, visual impairment, hearing impairment, mental disorder, multiple disabilities, and speech impairment. However, it is believed that many PWDs might not disclose their status to the government, thus leading to under-reporting of the data. An accurate statistic about the PWDs is vital to establish a strong monitoring and support system for the well-being of PWDs. There are many issues that the government needs to look into regarding the welfare of the disabled people in the country, including social stigma, lack of representation in the right of speech, fair policies, or decisions on matters related to the disabled. Often, the PWDs face economic instability due to their lack of access to education and employment opportunities. According to the Department of Developmental Disability (JPOKU) Malaysia, only 581 people with disabilities were

employed in the public sector since 2008. However, the performance of the private sector was better with the employment of 17,000 PWDs. This fulfilled the target of having an estimated 10-20% PWDs to be economically active or employed.

For all individuals, securing legal employment is a fundamental aspect of life, as it flourishes self-reliance and dignity. PWDs have familial, household, and other essential needs just like anyone else. Yet, they often face significant barriers such as inadequate educational facilities, lack of qualified educators, and limited job opportunities, which impede their ability to make a living. In Malaysia, the principle of equal employment opportunities for disabled individuals is neither a priority nor commonly practiced by employers. Many PWDs remain unemployed, and those who are employed often receive lower wages compared to their non-disabled peers, despite having similar academic qualifications. Such inequalities are detrimental not only to PWDs but also to the country, as disabled individuals could contribute significantly to the workforce if given proper training.

Discrimination against PWDs by employers and colleagues persists despite the Malaysian Disability Act. This legislation has failed to effectively protect disabled individuals from discrimination and exploitation. Calls for amendments to align the Act with more robust anti-discrimination laws, such as the UK's Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) and the US's Americans with Disabilities Act 1990 (ADA), have been frequent. In addition to legal protections, the Malaysian government has launched initiatives aimed at integrating PWDs into the national economy. The National Sustainable Development blueprint emphasizes the need to provide decent employment opportunities for men, women, and young people with disabilities, with a target of increasing their participation in the workforce. In response, various industries and agencies have begun implementing serious measures to support PWDs in the job market. Recent data indicates progress is being made, yet also highlights the scale of the challenge; the labour force participation rate for persons with disabilities (PWDs) was 38.5% in 2023, a significant increase from previous years but still far below the national average (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2023).

1.2 Trends Pertaining to PWDs Employment Status

Numerous studies have explored the challenges faced by People With Disabilities (PWDs) in securing employment (Islam, 2015; Lee et al., 2011; Ta & Leng, 2013; Ta et al., 2011). However, the definitions of disability vary significantly across different countries. Previous research has highlighted the diversity in how PWDs are defined globally (Kobus-Ostrowska, 2018; Zissi et al., 2007). For example, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA, 2020) defines a PWD as an individual with a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. This definition also includes individuals with a history of such impairments, even if they are not currently disabled. The ADA further prohibits discrimination against individuals based on their association with someone who has a disability.

In contrast, the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) as cited by Disable World (2020) defines a disabled person as someone with a physical or mental impairment that results in a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to perform normal day-to-day

activities. The DDA specifies that an individual is considered disabled if: (a) they have a mental or physical impairment, (b) this impairment adversely affects their ability to conduct normal daily activities, and (c) the effect is substantial and long-term (lasting 12 months or more, or for the remainder of the person's life). The World Health Organization (WHO, 2020) provides a comprehensive definition of disability as an umbrella term encompassing impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions. Impairments refer to problems in body function or structure, activity limitations involve difficulties in performing tasks or actions, and participation restrictions denote problems encountered in life situations. Therefore, disability is a complex phenomenon resulting from the interaction between personal body features and societal conditions. A detailed and unified definition of disability can enhance understanding, reduce stigmatization, and eliminate derogatory labelling of PWDs.

