

THE ACCEPTABILITY TOWARDS PWDs AT WORK PLACE -PERCEPTIONS AND AWARENESS

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ABSTRACT

This paper aimed to gauge the level of knowledge about People with Disabilities Act (PWDA) 2008 among individuals working in private organizations and identify its effect on their perceptions and acceptance towards persons with disabilities (PWDs) at work place. Misconception about disabilities and the subsequent low expectations towards PWDs often resulted them in being deprived and left behind in many areas of life including work; one of the most important elements for independent living. Several national social welfare and social service policies, including PWDA, were introduced in Malaysia with aims to assist the independent living of PWDs. While the government claimed that the implementation of PWDA was in good shape, opinions by observers on the efficiency and effectiveness of such implementations were far from favorable. Thus, this research was conducted with the aim to clarify the existing gap. A study from grass root level to understand the actual situation was necessary. The study utilized a questionnaire that was partially developed by the researchers, combined with Interaction with Disabled Persons (IDP) Scale that was developed by Gething as a medium for data collection. The sample for this research were staffs from private institution's working at branches and a subsidiary located around Kelang Valley. 1200 questionnaires were distributed and among the returned 671 were valid with information for the research. The latest version of SPSS was used to analyze the data obtained and descriptive analysis methods were utilized. Findings of the research suggested that there was no evidence of relationship between "gender", "staff categories", "length of services" and "engagement/communication with PWDs". There was also no evidence of relationship between "opportunity of communication with PWDs" and intention to be "involved in charity work" (for PWDs). Further, though strong evidence of relationship between "Knowledge about PWDA 2008" and "Support towards 1% employment of PWDs" were noted, analysis on the actual relationship between the two revealed only weak result. Awareness exhibited towards PWDs were not translated into helping action and shared knowledge about PWDA were insufficient that it weakens the support towards its implementation.

Keywords: People with disabilities, employment, perceptions, awareness

Introduction

Issues on the importance of employment attainment has always been central to the discourse of self-independency of individuals. Engagement in employment was identified as the effective long-run measure for poverty-free self-independency. Yet, to engage in employment has always been a huge challenge for many, especially for persons with disabilities (PWDs) (Baidi et al., 2018). PWDs were described as among the poorest of poor in all societies and the poverty was closely linked to their exclusion from education, employment, and other economic and social opportunities (Ang, Ramayah & Vun, 2013). More than 95% of PWDs were still unemployed though many expressed that they were able and willing to work. Employment could help PWDs escape from the perpetual and vicious circle of marginalization, poverty and social exclusion (Ang, 2014). The barriers to employment for PWDs could be both physical and attitudinal in nature. Hazlin Falina et al. (2015) and Lee, Abdullah & Mey (2011) identified that lack of accessible transportation appeared to be the greatest problem. Awareness towards the situation was very low and the possible main contributing factor was public ignorance, both, at work place and outside. The fact that functional impairment of PWDs in attaining employment could mostly be ascribed to social reaction (Guse & Harvey, 2010) necessitates a study relating to awareness (consequently perceptions) towards PWDs at workplace to be conducted.

Person with Disability Act (PWDA) was enacted in 2008 and such act requires public and private sectors to allocate 1% (from the total number of employed staffs) of the job opportunities available in their organizations to PWDs. However, opinions on the effectiveness of implementations of the Act from observers were far from favorable. Islam (2015) argued that though the Malaysian Government has formulated and legalized various policies, legislations and initiatives, those policies were not properly implemented. They were merely policy statements without running their actual course. The unemployment rate among PWDs in Malaysia remains high (Lee, Abdullah & Mey, 2011; Hazlin Falina, et al., 2015). A gap exists between the policy formulation and policy implementation process. It is tempting to identify possible factors that may contribute to the forming of such gap and to gauge the public's understanding and acceptance toward PWDA from the grass root level could be the first step for the identification process. Earlier studies showed that organizations' compliance to certain implemented Act would increase if they were knowledgeable about it (Ang, 2014). Such fact motivates the necessity to gauge the level of knowledge about

PWDA 2008 among individuals working in private organizations and identify its effect towards their attitude (perceptions and acceptance) to PWDs at work place.

