

Exploration of HR Managers Perspectives in Hiring and Retaining Practices of People with Physical Disabilities

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore employers' attitudes and perceptions in hiring and retaining people with physical disabilities. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with eleven human resource managers working in the private sector of Islamabad. Transcripts comprising participants verbatim were analyzed using Thematic Analysis and a descriptive approach. The reliability of the research was established by ensuring credibility, dependability, transferability, and conformability. Inter-rater reliability was found satisfactory. Findings show six major themes namely employers' attitude, policy awareness and implementation, perceived concerns and challenges by employers, barriers to employment of people with disability (PWD), provision of reasonable accommodation and, career development and retention policy. The research findings indicate that human resource managers generally have socially desirable, favorable attitudes towards the employment of people with disabilities. However, in-depth exploration indicated either attitudinal barriers or apprehensions to hire PWD due to the lack of resources and limitations in policy implementation. Findings show that small and medium-sized organizations face greater challenges in hiring and retaining PWD. Further, a dire need for governmental and legislative support to the employers is highlighted. Implications of research findings have been discussed.

Keywords: Attitude, employment, people with disabilities, perception, physical disability

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INTRODUCTION

Employment is considered a critical element of societal membership and every person should have equal access to employment without any prejudice based on personal characteristics such as race, religion, disability, or color of a person. People

with disability (PWD), however, are more probable to come across barriers to employment as compared to those without disabilities. PWDs all over the world are less likely to be employed than people without disabilities (World Health Organization & World Bank 2011). Notably, workers with disabilities are more likely to report underemployment, involuntary part-time, and lower than average salaries (Baldrige et al., 2016).

The consideration of disabilities is an emergent issue in most developing Asian countries. Pakistan is one of the largest populations comprising of youth reported 2.94% of its total population as PWD and it is reported that the employment rate of PWD is as low as 14% (Waqar, 2014). Despite the numerous policies (e.g. Disabled persons employment and rehabilitation ordinance, 1981) on the employment and inclusion of PWDs, the employment rate remains low as compared to the people without disabilities. A study shows that general prejudice exists within the society against PWD. Generally, employers hesitate to engage people with disabilities in the workforce due to costing and accommodation issues. Limited research has been done to explore the concerns of the employers as the focus is more on the development of PWD rather than on the needs of the human resources managers (Heera & Devi, 2016). Human resource (HR) managers as major decision-makers can perform a vital role in providing equal opportunities to PWD. They can formulate policies and procedures that promote inclusivity. Critical HR matters

such as equal employment opportunities for PWD, career development plans, reward systems, and job design can be reviewed and redesigned to engage PWD and thus promoting a barrier-free environment for them to work.

This study, therefore, aims to investigate the attitudes and perceptions of HR managers in hiring and retaining people with physical disabilities as well as to identify their concerns and challenges that influence the willingness in employing such people. Physical disability refers to a limitation on a person's physical functioning, mobility, dexterity, or stamina. The findings will contribute in improving existing HR practices and approaches for hiring and retaining PWDs.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Disability in Pakistan

According to the International Labour Organization (2007), there are more than 650 million people with some disability, and majority of these people live in developing countries. Asia and the Pacific region have the largest number of people with disabilities i.e. 60% of this population resides in Asia and the Pacific according to the UN estimates. According to the census (1998), 2.49% of the total population of Pakistan constitutes people with disabilities. According to the data, the highest percentage of disabled people was found in Punjab (55.7%), followed by Sindh (28.4%), NWFP (11.1%), Baluchistan (4.5%), and then Islamabad (0.3%). The data revealed that

most of the people had a physical handicap and the number of males with a disability was higher than women in both rural and urban areas (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics; Government of Pakistan, 2021).

Legislation and Policy Reforms

Pakistan announced its first national policy supporting disability in 2002 to empower people with disabilities. Before this Disabled Persons' (Employment and Rehabilitation) Ordinance (1981) was publicized. Under this order it was the responsibility of the government to work towards the prevention of disabilities; the provision of medical care, education, training, employment, and rehabilitation to the persons with disabilities. This ordinance also introduced a quota system, which made it mandatory for private and public sector organizations to reserve a 2% quota for the PWD.