Employment is a critical determinant of health for all individuals. Securing a job provides income and promotes social inclusion, which positively impacts various aspects of health. Conversely, unemployment can lead to poverty and may contribute to a range of negative outcomes, including depression, substance abuse, chronic illness, family conflict, reliance on government assistance, and criminal involvement (Drake et al., 2016). For instance, while many individuals with mental illnesses are unemployed, they express a strong desire to work. Research indicates that individuals with mental disabilities not only prefer to work (Drake et al., 2016) but also aspire to secure and maintain meaningful employment (Devine et al., 2019). Despite these aspirations, organizations often hesitate to employ individuals with intellectual disabilities and mental disorders due to perceived skill deficiencies and legal concerns (Kocman et al., 2018). Individual placement and support programs can help PWDs achieve competitive employment, thereby advancing their personal and societal goals.

Despite promising research, the unemployment rate among PWDs remains high, and many people remain unaware of the challenges faced by PWDs. Persistent discrimination and exploitation highlight the need for rigorous monitoring and immediate intervention. Extensive literature has explored employers' feedback on hiring PWDs (see Copeland et al., 2010; Drake et al., 2016; Schur et al., 2016). These studies identify key factors influencing employers, such as attitudes towards PWDs, social inclusivity, budget allocation for accommodations, and additional support needs. They also highlight that negative attitudes from both administrators and colleagues are a significant barrier (Murfitt et al., 2018).

Moreover, Hart et al. (2018) found that many organizations struggle to find skilled and qualified PWDs for their sectors, partly due to negative perceptions. Hemphill and Kulik (2016) suggest that increased contact with PWDs can lead to more positive interactions and greater support for hiring PWDs. Despite this, positive attitudes have not translated into higher hiring rates. In fact, a decline in PWD hiring by decision-makers was observed from 2012 to 2014 (Hemphill & Kulik, 2016). This ongoing issue underscores the need for further investigation into employers' decision-making processes to improve employment outcomes for PWDs.

Often, PWDs experience social exclusion and isolation due to their impairments. Social

inclusivity is a major concern for PWDs' well-being as it limits many opportunities available to them. Securing stable employment can provide access to health services and financial stability. However, PWDs frequently face rejection from employers when seeking job opportunities. Research indicates that these barriers are often due to ineffective recruitment processes, a lack of appropriate job roles for PWDs, and high demands for productivity and efficiency from the operations and services departments (Moore et al., 2019).

With the rising number of unemployed PWDs, Smith et al. (2018) and Cheng et al. (2017) advocate for clearer strategies, including natural support, employment support services, and instructional approaches to address this issue. They also highlight that most research has focused on individual-level strategies rather than improving the workplace environment for PWDs (Cheng et al., 2017). Despite new government policies and expanded strategies to integrate PWDs into the job market, many still struggle to enter the workforce due to industry demands for specific qualifications, work experience, and types of disabilities. Smith et al. (2018) note that providing natural support to PWDs can enhance their employment prospects by boosting their confidence and self-esteem, making them feel more valued within an organization. This, in turn, can lead to improved performance and job satisfaction.

Unfortunately, changing societal attitudes towards PWDs remains challenging. Complex interactions with PWDs and ineffective awareness programs contribute to misunderstandings and a lack of appreciation for their contributions (Hart et al., 2018). Recent studies have shown that life circumstances such as past trauma, negative experiences with employment services, housing insecurity, poverty, lack of informal support, and limited access to health services significantly impact PWDs' employment opportunities. Without adequate support, PWDs may face isolation, leading to depression and anxiety (Devine et al., 2019).

Research on the effects of extrinsic and intrinsic support on the well-being of PWDs indicates that poor workability skills (Lavasani et al., 2015) and low academic attainment (Yilmaz, 2019) are major factors in employers' reluctance to hire them. Additionally, there is a consistent relationship between workability, job satisfaction, and self-evaluation among PWDs. Socio-demographic factors, such as age, education level, and employment status, also play a significant role in their workability. Graham et al. (2018) identify three common barriers—accommodations, discrimination, and transportation—that hinder PWDs' advancement. The study suggests that providing appropriate accommodations and involving PWDs in comprehensive development programs are crucial for their progress.