Attitudes are defined by life experiences that mostly consists of the relationships of individuals with others around them. Relationship in this context includes parents-child bonding that takes place at home from its earliest stage to communication established with surrounding others at all and different phases of life. The quality of relationship influences the types of behavior and attitudes formed within the individuals. For example, Aiden and McCarthy (2014) stated that a person's attitudes towards one disabled person might be determined by their earlier experiences of knowing another disabled person. Adverse attitude formed within individuals may yield behavior such as stereotyping, discriminating and being prejudice. Hall and Zweigenhaft (2016) argued that stereotypes, discrimination, and social prejudices were common issues to PWDs and it is often that individuals with disabilities receive far less attention than those who suffer from other forms of prejudices. The mainstream media, at times, exacerbate the situation by consistently portraying disability in negative connotation, leading to public's misinterpretations, causing low expectations and poor attitudes about the disabled (Hall and Zweigenhaft, 2016). Positive visibility of disabled people on mainstream media would be necessary to reduce the stigma and discrimination towards disability (Aiden and McCarthy, 2014). Yet, having insufficient right information on PWDs and their capabilities, reported stories were inaccurate and as a result misconception about disabilities were perpetuated (Opoku-Boadi, 2015). Media depiction of disability influences the public acceptance towards PWDs.

Misconception about disabilities and the subsequent low expectations towards PWDs often resulted them being deprived and left behind in many areas of life including work. Act enactments and legislative changes seeking to tackle discrimination towards disabled people are observable since at least two decades ago. For example, United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) champion the right of PWDs to work on an equal basis with others and forbid all forms of employment discrimination (Opoku-Boadi, 2015). The European Union sustain the idea that disabled people should be independent and must be capable of making their own decisions for life through the support of positive discrimination and social integration programs (Lazányi, 2014). And, in Malaysia, numbers of national social welfare and social service policies were introduced too with aims to assist the independent living of PWDs. The introduction of Person with Disabilities Act (PWDA) 2008 were a history due to its comprehensive and "right-based" nature as compared to earlier available policies (Islam, 2015). PWDA promotes the quality of life and wellbeing of disabled people (Part IV). Points relating to accessibilities (Chapter 1), habilitations and rehabilitations (Chapter 2), health (Chapter 3), protection of persons with severe disabilities (Chapter 4) and situation of risks and humanitarian emergencies (Chapter 5) were highlighted (Person with Disabilities Act, 2008). However, despite the existence of these acts and regulations, negative perceptions about PWDs persists and employers are still unwilling to employ PWDs. The implementation of these protection provisions varies considerably, often poorly enforced and not well known (Opoku-Boadi, 2015).

This paper is divided into five parts. The "Introduction" discussed in brief about the attitude and behavior towards disability, misconception about disability and measures promoting the employability of PWDs. The next part, the "Literature Review", summarized earlier conducted researches on attitudes toward PWDs. Factors hindering PWDs from attaining stable employments were also discussed. The third part; "Research Methodology", provided explanation about the research design, instrument, data collection process and analyzing style utilized in this research. The fourth part; the "Results" provided data and analysis summary on demographic trend of respondents; communication with PWDs at work place; awareness towards the need of PWDs; knowledge of People with Disabilities Act (PWDA) 2008 and support on the implementation. The fifth part; the "Discussion", summarized the whole issue highlighted in this paper and the "Conclusion" states the writers point of view derived from this study

Literature Review

I. Attitudes and Perceptions on Disabilities

Understanding of the conditions influences attitudes towards disability. Compared to decades ago the level of consciousness towards PWDs has increased to a significant positive degree. Disability is considered as a part of human right issue now as compared to earlier time when disabled were neglected and isolated. As argued by Singh (2010), the attitude has significantly changed from negative to positive aspect in various dimensions and manifestations. However, differences in terms of culture-to-culture and countries do exist.

Public attitudes and perceptions are still the barriers to achieving equality and full participation for PWDs (Hannon, 2006). Disability could be the society's reaction to impairment (i.e. a stigma), that is created by the society's attitudes, physical environment, institutional and legal barriers (Lazányi, 2014). Attitudes matters most in the practice of equality because they may translate into behaviors towards individuals and groups in society which may (or may not) have negative consequences such as discrimination and hate crime. It is often presumed that negative attitudes and behavior towards disabilities come from people not having adequate knowledge. For example, people may maintain high level of social distance with individuals with mental health conditions because they think they are prone to violence even though this is not true (Stanlland, 2010). In other words, the oppression, exclusion and segregation of PWDs from participation in mainstream activities could be the result from disabling social environments and prevailing hostile social attitudes (Daruwalla and Darcy, 2005).