The National Plan of Action 2006 (Government of Pakistan, 2002) was developed to translate the National Policy for the Persons with Disabilities 2002 into practice. This legislative development sets a larger context to accommodate and mainstream people with disabilities in a different segment of society including the workplaces. It focused on ensuring inclusion, access, and equalization of opportunities for people with disabilities. Pakistan has also signed the "*Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities 2006*". This convention obliges the signatory countries to develop a legal framework that will aim to provide equal opportunities to the PWDs in all spheres of life.

Employers Perception towards the Employment of People with Disabilities

Employment has proved to be beneficial for PWD as it helps them in their skill development, income generation, reduction in social isolation, and contributes to life satisfaction, and civic skills (Schur, 2002). However, most PWD are unemployed indicating the need for diligent efforts to increase their employment. In the United States, 56% of people with disabilities are employed (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018).

Schur (2002) reported that less than 50% of the people with disabilities (those seeking jobs) were employed as compared with 82% of the people without disabilities. Whereas in Pakistan only 14% of the PWDs are employed, the rests of the PWD are dependent on their family members for financial support (Waqar, 2014). A study shows that 95% of the people who are employed are not satisfied with their jobs and are facing the issue of under-employment (Sajjad, 2008). This shows limitations in implementing the existing laws of disability, especially in relation to the reservation of jobs for people with disabilities (Ramachandra et al., 2017).

The perceptions and attitudes of employers can have a major impact throughout the hiring process as these perceptions permeate through the entire employment cycle starting from the process of job posting and hiring to the retention and career development of people with disabilities. Therefore the perspective of employers is pertinent in providing and maintaining employment opportunities for

people with disabilities (Bruyere al., 2004; Heera & Devi, 2016).

Negative attitudes and discrimination are cited as the major barrier in the employment of people with disabilities despite all the policies and initiatives taken by the state (Ruggeri-Stevens & Goodwin, 2007). The negative attitudes might be the result of past working experience or frequent exposure to disability (Perry et al., 2008; Unger, 2002). Literature also suggests that employers having working experience with a person with disabilities had positive attitudes and are more willing to hire and integrate people with disabilities (Gilbride et al., 2003).

Female employers are reported to have more favorable attitudes towards PWDs rather than male employers (Perry et al., 2008). Evidence shows that some employers do not fully accept workers with physical disabilities (Jean-Joseph, 2020). Employees with disabilities were rated low on monthly performance evaluations as compared to the employees without disabilities (Smith et al., 2004).

Another barrier in the workplace includes a lack of manager's awareness and knowledge about the care of the PWD (Selvi, 2018). The employers/managers lack the knowledge on how to cater to the needs. Further, the presence of stereotypical attitudes of the managers and coworkers, the lack of required skills, and the cost associated with the career development of PWD play a major barrier in the hiring process (Paez & Arendt, 2014).

Despite the numerous challenges reported by the employers, positive aspects of employing PWD at the workplace were reported. Coworkers who had work opportunities with PWD described their experiences as positive (Ruggeri-Stevens & Goodwin, 2007). Employees having a disability were reported to be more committed, dedicated, and loyal to the organization, and hiring them may lead to tangible benefits for the organization such as assistance by the state, the flexibility in tax credits, and funds for disability training programs (Geng-qing & Qu, 2003; Sajjad 2008).

Considering the mixed picture regarding the attitudes at the workplaces towards PWD, this research aimed to explore the perspectives of HR managers that influence the willingness of employers in hiring and retaining PWD.

Theoretical Background

This study is based on the social model of disability proposed by Oliver (1996). This model emphasizes the barriers to access and inclusion of people with disabilities that are created by mainstream society. It asserts that people with disabilities are disabled by the environment they live in and not by the features of their own bodies as per the medical model. These barriers maybe are physical such as lack of infrastructure in buildings or can be attitudinal. This model, therefore, helps in recognizing these barriers that make the inclusion of PWD also exist at the workplace.

Rationale

Numerous studies have focused on the employment experiences of PWD, however, with little focus on the needs and demands of employers (Gottlieb et al., 2010). Majority of the previous studies focus on whether employers hold a negative attitude towards hiring people with disabilities but do not explore employers' perspectives in a comprehensive and contextual context. Further, the impact of employers' demographic variables (size of the organization and industrial sector) has not received much attention. This study is therefore based on descriptive thematic analysis to explore the attitudes and perceptions of employers. (Kang, 2013; Robert & Harlan, 2006).