Last but not least, Smith et al. (2018) and Cheng et al. (2017) discussed the challenges and strategies to improve PWDs' employment. Although the employers and agencies are expected to put in serious attention and efforts to assist PWDs, eventually the biggest role fall upon the social business and enterprise. Major industrial players must establish a comprehensive strategy by creating inclusive employment with competitive wages, better working conditions, and adequate levels of support for PWDs.

1.3 Research Objective

This research aimed to uncover the factors related to the employers' intention of hiring PWDs

in their organization. Two research questions were formulated:

- a) What are the required skill by Malaysian employers when considering the hiring of PWDS that will subsequently encourage them to join the workforce?
- b) What factors contribute to the increased possibility of PWDs gaining employment in Malaysian industries?

2. Methodology

This was a cross-sectional descriptive study. A quantitative survey of 2759 employers registered under the Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation (MATRADE) was conducted and randomly selected. The email of each company was obtained online via the official MATRADE website. Internal and external validation was carried out by expert reviews in the faculty, including assistant professors with strong research experience in this field. It was modified two times based on the comments and minor correction was made before the actual study took place. The instrument was then distributed to all the employers listed in the MATRADE database using Qualtrics, an online survey database system. Qualtrics enables the monitoring of the progress of responses, thus it is a good tool for data collection.

The survey questionnaire consisted of five sections. Section A composed of four questions regarding employers' demographic profiles such as position, years with the company, company size, and nature of the industry. Section B comprised of two questions related to employers' preference for soft skill and other requirements concerning hiring PWDs. A five-point Likert scale was utilized, ranging from not demanding, less demanding, quite demanding, demanding, to very demanding. Open-ended feedback was also created in Section B to obtain employers' feedback on related skills not listed in the given list. Section C included six variables: PWDs' recruitment efforts, factors in hiring PWDs, challenges and barriers, concern and perception, career development for PWDs, as well as strategies and incentives for hiring PWDs. This section was adopted from the Disability Employment Policy study on employers' perspectives conducted by the United States Department of Labor Office by Domzal, Houtenville, and Sharma (2008). The survey instrument comprehensively assessed employer engagement with disability employment across four key domains. It first evaluated Current Practices and Policies by inquiring about the existence of formal written policies for recruiting people with disabilities, the types of accommodations provided (such as adaptive equipment or flexible schedules), and strategies for retaining and promoting employees who acquire a disability. Secondly, it probed Perceptions, Attitudes, and Knowledge, gauging perceived challenges like accommodation costs or fear of lawsuits, perceived benefits like improved morale and access to talent, and awareness of support resources such as the Job Accommodation Network (JAN). The third domain focused on Recruitment and Hiring, investigating standard outreach methods and any specific strategies used to attract applicants with disabilities, as well as the employer's actual experience with recruiting or hiring from this group in the past year. Finally, Company

Demographics were collected—including industry sector, company size, and federal contractor status—to analyze how these factors influenced policies and perspectives.

The six variables employed a five-point Likert scale on the level of frequencies and a three-point Likert scale on the level of challenges. The consistent use of the Likert scale was to ensure that inferential analysis can be performed the meet the criteria of the chosen analytical tools. The final section captured further information about the respondents to send them a token of appreciation and to inquire about their interests to have face-to-face interview sessions for future investigation. The respondent could skip or omit from answering any question. It took about 15 to 20 minutes to complete the questionnaire. Each respondent could only respond to the survey once. As a control measure, the IP address of the respondent was recorded to avoid the respondents from completing more than one questionnaire. The questionnaire was in English and not translated to the local language based on the perception that the meaning of the terms used in the instrument was easy to understand. Ethics approval was obtained from the Research Management Centre of Universiti Putra Malaysia under the Ethics Committee for Research Involving Human Division (Reference No. JKEUPM-2019-362).

2.1 Pilot Study

Internal consistency and reliability of the constructs of each section in the questionnaire were checked. The consistency of the construct is important to measure the outcome of the findings according to the formulated research objective. Cronbach's alpha (α) was the special measure of reliability used to analyse internal consistency. The more consistently the respondent's response to each item in the questionnaire, the higher the value of α . A total of twenty feedbacks was utilized in the pilot study prior to the actual study. Table 1 shows the results of the α values of each construct.