Studies on the social and economic history of the western blind illustrated the transformation of attitudes and consciousness towards PWDs in general. During the initial stage (the primitive period), PWDs were regarded as liability and even denied of the fundamental right to live. They were treated with contempt and not only neglected but also to be left to die. In the following

stage that began with the rise of Christianity in Rome (the era of the asylums); though the right to life was recognized, education and independence were not encouraged. PWDs were still considered helpless and should depend on the benevolence of others to live. The final stage (the age of social integration) started with the founding of the first school for the blind in Paris in 1784. Once equipped with the skills requisite for self-support, the blind becoming integrated into mainstream society, as full-fledged members; but this process of assimilation has been slow and remains even today only partial (Singh, 2010).

II. People with Disabilities and Work Life

Work and employment play a central role in people's lives and are essential factors in social inclusion and well-being (Hannon 2006). Work provides an opportunity for economic self-sufficiency, fosters social connectedness, contributes to sense of dignity and self-worth, and serves as a means of self-expression (Opoku-Boadi, 2015). Yet, PWDs are more likely than people who are not disabled to experience the attitudes of others as a major barrier to employment, education, leisure, transport, access to public services and accessibility outside the home (Aiden and McCarthy, 2014). Lower rates of employment is the main reason why disability may lead to poverty (WHO, 2011) in (Opoku-Boadi, 2015). Research indicated that society's negative attitude resulting in discrimination in the workplace and the lack of adequate infrastructure are significant obstructive factors to people with disabilities' employment (Lazányi, 2014). In spite of the existence of protective legislation (i.e. 1990 ADA legislation in the USA), discrimination at work, rooted in negative attitudes, continues to adversely affect employment outcomes (Hannon 2006). Addressing the employment problems of PWDs cannot be achieved in isolation as it is connected to values such as non-discrimination, social inclusion for difference, accessibility, participation and recognizing their capabilities. Understanding the prevalence of positive and negative attitudes and which groups of people hold them is crucial if we want to understand how to improve public attitudes (Aiden and McCarthy, 2014; Opoku-Boadi, 2015).

Employer perceptions and attitude toward the disabled workforce is a significant barrier to the employment of PWDs. Concerns about productivity, demand for supervision, as well the cost of accommodating PWDs' needs were voiced (Hernandez et al., 2008). Many employers would not employ PWDs because they perceive them to be less productive (Opoku-Boadi, 2015). There were fears that supervisory time would increase, productivity would suffer, and frequent absences would incur. A lack of coordination among employers, health-care professionals, and social welfare workers may also impede and complicate the inclusion of PWDs at work place and resulted on why they are discriminated against (Hall and Zweigenhaft, 2016).

While getting into an employment is already a high hurdle, being employed too is not an ultimate guarantee of problem solving for PWDs. As stated earlier, PWDs are more probable to be unemployed. Even if they succeed in finding a job, their average salary is significantly lower than that of those without any impairment (Lazányi, 2014). Misconceptions about the ability of PWDs to work are important reasons both for their continued unemployment, and, if employed, for their exclusion from high premium jobs (Opoku-Boadi, 2015). In a competitive job market, and in the absence of legislation, employers will be less likely to recruit PWDs with the perception that such action would result in productivity compromising and would impose additional costs on the business. Employers will only employ them where they can obtain benefit to the business by reducing the wage paid to match the expected lower productivity. Thus, PWDs are often clustered into sectors offering low-paid jobs such as receptionists or cleaners (Opoku-Boadi, 2015). Often, managers' negative perceptions and concerns towards PWDs were linked to their unfamiliarity or lack of experience with workers with disabilities and lack of knowledge with the supporting legislation. A study reported that the cost of accommodating workers with disabilities was only minimal in actual (Hernandez et al., 2008). Would the same unfamiliarity influence the acceptability of community at work place towards PWDs in Malaysia is the issue to be highlighted in this paper?