In addition, there has been limited literature on employer perspectives towards employing disabled people, particularly in Pakistan (Ahmed et al., 2011; Sajjad, 2008). Further previous studies in Pakistan have focused on general disabilities. A focus on a selected disability type can give an in-depth perspective (Ahmed & Khan, 2011; Sajjad, 2008). Therefore this study will explore the attitudes and perceptions that influence the hiring and retaining decisions of employers working in the different industrial sectors and different sizes of organizations.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research is qualitative in nature as the aim was to explore the perceptions, and attitudes of qualified experts responsible for the hiring, retention, and career development of potential job seekers having a physical

disability. It was based on an inductive approach with the elements of deduction hence thematic analysis was used to identify the attitudes and perceptions regarding concerns and challenges faced by the employers and extends previous studies such as by Nowell et al. (2017).

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, based on a descriptive approach with a focus on lived experience. Lived experience is understood from a life-world approach which is a sum of physical surroundings and everyday experiences that make up an individuals' world and becomes the starting point for understanding lived experiences. Hence, the life-world forms the foundation for our understanding of lived experiences (Dahlberg et al., 2008).

This research is directed by the following research questions:

- What is the employers' perspective about the policies for the inclusion of people with disabilities?
- What are the concerns and challenges faced by employers while hiring individuals with physical disabilities?
- What initiatives are taken for the career development and reasonable accommodations of employees with physical disabilities?

Sample

Given the exploratory nature of the research, the data was collected by using the purposive sampling technique. Human resource managers from Telecommunication and NGO sectors in Islamabad were approached,

having a minimum of two years of work experience in the field of HR and a degree or specialization in Human Resource management participated in this study. Preference was given to employers having experience in working with people with physical disabilities. The two-year work experience in HRM criterion was set as such employers get opportunities to participate in the hiring of new employees and are well aware of the organization's policies and culture. Further, the size of the organization was determined by the number of employees in each organization. It was decided that small-scale organizations have 10-49 employees, medium-scale organizations have 50-249 employees and large-scale organizations have more than 250 employees (OECD, 2021). Eleven participants were interviewed for this study. The demographic details of the participants are as stated in Table 1.

The sample size was not predefined as the numbers of participants in a qualitative study are defined by the degree to which the research question of the specific study has been addressed. It was observed that by the tenth interview the information was repetitive, however; one additional interview was conducted to confirm the saturation point (Javadi & Zarea, 2016).

Semi-structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted for exploration. The interview protocol refinement framework proposed by Castillo-Montoya (2016) was followed to develop the semi-structured interview guide. The

interview consisted of questions aligned to the objectives of the study. All the interviews were conducted at the workplace of the participants and were audio-recorded with consent. The average time duration was 40-45 minutes for each. The participants were ensured about the confidentiality of the data.

Data Analysis

The interview data were analyzed thematically by following Braun and Clarke (2006). In the first phase, the data was transcribed and read 2-3 times to facilitate initial theme generation (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). In the second phase, three broad categories were defined on the basis of the research questions – method of deduction (King, 2004). All the transcripts were coded manually by underlining the data extracts. Coded data were then assembled together within each code by copying the extracts of the data into MS excel against the codes that emerged.

In the third phase, similar codes were grouped together into potential themes. Visual representation of data assisted the theme formulation. The name of each code was written and the codes were organized into emerging themes. In the fourth phase, clear themes emerged. Themes that did not have clear distinction were merged under a single broader theme and a thematic map was finalized (Figure 1). Further, the themes were checked against the coded extracts and the raw data to ensure validity. In the fifth phase, the themes were defined to gain clarity on the aspects of data captured by each theme. As a part of refinement,

Table 1
Demographic characteristics of the sample (N=11)

