

Employment Opportunity of People with Disabilities: A Conceptual Framework

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Abstract

Traditionally, people with disabilities are people with physical disabilities or impairment. As society defines people with disabilities according to their judgment, they tend to be isolated and being denied their right as part of society. However, there are many employment opportunities for people with disability to live independently instead of being shut out and ignored. Therefore, this article explores the underlying factors that contribute to the employment opportunity of people with disability. Using the two-dimensional stereotype content model (warmth and competence), we explored the employment challenges and opportunities of people with disabilities. Warmth was explained based on the employer's perception and barriers, while competence was discussed in terms of readiness and independence of people with disabilities to be hired. The findings portend important implications for people with disabilities and the society in improving participation in the employment sector

Keywords: *Employment opportunity, Employability, People with disabilities, Stereotype model.*

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Introduction

According to the Person with Disability Act of 2008, People with Disability (PWD) mean "those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society" (Laws of Malaysia, 2014, p. 9). To be more precise, these group of peoples usually being defined through disabilities models, which are the medical model and social model. The medical model is one of the models usually define PWD as impairment. The medical model is also known as a personal tragedy model, individual model, and rehabilitation model which is still being defined in the same way (Retief et al., 2018). In the medical model, PWDs seen as a failure of bodily function and the only solution is through medically curing and rehabilitation (Retief et al., 2018). Medical model also leads to a negative skeptic like to make a comparison of PWDs with able-bodied individual and derive terms to personalize their abnormal as invalid, cripple, spastic, handicapped and retarded (Retief et al., 2018; Ta et al., 2011). The social model is in contrast with the medical model because it is based on society's judgment. The social model starts to take part in defining PWDs during British Disability movement in the 1960s and 1970s. Society is the person-centered in defining PWDs in the social model. Based on a social model, the disabilities will be defined through majority voice (societies) instead of depending on medical interpretation (Jackson, 2018; Khoo et al., 2013a, 2013b; Retief et al., 2018).

Judgmental on People with Disabilities

As Malaysia keeps improving their effort on the right of PWDs, they still facing lots of issues because society keeps treating them similarly and judge them as they are not capable enough (Lee et al., 2011). Regardless of whether the country is developed, developing or

an underdeveloped country, PWDs are being treated the same which are a minority in society. Labelling PWDs as a minority might affect the perception of society in the context of the social model and eventually lead to some kind of oppression (Abberley, 1987; Anastasiou and Kaufmann, 2013). In some country, PWDs tend to be discriminated and treated as deviant. Besides receiving a double standard by society, they also related to negative terms like a burden and sub-human, this makes them prone to victims of physical abuse, assault, and violence (Khoo, Tiun and Lee, 2013b). In another country like Vietnam, they believe encounters with PWDs is bad luck, so they will try to avoid them during the important days like early business time or exam days (Khoo, Tiun and Lee, 2013b). In Malaysia also doesn't have lots of different like other countries, some of the employees with disabilities in the workplace were found to get unequal salary than their coworkers (Khoo, Tiun and Lee, 2013b). This negative judgmental leads to discrimination. The biggest discrimination PWDs receive is in employment which their opportunity are being juggled around following the employer perception on them.

Employability of People with Disabilities

Issue employability is the chain issue. In Malaysia, the number of PWDs as on June 2018 is 475,587 thousand compares to 2010 it was 314,247 thousand, it shows the increasing number of citizen registers for an (Orang Kurang Upaya) OKU card at the Department of social welfare Malaysia. But the data could not be confirmed because it is not compulsory and there might PWDs who are not registered. Collecting the statistical of PWDs still be ambiguous, the number of PWDs register according to state is not linear with the total population. According to Ministry of Human Resource record, the population of people who live in Kuala Lumpur is more compare to Kelantan but for PWDs who register OKU cards shows a higher number in Kelantan



which 34,048 thousand compare to Kuala Lumpur only 31,494 thousand (Ministry of Human Resource, 2018). From it shows there might be hidden PWDs in Kuala Lumpur who feel inferior to penetrate within society.