Research Methodology

I. Research Design

The main aim of this research was to identify the public understanding (individuals working in private organizations) towards PWDA that was implemented in 2008 and learn its effect towards their perceptions and acceptance to PWDs at work place. Though attitudes towards PWDs have improved since decades ago, prejudice towards disabled people is still widespread (Stanlland, 2010). Attitudes towards PWDs are not straightforward. They are made up of a complex mix of presumptions and stereotypes alongside unconscious norms and social factors (Hall and Zweigenhaft, 2016). For greater impact of positive change to happen in the way how PWDs are treated in term of employment, not only the legislations, but the reception towards PWDs too has to undergo major changes (Kornélia Lazányi, 2014). In this research, descriptive analysis method was used to analyze obtained data that were mostly categorical. Other than frequencies and percentages (to understand the general trend of answers for all parts of questionnaire), cross tabulation method was utilized to extract comparison results of descriptive data between categories of respondents. The results were then tested with Chi-Square Test for evidence of relationship. Finally, the relationship (if any) derived from the ordinal data were then tested their strength using Gamma Coefficient.

II. Study Setting and Sample

The population of research were employees at a selected huge organization (a public listed company) with branches in most parts of the country. Other than the head quarter, staffs (both male and female regardless of age) from 11 branches and 1 subsidiary (all located in Kelang Valley) were involved in this research as respondents. 4 categories of staff (Executive Management, Executive Technical, Non-Executive Management and Non-Executive Technical) were invited to participate in this research. Purposive Sampling method (Typical Case Sampling) was utilized in this research as this is the suitable method to understand the typical response (Palys, 2008) of the public (at work place) towards PWDA 2008, and consequently PWDs.

III. Data Collection

Letter of approval was obtained from the organization prior to the conduct of questionnaire distribution. An officer was appointed to specifically assist the research. Upon discussion, the appointed officer then decided branches that were suitable for the research (11 branches) and appointed a person-in-charge to assist the research from all selected branches. Communication with PIC from all branches were then conducted and dates to meet them (for briefing on the structure of questionnaires) and to distribute questionnaires were then fixed. Researchers went to all the branches and personally briefed the structure of the questionnaire (in order to minimize answering errors) and did the distribution. A total of 1200 questionnaires were distributed and 700 were returned (58.4%). 671 questionnaires (55.9%) were valid with information and utilized in this research. The process of distribution and collection of questionnaires took almost 3 months to be completed.

IV. Instrument

The study utilized a questionnaire that was partially developed by the researchers (Part 1 – Part 6), combined with Interaction with Disabled Persons (IDP) Scale (Part 7) that was developed by Gething in the year 1991 (Forlin et al., 1999) as a medium for data collection. Only the data from Part 1 to Part 6 were analyzed and elaborated in this research paper. Data from Part 7 will be constructed into another individual research paper to be presented separately at a later date. Part 1 of the questionnaire was on the demographic trend of the respondents. Part 2 of the questionnaire looked into the “Interaction History” of individuals with PWDs at work place. Part 3 of the questionnaire analyzed the respondents’ “Awareness towards PWDs”. Part 4 of the questionnaire focused on the “Readiness in Accepting PWDs” at work place. Part 5 of the questionnaire highlighted “Organizational Contribution to PWDs”. And, Part 6 of the questionnaire gauge the knowledge of respondents about People with Disabilities Act (PWDA) 2008. Items in the questionnaire were measured either using Binary or Dichotomous Scale (1 - Yes, 2 - No) or 4-point Likert Scale. Items measured using dichotomous scale were: Part 2 (Q1-Q5), Part 3 (Q4) and Part 4(Q3 & Q4). Different types of 4-point Likert Scale were used to measure remaining items in the questionnaire. Information about the scale are displayed on each table in the Result Section. The data analysis for this study was done using SPSS software (version 22).