Participant	Education	Gender	Designation	Experience in HR	Have experience working with PWD	Sector	Company size
P1	MBA, LLB	Male	General manager finance, HR manager	10 years	Yes	NGO	Small
P2	MBA	Male	Manager training and development	6 years	Yes	Tele-communication	Large
P3	BBA (HR)	Male	HR executive	4 years	Yes	Tele-communication	Large
P4	BBA (HR)	Male	GM- Talent acquisition and management	3 years	Yes	Tele-communication	Medium
P5	MBA	Male	HR executive	2 years	Yes	Tele-communication	Medium
P6	BCS, MS-HR	Male	Head of OD (HR)	12 years	Yes	Tele-communication	Large
P7	MS- Anthropology	Female	Director operations	15 years	Yes	NGO	Medium
P8	MBA	Male	HR manager	6 years	Yes	NGO	Medium
P9	MS project management	Female	Assistant manager HR	5 years	Yes	NGO	Medium
P10	MBA	Male	Head of HR	10 years	No	NGO	Medium
P11	MBA	Male	Head of services	6 years	Yes	NGO	Large

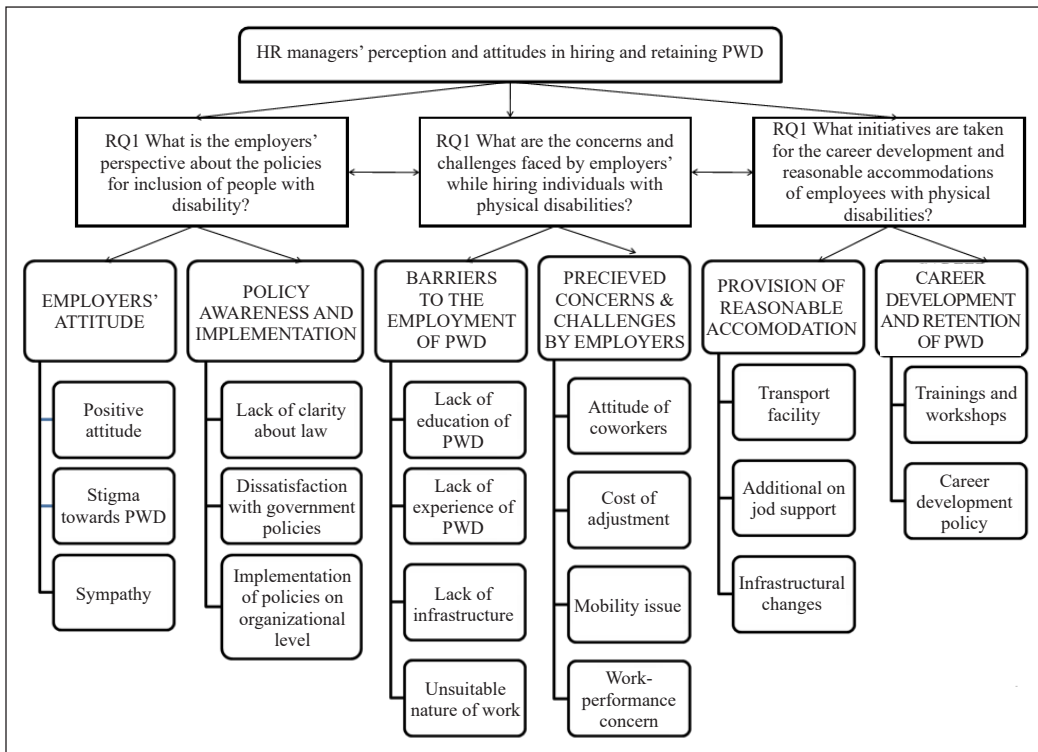


Figure 1. A thematic map on HR managers' perceptions towards hiring and retaining PWD

subthemes were identified and a final thematic map emerged. Verbatim was quoted to provide clarity in reporting.

The issue of validity and reliability was dealt with by adopting the criterion proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Ensuring credibility, dependability, transferability, and conformability helped in establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research. Table 2 provides brief information about ensuring reliability and validity for this study.

FINDINGS

Six key themes emerged from the analysis, namely: employers' attitude, policy awareness, and implementation of perceived concerns and challenges of employers,

barriers to employment of PWD, reasonable accommodation for work, and career development and retention of PWD. Here the focus was exclusively on physical disabilities. Next, these themes have been discussed briefly.