Table 1. The result of reliability testing (N=20)

Constructs	Number of items	Alpha Coefficient (α)
Employability Skills	8	.944
PWDs Recruitment Efforts	10	.967
Factors in Hiring PWDs	10	.963
Challenges and Barriers	12	.912
Concern and Perception	6	.936
Career Development for PWDs	12	.963
Strategies and Incentives for employers	14	.964
Hiring PWDs		

3. Results

Based on the descriptive analysis, out of the 2759 questionnaires distributed to the companies, the researcher received 147 (5.33%) responses after three sets of reminders. Out of the 2759 emails sent to the companies, 129 emails bounced back due to full inbox, non-existent email address, and other technical issues such as wrong spelling and wrong email addresses. However, upon filtering the data, only 78 respondents completed all the questions in the survey. Therefore, only the 78 completed responses were included in the final descriptive and inferential analysis. Table 2 (see **Appendix A**) presents the descriptive profile of the companies.

This study set out to assess the type of employability skills valued by employers. Table 3 illustrated the eight most sought after employability skills listed by the employers. The list was based on the World Economic Forum 21st century skills desired by employers. A specific question was asked: "Q8- Please indicate your company preferences of employability skills requirement concerning the hiring people with disability". The total number of respondents who answered this section was 108. Respondents were asked to respond to each of the employability skills traits on a 5-point scale with 1 indicating "not demanding", 2 indicating "less demanding", 3 indicating "quite demanding", 4 indicating "demanding", and 5 indicating "very demanding". The result showed that the highest mean was on time management ($M=3.98$, $SD=0.94$) whereas leadership skill ($M=3.04$, $SD=1.19$) was the least required skills.

Table 3. Results on descriptive analysis of employability skills requirement

Employability Skills Trait	M	SD	Variance
Leadership Skill	2.99	1.18	1.40
Communication Skill	3.62	1.02	1.03
Collaborative Skill	3.60	0.99	0.98
Role Specific Skill	3.50	1.05	1.10
Creative	3.47	1.11	1.22
Persuasive Skill	3.06	1.16	1.34
Adaptability Skill	3.63	0.92	0.85
Time Management	3.95	0.95	0.89

Note. N=78

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine the relationship between the demographic profiles of employers, i.e. positions in the company, years in the company, company size, nature of the industry and the list of predictors, i.e. employability skills, PWDs' recruitment efforts, factors in hiring PWDs, challenges and barriers, concern and perception, career development for PWDs, and strategies and incentives for employers in

hiring PWDs. Statistical significance was taken at $p < 0.05$.

The findings showed a significant relationship between years in company and employability skills at $[F(2, 105) = 3.54, p = 0.03]$. However, there was no relationship between employability skills and other demographic profiles such as positions in company $[F(8, 99) = 1.54, p = 0.16]$, company size at $[F(2, 105) = 0.19, p = 0.83]$, and nature of industry $[F(30, 77) = 0.65, p = 0.91]$.

As for PWDs' recruitment effort, it was found to be significantly related to positions in company $[F(8, 89) = 2.42, p = .02]$ but not with any other demographic profiles, i.e. years with company $[F(2, 95) = 0.96, p = 0.39]$, company size, $[F(2, 95) = 0.67, p = 0.51]$, and nature of industry $[F(28, 69) = 1.36, p = 0.15]$. There was also a significant relationship between years with company and factors in hiring PWDs $[F(2, 89) = 3.43, p = 0.04]$. However, there was no relationship between positions in company and factors in hiring PWDs $[F(8, 83) = 0.58, p = 0.79]$, company size and factors in hiring PWDs $[F(2, 89) = 0.56, p = 0.57]$, and nature of industry and factors in hiring PWDs $[F(26, 65) = 0.60, p = 0.93]$. In terms of positions in company, it was significantly related to the career development for PWDs $[F(8, 69) = 2.11, p = 0.04]$. However, the other three demographic factors were not significant, namely years with company and career development for PWDs $[F(2, 75) = 0.23, p = 0.80]$, company size and career development for PWDs $[F(2, 75) = 0.54, p = 0.59]$, and nature of industry and career development for PWDs $[F(26, 51) = 0.70, p = 0.84]$. Table 4 (see **Appendix B**) describes the ANOVA results between all the variables pointed and employers' demographic profiles.