Results

I. Demographic Trend of Respondents

This section presented the statistics of respondents for the research. An almost balance participation between male (45.9%) and female (54.1%) was recorded from the 671 respondents involved in this study. The involvement of Management Staffs for both categories were remarkably higher (Executive category: 34.4% and Non-Executive category: 38.9%) compared to Technical Staffs that only recorded 9.7% of involvement for Executive category and 17% of involvement for Non-Executive category. The majority of respondents engaged in the study were middle-aged staffs ageing 39 years old or younger (67.9%). The age category of 30-39 years old recorded the highest participation of 41.4%. This trend corresponded with other items such as Length of Service and Level of Income in which respondents were noticeably clustered in the middle range of length of services (20 years and below: 78.7%) and level of income (RM 5000 and below: 71.5%). In terms of Level of Education, majority of the respondents were either a certificate/diploma holder (42.6%) or a Degree/Master holder (41.7%). Participation from staffs with PhD education background was the least (1%) compared to others.

Table 1. Description of the sample

	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
1. Categories		
Executive – Management	231	34.4
Executive – Technical	65	9.7
Non-Executive – Management	261	38.9
Non-Executive – Technical	114	17.0
2. Gender		
Male	308	45.9
Female	363	54.1
3. Age Categories		
20-29 Years Old	178	26.5
30-39 Years Old	277	41.4
40-49 Years Old	144	21.3
50-59 Years Old	72	10.7
4. Level of Education		
Certificate/Diploma	286	42.6
Degree/Master	280	41.7
PhD	7	1.0
Other Special Qualification	98	14.6
5. Length of Services		
Less than 10 years	325	48.4
11 – 20 years	203	30.3

21 – 30 years	85	12.7
More than 30 years	58	8.6
6. Level of Income		
Less than RM 3000	227	33.8
RM 3000 – RM 5000	253	37.7
RM 5000 – RM 10 000	147	21.9
More than RM 10 000	44	6.6

Note: N=671

II. Communication with People with Disabilities (PWDs) at Work Place

Result of analysis exhibited in Table 2 Panel A indicated that tendencies for staffs to have opportunities to communicate with PWDs at work place were very minimal for both genders and for all categories of staffs. 75.6% of male staffs and 75.8% of female staffs responded that they never had the opportunity to communicate with PWDs. The “Yes” scores were significantly lower than “No” score for all categories of staffs for both genders, indicating very minimal interaction that took place between them and PWDs. Referring to Table 2 Panel B, it can be concluded that there is no evidence of relationship between staff categories and opportunity to engage and communicate with PWDs at work place for both men and women (Chi-Square = 1.337, df = 3, $p > 0.05$).

Table 2 Panel A. Crosstabulation between gender, staff categories and opportunity to communicate with PWDs

Staff Categories	Male (%)		Female (%)		Total Overall (%)	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Executive - Management	6.5	25.0	8.8	28.1	7.7	26.7
Executive – Technical	3.6	9.7	2.2	4.4	2.8	6.9
Non-Executive - Management	8.1	19.8	11.0	37.2	9.7	29.2
Non-Executive – Technical	6.2	21.1	2.2	6.1	4.0	13.0
Total (%)	24.4	75.6	24.2	75.8	24.3	75.7

Note: N=671

Table 2 Panel B. The relationship between gender, staff categories and opportunity to communicate with PWDs

Gender		Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Male	Pearson Chi-Square	2.047 ^b	3	.563
Female	Pearson Chi-Square	1.368 ^c	3	.713
Total	Pearson Chi-Square	1.337 ^a	3	.720

a. The minimum expected count is 15.79.

b. The minimum expected count is 9.98.

c. The minimum expected count is 5.82.

Table 3 Panel A exhibited that length of service too was not an indicator of a better opportunity to communicate with PWDs at work place. All categories of length of service for both male and female were indicating that the “Yes” scores recorded significantly lower percentage than the “No” score. 75% of the male respondent and 79.6% of the female respondents stated that they did not have any opportunity to communicate with PWDs. As such, referring to Table 3 Panel B, it can be concluded that there is no evidence of relationship between length of service and tendency to communicate with PWDs at work place for both men and women (Chi-Square = 6.941, df = 3, $p > 0.05$)

Table 3 Panel A. Crosstabulation between gender, length of service and opportunity to communicate with PWDs

Length of Service	Male (%)		Female (%)		Total Overall (%)	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Less than 10 Years	11.7	37.7	7.7	39.9	9.5	38.9
11-20 Years	5.2	21.8	8.5	24.5	7.0	23.2
21-30 Years	5.5	7.5	3.0	9.4	4.2	8.5
> 30 Years	2.6	8.1	1.1	5.8	1.8	6.9
Total (%)	25.0	75.0	20.4	79.6	22.5	77.5

Note: N=671

Table 3 Panel B. The relationship between gender, length of service and opportunity to communicate with PWDs

Gender		Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Male	Pearson Chi-Square	8.134 ^b	3	.043

Female	Pearson Chi-Square	4.828 ^c	3	.185
Total	Pearson Chi-Square	6.941 ^a	3	.074

a. The minimum expected count is 13.05.

b. The minimum expected count is 8.25.

c. The minimum expected count is 5.10.