Theme 1: Employers' Attitude

The first theme; employers' attitude represents the way the employers think and feel about people with disabilities. It includes the opinions employers hold about PWD and their actions towards them. Three subthemes emerged under this theme; positive attitude, stigma towards PWD, and doubting abilities of PWD. Employers generally showed a positive attitude towards

Table 2
Establishing trustworthiness

Credibility	<p>Examining the existing literature. Published and established protocol for thematic analysis was followed (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Transcripts were sent back to the interviewees to check the accuracy of the transcription (Albarracin, 2018; Morse, 2015). The data and quotes were repeatedly reviewed for alignment and reporting. Independent researcher having experience of research in the field of business management was included in the study to calculate the percentage agreement (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). 10% of the transcribed data were coded by the independent researcher. The Cohen kappa was also found substantial (.77) which indicated that the coding of the data was free from researchers' personal bias (Burla et al., 2008).</p>
Dependability	<p>The research procedure is descriptive and clearly documented to establish logical connections (Tobin & Begley, 2004).</p>
Transferability	<p>Descriptions and justifications were provided to support the analysis.</p>
Conformability	<p>A detailed account of methodology was given with justifications for each research decision. Research journals were maintained during the research process to avoid bias. This included documenting meetings with co-researcher, appointments with research participants, maintaining diagrams to build the thematic map, documenting emerging ideas, definitions, descriptions, and thinking processes as a starting point prior to and during the data interpretation (Malagon-Maldonado, 2014).</p>

the hiring of PWDs however after in-depth probing, stigmas and sympathetic attitudes were observed. Most employers in small and medium-scale organizations hold a belief that people with physical disabilities might not be able to perform effectively.

P5: "The major challenge is that whether the PWD will be able to perform or not...and even if they are hired, the focus of the employer will remain on the performance of the PWD. In an interview also they will think if the person would be able to perform his job effectively or not."

The findings suggest that employers sympathize PWDs and hire them due to anti-discriminatory cultural and religious

values however they do not provide them with positions as per their qualifications due to existing stigmas resulting in underemployment of PWD.

P8: "Employers will only hire PWD in order to gain blessings from God or to avoid sins and for religious satisfaction."

All the employers had a previous positive experience while working with people with disabilities yet their sympathetic attitude limits the potential and opportunities of such people. They do not hire them due to existing stigmas, and factors such as unsuitable nature of work, lack of experience and education, infrastructural issues, and cost-related concerns.

Theme 2: Policy Awareness and Implementation

The second theme refers to the understanding of the government policies for people with disabilities and the extent to which these policies are being implemented (generally or at the organizational level). Three subthemes emerged under this theme; lack of clarity about law, dissatisfaction with government policies, and implementation of policies on an organizational level. Most of the employers found unaware of the national policies. While other employers who were aware believed that national laws do not fully support the inclusion. They reasoned it to the State's approaches around the medical models of disability. All employers suggested that there is a lack in the implementation plan of the relevant policies.

P2: *"We have very good policies but we need implementation plans for them."*

P8: *"I think there must be but again it all depends on the implementation because we always lack in the implementation thing. Policies are there, we have signed UN Convention, we have signed each and every you know convention, signatures, MOUs whatever but again when it comes to implementation so there's always no implementation plan."*

When further explored, most of the employers did not have any formal written

policy aiming at the employment of PWDs. Due to fewer numbers of applicants with a disability; employers did not find it necessary to develop separate policies for PWD. Employers believed that reserving quota can address the issue of unemployment of PWD however due to reasons like unsuitable nature of work, directing resources and quota system adaptation is not possible.

P1: *"...so it is not that we do not want to take those people but again limited resources and different work nature actually won't allow us to hire people on the quota system."*

Employers' workings in the NGO sector, which is solely based on humanitarian approach, also hesitated in fixing quota as they stated that most of the hiring is project-based due to which fixing quota is not applicable.

P1: *"We cannot locate a quota because you never know that how or what type of project you get, in that project what type of people you want for example you are implementing some training programs; you will need a trainer if you are doing some counseling stuff you will need a psychologist so you cannot take 1 or 2 percentage of the people on the quota system that they will come here they will sit here and they will perform these ongoing jobs because there are no such ongoing jobs in our setup."*

Theme 3: Perceived Concerns and Challenges of Employers

This theme refers to the employers' perception or estimation of the challenges while hiring and retaining people with physical disabilities. Four subthemes emerged under this theme: attitude of co-worker cost of adjustment, mobility issue, and work performance concern. All the employers believed that their nature of work requires frequent movement due to which PWDs are not suitable for the positions. They believed that the lack of mobility of PWD can limit their work abilities and work performance.