Furthermore, a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationships among all the variables: (a) employability skills, (b) PWDs recruitment efforts, (c) factors in hiring PWDs, (d) challenges and barriers, (e) concern and perception, (f) career development for PWDs, and (g) strategies and incentives for employers in hiring PWDs. There was a moderate positive correlation between challenges and barriers and concern and perception ($r = 0.534, p = 0.000$). A moderate positive relationship was also found between challenges and barriers and career development for PWDs ($r = 0.641, p = 0.000$), concern and perception and career development for PWDs ($r = 0.450, p = 0.000$). However, the result also indicated a negative relationship between factors in hiring PWDs and strategies and incentives for employers hiring PWDs ($r = -0.357, p = 0.001$).

Table 5 shows the scatter plot that summarized all the ANOVA results. It is interesting to note that the bigger the challenges encountered by employers, the higher would their concern and perception be. Furthermore, the results also showed that the higher the challenge and barriers encountered by the employers in providing a job for PWDs, the higher the impact would be on the career development of PWDs. The results also showed that employers' concern and perception towards PWDs also had an impact on the promotion and career development of PWDs. In contrast, the factors in hiring PWDs did not impact on the strategies and incentives for employers hiring PWDs.

Table 5. Mean, Standard Deviation, and Correlations

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Employability Skills	-	.192	.175	.147	.081	.194	-.037
2.PWDs Recruitment Efforts	.192	-	.142	-.067	-.057	-.110	-.196
3. Factors in Hiring PWDs	.175	.142	-	.060	-.036	-.141	-.357
4. Challenges and Barriers	.147	-.067	.060	-	.534**	.641**	.137
5. Concern and Perception	.081	-.057	-.036	.534**	-	.450**	.141
6. Career Development for PWDs	.194	-.110	-.141	.641**	.450**	-	.128
7. Strategies and Incentives for employers Hiring PWDs	-.037	-.196	-.357	.137	.141	.128	-
M	3.48	1.57	3.24	1.95	2.00	2.00	1.24
SD	0.84	0.66	0.96	0.43	0.53	0.50	0.32

Note: * at $p=0.001$, **at $p<0.001$, $N=78$

4. Discussion

The study highlights employers' feedback on the criteria and factors influencing their hiring decisions for People With Disabilities (PWDs). Employers expect PWDs to demonstrate certain employability skills to adapt and thrive in their work environments. These skills not only help PWDs value their jobs but also earn the respect of their colleagues. The employability skills sought by employers are similar for both disabled and non-disabled candidates. According to Robinson (2000), employability skills are essential traits that help individuals secure and retain employment. These skills encompass abilities, attitudes, and actions that facilitate effective collaboration with colleagues and supervisors, particularly in critical decision-making scenarios. Robinson (2000) further distinguishes employability skills from occupational or technical skills by noting that employability skills are generic and applicable across various industries, business sizes, and job levels, unlike job-specific skills.

Barnes (2019) explored the employability skills acquired by hearing-impaired students through university training. The generic skills, such as organizational ability, time and workload management, presentation skills, and self-confidence, were found to enhance their performance and contributions in the workplace when appropriately developed.

Additionally, Scheef et al. (2019) noted that some employers value soft skills—such as attitude, dependability, stamina, flexibility, and communication—over job-specific technical skills. Consistent with the findings of Ju et al. (2012) and Ju et al. (2013), employability skills are crucial for PWDs to secure job placements. Notably, many of these employability skills can be retrained through training programs available to both disabled and non-disabled individuals. Generic skills often do not require specialized technical training; rather, they are

soft skills that anyone can practice.