III. Awareness towards the Need of People with Disabilities

Table 4 Panel A indicated that though opportunities to communicate with PWDs were very limited (only 19.1% of the respondents had the opportunity to communicate with PWDs) awareness towards the needs of PWDs (i.e. charity work organization) were very high at 96% (I agree very much: 57.4%, I agree somewhat: 38.6%). Majority were on the opinion that the company should conduct more charity work that involves PWDs either inside or outside the organization. Hence, this situation corresponded with result exhibited in Table 4 Panel B which indicated that there is no evidence of relationship between communication with PWDs and support towards the idea that employee should conduct charity work involving PWDs (Chi-Square = 21.223, df = 9, p > 0.05).

Table 4 Panel A. Crosstabulation between communication with PWDs and desire to conduct charity work

A number of PWDs are actually being part of the organization	My company/organization should conduct more charity work (inside and outside) that involves PWDs.				Total Overall (%)
	IAMV (%)	IAS (%)	IDS (%)	ITD (%)	
• Yes, I know and often communicate with them.	12.8	5.8	0.4	0.0	19.1
• Yes, I know but never communicate with them.	23.4	20.1	1.3	0.9	45.8
• May be. I saw them.	20.1	10.7	0.7	0.3	31.9
• I would rather focus on my own thing.	1.0	1.9	0.1	0.1	3.3
Total (%)	57.4	38.6	2.7	1.3	100.0

Note: N=671

(IAMV – I agree very much, IAS – I agree somewhat, IDS – I disagree somewhat, ITD – I totally disagree)

Table 4 Panel B. The relationship between communication with PWDs and desire to conduct charity work

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	21.223 ^a	9	.012

a. The minimum expected count is .30.

Table 5 Panel A exhibited the relationship between communication tendency with PWDs and the intention to provide them with suitable employment (from the employees' point of view). A similar trend to what was discussed earlier in Table 4 Panel A was noted. Limited communication with PWDs (only 19.1% of the respondents had the opportunity to communicate with PWDs) did not adversely affect the intention to assist PWDs by providing them with suitable employment. 49.9% of respondents answered I agree very much, and 44.6% respondents answered I agree somewhat towards the idea that it is the obligation of employers to provide a suitable job for PWDs. Only 5.5% of the respondents did not agree with this idea. Table 5 Panel B clearly indicated that there is no evidence of relationship between communication with PWDs and support towards the idea that employee should create job positions that enable the hiring of PWDs (Chi-Square = 13.032, df = 9, p > 0.05).

Table 5 Panel A. Crosstabulation between communication with PWDs and intention to provide them with suitable employment

A number of PWDs are actually being part of the organization	My company/organization should create job scopes/positions that suit PWDs and enable their hiring.				Total Overall (%)
	IAMV (%)	IAS (%)	IDS (%)	ITD (%)	
• Yes, I know and often communicate with them.	11.2	7.6	0.3	0.0	19.1
• Yes, I know but never communicate with them.	22.5	20.7	1.9	0.6	45.8
• May be. I saw them.	14.9	14.3	2.2	0.4	31.9
• I would rather focus on my own	1.3	1.9	0.0	0.0	3.3

thing.					
Total (%)	49.9	44.6	4.5	1.0	100

Note: N=671

(IAVM – I agree very much, IAS – I agree somewhat, IDS – I disagree somewhat, ITD – I totally disagree)

Table 5 Panel B. The relationship between communication with PWDs and intention to provide them with suitable employment

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	13.032 ^a	9	.161

a. The minimum expected count is .23.