P9: *"No one can work in the field without a leg.."*

Further, the findings show that small and medium-scale employers were concerned about the additional cost in adapting the premises or to assist the health-related issues or general issues of PWDs.

P4: *"Also in some organizations costing would be an issue because they would have to amend their work stations, they would have to tailor some things with regard to that person's needs."*

Most of the employers were also concerned about the work performance of the PWD. They were sure that their coworkers would be happy and supportive of the PWD. However, 18% of the employers stated that they are concerned that the negative attitude of coworkers will affect the employee personally and professionally.

P8: *"Coworkers will be helping, if I talk about my society and Islam, we always tend to help others. Even if we take small steps but we help. So they will help each other. Even in our organization, the culture is very friendly. If a person comes from any department, he is accepted and we start looking at him as a part of us."*

Theme 4: Barriers to the Employment of PWD

This theme discusses the existing barriers or the challenges in the employment of people with disabilities at the workplace which influence the employers' decision. Four subthemes emerged under this theme; lack of education of PWD, lack of experience of PWD, unsuitable nature of work, and lack of infrastructure. Most of the employers stated that the nature of work is unsuitable for the PWDs. The nature of work in their respective organizations requires frequent movement and fieldwork which is not suitable for PWDs.

P3: *"you know I have a position for a telecommunication engineer and that guy has to roam around every day, they have to check the towers, he has to maintain all the SOPs, so in such position, if a disabled guy applies it's very hard for me to hire.."*

The employers further perceived that the unsuitable nature of work can cause health or safety implications, especially in the telecommunication sector. Further

employers working in small and medium scale organizations stated that one major existing barrier is the lack of infrastructure and necessary resources to overcome these barriers. Moreover, most of these organizations are situated in buildings and plazas which do not observe universal design hindering the employment of PWD.

P4: *“Most of the organizations are small scale or I would medium as well, they have their offices in certain plazas so the main constraint was the infrastructure.”*

P7: *“Other than that employers don’t hire them as they would have to make structural changes for such people. They might need different toilets or entrances or different setups so they don’t want to hire and get into this hassle.”*

Employers stated that PWD does not have the relevant work experience and the required education for the position. Employers believe that the PWD are viewed as a burden in society due to which they are excluded from the basic rights; they are not provided with standard education making it difficult for employers to hire them on merit.

P8: *“They will not be put into schools. They will be sent into madrassas (religious schools). The family would say that we should teach them at home, they won’t need any job as they won’t be able to perform.”*

Theme 5: Reasonable Accommodation for Work

Provision of reasonable accommodation refers to any change in the work environment/job that enables a person with a disability to enjoy equal employment opportunities. Three subthemes emerged under this theme; transport facility, additional on-the-job support, and infrastructural changes. Employers agreed that they had already provided or would be willing to provide reasonable accommodations for employees with disabilities.

P4: *“We are installing our own lift and that in the other building we have already installed a ramp and we are going to do that here as well. So we are somewhat working on the infrastructure”*

However small and medium scale employers were concerned about the cost associated with the provision of reasonable accommodation. It was found that most of the employers provided transport facilities to the PWD however some of them stated that any kind of accommodation in terms of transport would be provided.

P1: *“if a person with a little bit of a disability like she is unable to walk or she is unable to travel frequently in the field, so as an employer we definitely think that we should be you know we should give her a little bit of the leverage that we can give her the vehicle so that at least*

she can go to the community on the office vehicle and then she can perform her duty “

Further, all the employers stated similar health and other benefits are provided to all the employees; no benefits are given to the employee with a disability.

Theme 6: Career Development and Retention Policy

Career development and retention theme refers to the efforts of the employers to train and develop an employee for internal benefits and for the employee's satisfaction in order to retain the employee ultimately lowering the organization's turnover rate. Three subthemes emerged under this theme; general training and workshops, lack of career development policy, and up-skilling needs. Most of the employers stated that numerous training and workshops are being held for all the employees but there is no specific training aimed at the development of PWDs.