Ju et al. (2012) identified the top five employability skills desired by employers when hiring PWDs, including personal integrity, the ability to follow instructions, respect for others, punctuality, and adherence to safety procedures. In a subsequent study, Ju et al. (2013) expanded this list to include integrity, honesty, punctuality, respect, and a high regard for safety. Additionally, basic skills such as reading and writing, and work-related skills like quality of work, attendance, and task management, are essential for all employees. Understanding the employer's desired employability skills can improve job training and preparation for job seekers. Employers typically evaluate both soft skills and technical skills to ensure candidates meet job requirements and contribute positively to the organization.

Given the importance of employability skills for PWDs in the workplace, adequate training and practice are essential. The goal of any employability skills program is to prepare employees for the workforce by equipping them with necessary generic and soft skills. McMahon et al. (2013) conducted a program for PWDs that successfully achieved its goals. Participants received uniform training to enhance their employability, regardless of their specialization. McMahon et al. (2013) found that participants benefited most from action plans outlining suitable job types and required training. Notably, the goal of these programs extends beyond fulfilling employment requirements; evidence shows that job-seeking skills and consistent application of learned skills improve post-training.

The study also revealed that certain demographic factors of employers significantly impact the variables studied. Employers with more years of service in their company are better positioned to identify and nurture employability skills among PWDs. Their experience enables them to effectively coordinate tasks and jobs for diverse employees, including PWDs. Proper recruitment efforts by employers in administrative roles can facilitate the inclusion of PWDs in their companies.

The study found that the role of employers' positions is a predictor of PWD retention in organizations. Typically, higher-level employers, such as company owners, are more proactive in hiring PWDs, reflecting a commitment to developing a positive work environment for them in Malaysia. Employers play a crucial role in the hiring process for PWDs and can significantly impact their future prospects. PWDs who have demonstrated their talents and capabilities should be treated equitably regarding career development, including promotions and salary increases.

Employers have made various efforts to support PWDs in employment, such as accommodating their needs, adjusting job roles, and covering insurance and health-related costs. Employers with longer tenure often possess more experience in working with disabled employees. Hart et al. (2018) emphasized the importance of creating PWD-friendly workplaces and prospering organization-wide awareness of disability diversity. Protecting PWDs' legislative rights and offering flexible career paths is also crucial. Peer support through forums and the creation of disability rights manager positions can further safeguard PWD employees' rights. Ultimately, workplace diversity allows for greater appreciation of varied talents and encourages humanistic values.

Given the increasing stigma and marginalization faced by PWDs globally, this study's findings offer valuable insights for addressing employment challenges among PWDs. Discrimination often exacerbates their difficulties in securing jobs, and community perceptions play a significant role in boosting their morale and attitudes. With positive community reception, PWDs' economic and social well-being in the workplace are more likely to be supported. The diversity brought by PWDs can enable employers to harness a broader range of talents and perspectives, contributing to a more harmonious and respectful society.

The study also indicated that Malaysian employers are increasingly attentive to PWDs' well-being. Despite the challenges and barriers in hiring PWDs, employers are keenly aware of PWDs' performance in their organizations. Concerns about potential performance issues lead employers to carefully consider hiring PWDs. Evaluating job tasks suitable for various disabilities helps employers make informed decisions about hiring and promoting PWDs. Government policies and acts designed to enhance job opportunities for PWDs across all sectors are supported by retraining and reskilling programs.

In some cases, talented PWDs make significant contributions across various career fields. Many successful PWDs demonstrate their capabilities and impact when given the opportunity. Denying employment opportunities to PWDs who can contribute effectively is a missed opportunity for organizations (Bruyère et al., 2016). The general population should strive to understand PWDs' talents and potentials better to nurture inclusivity and respect.