IV. Knowledge of People with Disabilities Act 2008 and Support on the Implementation

Claimed by observers stating that the implementation of PWDA 2008 was not at all efficient may not be entirely correct. Table 6 Panel A indicated that though only 6.4% respondents answered, “I know the Act well”, a total of 46.7% respondents had the knowledge (at varying level) about PWDA 2008 (“I know some part of it”: 13.7%, “I have heard about it”: 27.6%). The other positive side was that the majority of respondents (86.3%), regardless of their level of knowledge about PWDA 2008, agreed to the idea that all organization (public and private) should allocate employment for PWDs amounting at least 1% from the total number of their employees. Yet, the fact that a total of 52.3% respondents answered “I don’t know about it at all” can be quite alarming too and suggested that the ground for improvements is still wide open. From Table 6 Panel B, it was noted that there was a strong evidence of relationship between “Knowledge about PWDA 2008” and “Support towards 1% employment of PWDs as encouraged by PWDA 2008” (Chi-Square = 138.124, df = 9, p < 0.05). However, conducted strength measuring analysis utilizing Gamma Coefficient (Table 6 Panel C) indicated that the relationship between “Knowledge about PWDA 2008” and “Support towards 1% employment of PWDs as encouraged by PWDA 2008” was very weak with recorded value between 0.2 and 0.6 (Coefficient = .278).

Table 6 Panel A. Crosstabulation between knowledge about PWDA 2008 and support toward its implementation in term of employment for PWDs

My knowledge about PWDA 2008.	PWDA 2008 requires all organization (public and private) to employ at least 1% of PWDs as compared to the total number of their employees.				Total Overall (%)
	IKTS (%)	IDKTS (%)	IKBDA (%)	IDKNN (%)	
• I know the Act well	3.6	1.2	0.9	0.7	6.4
• I know some parts of it	2.2	9.1	1.3	1.0	13.7
• I have heard about it	6.1	18.6	2.1	0.7	27.6
• I don’t know about it at all	2.5	42.9	0.7	6.1	52.3
Total (%)	14.5	71.8	5.1	8.6	100

Note: N=671

(IKTS – I knew about it and totally support it; IDKTS – I don’t know about it but totally support it; IKBDA – I knew about it but do not agree with it; IDKNN – I don’t know about it and don’t think it’s necessary)

Table 6 Panel B. The relationship between knowledge about PWDA2008 and support toward its implementation in term of employment for PWDs

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	138.124 ^a	9	.000

a. The minimum expected count is 2.18.

Table 5 Panel C. The relationship strength between knowledge about PWDA2008 and support toward its implementation in term of employment for PWDs

	Value	Asymptotic	Approximate T ^b	Approximate
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			Standard Error ^a		Significance
Ordinal by Ordinal	Gamma	.278	.065	4.191	.000

Discussions

As stated earlier, attitudes towards PWDs are a complex mix of presumptions, stereotypes and unconscious social norms (Hall and Zweigenhaft, 2016). Though studies indicated that attitudes towards PWDs have improved (Singh, 2010), prejudice that suggests PWDs as less capable than non-disabled people are still widespread (Stanlland, 2010). Understanding towards PWDs can only be effectively fostered through meaningful and mutual communication between the disabled and non-disabled. Meaningful and mutual in this context would require the disabled to be acknowledged as an individual with rights and dignity, just “like others”, to avoid misconception and paternalistic behavior to take place. A research conducted to British public concluded that much of the discomfort people feel about disability may stem from a lack of understanding (Aiden and McCarthy, 2014). Since to many disabilities means abnormal or wrong, the “otherness” is feared because they do not know how to handle such people, or situations (Lazányi, 2014). To understand them and to let their voice being heard through communication is the key.

Data from this study indicated that communication with PWDs were very minimal for all categories of staff for both gender due to the inexistence (low employability) of PWDs at work place. The low employability reasons could vary and the situation requires consistent tackling from both end for improvement to take place; that is, changing the mind set of both the organization’s management and its individual members. The continuous situation of absence of PWDs at work place as it is now would mean a consistent situation for the non-disabled to not have the opportunity to learn on how to accommodate and accept PWDs in the (work place) community. Communication is important because, other than public education about PWDs, everyday positive interactions between PWDs and people who aren’t disabled will increase understanding and acceptance of disabled people (Aiden and McCarthy, 2014). Further, constant reinforcement and refreshers are needed if attitude change towards PWDs is to become persistently internalized (Daruwalla and Darcy, 2005). To conduct constant reinforcement and refreshers of public education about disability is a huge challenge and normally raises question about who could and has the capacity to do it. As ample fund, knowledge and experts are definitely required for this purpose, it is not a task that only NGOs, organizations (public and private) or even the government alone could handle.