P1: “Not specific training but definitely overall HR training are being given to you know the people who are there on that positions but not categorically to train on these type of topics where you know we can seek a people hire from different backgrounds and different disabilities so not that particular on that topic but overall human resource management training is being given.”

Further no career paths were devised specifically for the PWD mainly because of the lack of development policy for the PWD. This might be due to the low number of quotas reserved for the PWD or the low number of applicants. Further, it was found that there is a need to design programs that can help the PWDs in developing basic skills needed for their career-making to assist them in becoming the best fit for the organization.

DISCUSSION

Employer's perspectives and attitudes towards disability play a vital role in the employment of people with disabilities. The employers participating reported having experience of hiring and working with PWD. Only one participant did not have any such experience. All employers generally showed a positive attitude however, after in-depth probing, stigmas and sympathetic attitudes were noted. Most employers in small and medium-scale organizations doubted the abilities of PWD and viewed them in terms of their disability rather than their abilities. They shared interrelated concerns that affect the entire employment cycle. Even when people with disabilities are employed, these workers are more likely to report underemployment, involuntary part-time or conditional employment, and unfair salaries (Arsh et al., 2019; Konrad et al., 2013). This general mindset of employers could be due to the lack of understanding about disability (Ang, 2017).

Findings enabled understanding culture-specific factors as hiring people

with disabilities was viewed as a source of spiritual fulfillment to gain personal satisfaction and blessings from God as Islamic teachings focus on the fact that no discrimination should be done among people based on color, race, or religion and everyone should be treated equally in the society. The Employers sympathize with PWDs and hire them due to their cultural-religious values however they do not provide them with positions as per their qualifications.

Further employer's attitudes were found to receive influence by the previous experiences. Previously employers were reported to have a previous positive experience while working with people with disabilities as researchers reported that PWD is more energetic, enthusiastic, and are more loyal to the organization. (Heera & Devi, 2016). On a contrary, it was found that employers hesitate in PWD due to the perceived challenges. Further, factors such as unsuitable nature of work, lack of infrastructure, cost issue, lack of experience and education, and perceived challenges and concerns of employers were cited as the barriers in the employment of PWD. Findings contradict the literature that suggests that employers who have positive previous experience in working with people with disabilities find it easier to integrate PWD in their workforce despite the barriers (Sajjad, 2008). Generally, the findings indicated positive attitudes of employers seemed to be a superficial perspective.

Further, it was found that the employers aware of the laws believed that the national

laws do not fully support the employment of PWD. This might be because the state often focuses on the impairments of the PWD (medical approach). They tend to focus on the disability of the person and provide them with assistance accordingly, instead of adopting a comprehensive rights-based approach. Employers state that due to a lack of implementation and proper monitoring systems the employers are unable to adapt laws and policies to support PWD. The telecom-based employers were willing to adopt quota systems however lack of proper and strategic action plan makes it difficult for the small and medium scale organizations to implement national policies in terms of adaptation of quota, providing reasonable accommodation, and the adaptation of universal design. Further, the NGO-based employers showed reluctance in adapting quota as these organizations hire an employee according to the project requirements to which makes it difficult to predetermine the number of employees as resulting in underemployment of PWD.

Further, it was found that the implementation of the policy was influenced by the size of the organization rather than by the industrial sector. It was observed that both the small and large scale organizations had general written policies to promote inclusivity however large scale organizations were found more willing to adopt quota system. Contrarily small-scale and medium-scale organizations lacked awareness regarding the national policies aiming at the hiring and retaining of people

with disabilities and were unwilling to adopt the quota system due to limited resources and a low number of employees. However, the employers from all three organizational sizes were found to be sympathetic. The employers believed that PWD deserves a fair chance however the employers are hesitant while hiring them due to limited resources. The existence of policy addressing the employment of people with disabilities had low variability by the industrial sector. Both the telecommunication sectors and NGOs had no written policy aiming specifically at the hiring and retention of people with disabilities however all organizations had general policy promoting inclusivity. This general policy refers to a clause in the formal policy stating that no discrimination will be done on the basis of color, race, or religion of the job seeker. The recruitment procedures, job succession paths were the same as people without disabilities. All the employers believed that there is a dire need to have national and organizational level support to include PWD in the workforce. The result also revealed challenges and concerns into two categories; the perceived challenges and the actual barriers in the employment of PWD. The perceived challenges by employers may be a result of the existing stigmas towards the PWDs. Despite the previous positive experience when including people with physical disabilities in the workforce it was seen that most of the employers were reluctant in hiring people with physical disabilities due to the perceived challenges and concerns. Perceived challenges were influenced by

the actual challenges such as is the lack of reasonable accommodation and resources for the mobility of the potential employee.