4. Conclusion

People with disabilities (PWDs) are an integral part of society and should have the opportunity to live successful lives just like anyone else. Despite this, PWDs still face significant challenges in securing employment. Many employers have negative perceptions about PWDs, viewing them as dependent on others and less productive due to issues like slower movement and reaction times, which can sometimes hinder work processes. This study aimed to identify the factors influencing the hiring of PWDs by Malaysian employers. The findings indicate that employability skills are crucial for the employment of PWDs. Employers prioritize employability skills alongside technical and theoretical skills when considering candidates. Therefore, possessing the necessary employability skills significantly enhances PWDs' chances of being hired. Furthermore, the study revealed that negative perceptions of employers can complicate the work lives of PWDs. Many employers and colleagues exhibit negative attitudes towards PWDs, leading to lower self-esteem and higher rates of depression among them.

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Appendix A

Table 2. Demographic profiles of respondent (N=78)

Demographic Variables	Frequency (f)	(%)
Position in company		
President/ Owner	17	21.79
Human Resource Officer	12	15.38
Assistant Director	1	1.28
Assistant Manager	1	1.28
Vice President	1	1.28
Director	12	15.38
Manager	20	25.64
Supervisor	3	3.85
Other	11	14.1
Years with company		
1-10 years	67	85.9
11-20 years	8	10.26
21-30 years	3	3.85
Company size		
Small (5-14 employees)	35	44.87
Medium (15-249 employees)	36	46.15
Large (250+ employees)	7	8.97
Nature of Industry		
Agricultural Produce	2	2.56
Apparel, Garments, & Accessories	3	3.85
Automotive, Parts & Components	2	2.56
Beverages	3	3.85

Building & Construction Material & Hardware	5	6.41
Chemical, Minerals & Alloy	3	3.85
Computer Software	5	6.41
Consumer & Industrial Electrical & Electronic Products	2	2.56
Electrical & Electronic Parts and Components	1	1.28
Fashion and Accessories & Textiles	6	7.69
Footwear	1	1.28
Furniture	1	1.28
Gloves	1	1.28
Household Products	3	3.85
Machinery Equipment & Automation	5	6.41
Medical Products	1	1.28
Oil and Gas Products	1	1.28
Packaging & Containers	2	2.56
Palm Oil Products	2	2.56
Pharmaceutical, Toiletries & Cosmetics	8	10.26
Plastic Products	2	2.56
Telecommunication	1	1.28
Textiles, Yarns & Other Related Materials	2	2.56
Toys and Sports Equipment	1	1.28
Transport Equipment & Parts	1	1.28
Wood Products	1	1.28
Others	13	16.67
<hr/>		
Current employees with a disability (ies)		
Yes	16	20.51
No	62	79.49

Appendix B

Table 4. ANOVA Results of Predictors by Employers Demographic Profiles

Predictor	Demographic Profile			
	Positions in Company	Years with Company	Company Size	Nature of Industry
Employability Skills				
df	8	2	2	30
MS	1.04	2.38	0.13	0.51
F	1.54	3.54	0.19	0.65
p	0.16	0.03*	0.83	0.91
PWDs Recruitment Efforts				
df	8	2	2	28
MS	0.93	0.42	0.29	0.53
F	2.42	0.96	0.67	1.36
p	0.02*	0.39	0.51	0.15
Factors in Hiring PWDs				
df	8	2	2	26
MS	0.63	0.34	0.59	0.70
F	0.58	3.47	0.56	0.60
p	0.79	0.04*	0.57	0.93
Challenges and Barriers				
df	8	2	2	26
MS	0.17	0.05	0.07	0.17
F	0.92	0.29	0.36	0.86
p	0.51	0.75	0.70	0.66
Concern and Perception				

df	8	2	2	26
MS	0.31	0.18	0.08	0.31
F	1.11	0.64	0.30	1.11
p	0.37	0.53	0.74	0.37
Career Development for PWDs				
df	8	2	2	26
MS	0.47	0.06	0.13	0.19
F	2.11	0.23	0.54	0.70
p	0.04*	0.80	0.59	0.84
Strategies and Incentives for Employers Hiring PWDs				
df	8	2	2	26
MS	0.08	0.01	0.21	0.10
F	0.75	0.10	2.19	0.95
p	0.65	0.91	0.12	0.54

Note. N=78, *p<0.05

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