Data from this study also revealed that more than 50% of the respondents were unaware about People with Disabilities Act (PWDA) 2008 (hence, do not understand it). Fortunately, however, positive attitude towards the needs of PWDs was noted despite respondents’ limited communication at work place with PWDs and their minimal knowledge about PWDA 2008. Majority of the respondents were concerned and supported the implementation of actions that would improve the wellbeing and employability of PWDs. Yet again, actions (regardless how benevolent they are) that are not supported by relevant knowledge and information can be misleading as they may wrongly conceptualized and go against or miss the actual needs of PWDs. Fostering knowledge about the scope of PWDA and implementing actions to support the wellbeing of PWDs must come hand-in-hand and they require coordination and organizing. Awareness shown towards PWDs might not be fully translated into meaningful helping action if shared knowledge about PWDA 2008 were insufficient. Vice versa, such ignorance would also contribute to the inefficient implementation of the act as well. Hernandez et al. (2008) argued that planned or targeted intervention efforts may prove effective in increasing social acceptance and employment rates for PWDs, as legislation alone has been unable to do so. Efforts must be focused to altering current adverse attitude towards disabled person among individuals at work place.

PWDA 2008 promotes employment opportunities and career advancement for PWDs through an online system called “Sistem Penempatan Orang Kurang Upaya” or SPOKU. The system functions as a data base that matches the working skills of PWDs registered under the system with organizations intending to employ them. Organizations too started to show the tendency of favoring the employment of management staffs with psychology and counseling skills. These could be actions that indicate the improvement level of awareness towards the employability and wellbeing of PWDs at work place. Hernandez et al. (2008) further suggested on the importance of disability employment agencies’ function to identify qualified applicants with disabilities and for providing support (i.e. job coaches) once PWDs were hired. There was also a need for disability “champions” within companies who would advocate strongly for the hiring of PWDs. Benefits of hiring PWDs (i.e. helped other employees be more accepting of diverse groups and sent a positive message of independent living and community inclusion for PWDs) must be shared and elaborated so that it would create positive vibe for organizations to employ PWDs. Finally, Opoku-Boadi (2015) added on the importance of creating positive perception among employers through tax incentives, provision of assistive technology and devices.

Conclusion

As communication would open door for understanding towards PWDs, in their absence, organization must create opportunities by proactively visiting PWDs facilities under CSR activities to create the first step of mutual communication. Though awareness level relating to special needs of the PWDs is high among individuals at work place, without practical knowledge and information (derivable from face to face communication) to guide such instinct into the right direction of action, effort to support them could be wrongly interpreted and executed that they might yield adverse effect. Government’s approach through knowledge sharing about PWDs to public and private organizations, supported by NGOs, may accelerate the information gaining process. These actions should then be strengthened by systematic effort to educate the top management level of the organization in order to raise their awareness toward the special needs of PWDs (not only in employment but in day-to-day living) as they are the

leader, policy maker and exemplary figure in work place community. Finally, a compulsory requirement should be set by the government for organization's top management to send delegates with decision making authority to attend trainings specific on PWDA (as part of the planned and targeted intervention) for better understanding, hence better implementation of such Act at the micro level while conducting a mild compliance check (for a beginning) at the same time. Acknowledgement and reward for compliance should be given and such information should be publicly shared as it would boost the spirit of adherence to the Act by others. These actions would partly assist the possible attainment of independent and meaningful living by the PWDs. The process of identifying and measuring public attitudes (in this context, public perception towards PWDs) has always been difficult as surveys rely on people self-reporting their own attitudes. As argued by Stanlland (2010), responses are likely to be affected by social desirability bias that occurs when people are questioned on sensitive subjects and do not answer questions truthfully, but instead give the answers they think are publicly acceptable. This was a huge challenge to this research, and we assumed that it is common to all research alike.

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