The findings show that most of the employers were concerned about the work performance of people with disabilities. They believed that people with disabilities might not be able to perform well as per the needs of the organizations. Due to this mindset, most PWD are not given a fair employment chance. This finding is consistent with the literature that employers doubt the work abilities of the PWD (Mansour, 2009). Despite having previous positive experience employers tend to hold stereotypical views about PWD.

Most of the employers were confident that their coworkers would be happy and supportive of the PWD as previously employed PWD have had a positive experience while working in their organization. The employers stated that their organizational culture promotes inclusivity which will support PWD at each step. However, 18% of the employers stated that they are concerned that the coworkers will stigmatize the PWD which will affect the employee well-being. This finding supports the literature largely but also contradicts literature that indicates openness and acceptance for the employees with disability (Naraine & Lindsay, 2011).

With regards to the barriers in the employment of PWDs, most of the employers stated that the nature of work is unsuitable for them. They stated that the nature of work requires frequent movements and fieldwork. The employers stated that

the unsuitable nature of work can cause health or safety implications, especially in the telecommunication sector. Further, the employers working in non-profit organizations stated that the hiring is usually project-based.

Another major barrier cited by the employers was the lack of infrastructure. Employers working in small and medium scale organizations stated that one major reason for the lack of infrastructure is the lack of resources available. Employers consider the additional costs of adapting the premises to the needs of the PWD unfavorable due to which the hiring of PWD is discouraged. As per the literature review costing related to infrastructural changes is cited as a major concern in small-scale organizations (Ramachandra et al., 2017). However, in this study, it was found that costing is a major issue for medium-scale organizations as well. Further employers stated that most of the medium and small-scale organizations are situated in buildings and plazas and are not disability friendly. This may be one reason for the fewer number of applicants as stated by the employers.

Employers further stated that people with disabilities do not have the relevant work experience and the required education for the position but at the same time recognized the importance of educating PWDs.

With regards to career development and retention initiatives for the PWD, most of the employers stated that numerous training

and workshops are being held for all the employees but there is no specific training for PWD. This finding is consistent with the literature as it suggests that other than the attitudes of employers, workplace practices such as lack of training opportunities for people with disabilities result in their lower employment and retention rate (Bruyere et al., 2004). Further the employers stated that no career paths or development policy exists to support PWD. This indicates that altering career paths can lead to higher employment rate of PWD (Bonaccio et al., 2020)

Further, the employers agreed that either they had already provided or would be willing to provide reasonable accommodations for employees with disabilities if required. However, small and medium scale employers were concerned about the cost associated with the structural change which discourages the employment of PWD. Most of the employers provided transport facilities to the PWD however some of them disagreed and stated that any kind of accommodation in terms of transport or extra health benefits could not be provided. All the employers stated that no separate benefits are given to the employee with a disability due to a lack of resources or government support.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study support the social model of disability and recognize and highlights the barriers existing that hinder the growth of PWD. Attitudes and

perceptions of human resource managers are perplexed and they are likely to form barriers in employing people with physical disabilities. This is further reinforced by a larger legislative and social environment. Inclusion in the workplaces requires change at both cultural and organizational levels with budgetary support to create infrastructure on the basis of universal design. The findings indicate the importance of formulating and/or implementing government policies to support hiring and retention of employees in all types of organizations.

The findings may also encourage organizational managers to develop organizational level strategies for employing PWDs and supporting them the attitudinal change and reasonable accommodation strategies in addition to a focus on training and development.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

This study only included private sector employers however exploring both private and public sectors can give a deeper understanding of policy implementation. Further, this study could not gauge the perspective of the employees. However future researches may take the perspective of the employees to find the discrepancies amongst the employees and the employers.

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