The inferior feeling to register the OKU cards affects the statistic of the employment rate of PWDs when the government could not trace the exact number of PWDs who are still unemployed (Khoo, Tiun and Lee, 2013a). Because of those situation makes PWDs is being described as people who stay outside of the labor force (Khoo, Tiun and Lee, 2013a). The statistic of the unemployment rate for September 2018 shows improvement which decreasing number from 3.4% to 3.3% equal to 525 thousand people decrease to 516.4 thousand people but this rate does not include a total of unemployment for PWDs. The statistic for PWDs in the employment rate is considered as an outside labor force which 7.13 million people in August 2018 (Jabatan Perangkaan Malaysia, 2018). Of course not only PWDs who contribute to this million rate, housewives, students, retirees and those who not interested to work also included (Jabatan Perangkaan Malaysia, 2018). The number of the outside labor force is higher than the unemployment rate and unfortunately, disabled people are trapped in it too.

As PWDs feeling inferior and stay hidden in the statistic, all the intervention to fight for their right becomes a hindrance. Because the employment sector is the measurement to identify their ability to be in society, so being employed is the first big step for PWDs. In 1989 there one policy created to enforce employer in Malaysia to hire PWDs about 1%, but now in 2018, only 3696 people equal to 0.7% were employed in the public sector. After a lot of years being passed, the policy is implemented still not receive the desired percentage (Ministry of Human Resource, 2018). For the private sector, the numbers of People with Disabilities being hired are unidentified as the total numbers of PWD registered is ambiguous (Khoo, Tiun and Lee, 2013a). For the government, it could be identified because of the records given by each agency to support the policy 1% made by the government (Ministry of Human Resource, 2018).

As an employment opportunity of PWDs based on a social model (social judgmental), there are lots of research conducted based on society judgment like employer perception (Manaf, Othman, Saad, Jamaluddin, and Noor, 2018; Lavasani, Wahat, and Ortega, 2015; Wright and Cunningham, 2017). From it, there is one research that portrays the employment opportunity of PWDs in sport and fitness sector according to the stereotype content model as their theoretical framework (Wright and Cunningham, 2017). The stereotype content model (SCM) is one of the models that explain the reason stereotype happens, maintain and portray in an individual's behavior. Usually, SCM is like a representative of society upon their acceptance of a minority group (Aktan, 2013). Because of the pertinent role of society in defining the employability of PWDs especially in the private sector, this article will explore the factors influence the employment opportunity based on the Stereotype Content Model. From the component of SCM and previous study, this article will identify several themes that contribute to the employment opportunity of PWDs in the private sector which are employer's perception, barrier, readiness, and independent (Refer to Figure 1).

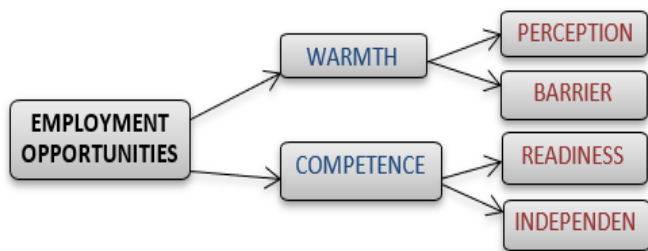


Figure 1: Contextual Framework

Factors Contribute to PWD's Employment Opportunity

Warmth and competence are components of the stereotype content model (SCM) that function to analyse social structure and stereotype in the context of emotional prejudices and discrimination (Brambilla, Ravenna and Hewstone, 2012). The stereotype exists when the intergroup has contact with outgroups (Brambilla, Ravenna and Hewstone, 2012). Which warmth can be determined through trustworthiness or friendliness and consider as the intent of predicted behavior while competence can be seen with capability and assertiveness to do the intent. Mostly the predictor influence of beliefs from shared common groups' warmth and competence (Fiske, 2018). To identify the level of competence and warmth of society, the stereotype content model (SCM) is divided into four clusters, in a shape of orthogonal 2x2 competence and warmth with low and high level respectively (Refer to Figure 2). Based on SCM, a group who receives high competence and high warmth are called insider which the most admiring people (an insider) while the group who receive low competence and low warmth is mostly contempt people, who not in favor (an outsider). If the group receives combination result like high competence and low warmth, they are being respected, but not being preferred, mostly they are being envious of others. Besides, people who are low competence and high warmth are not respected but being recognized their existence and mostly society being pitied for them (Aktan, 2013).

	Low Competence	High Competence
High Warmth	Paternalistic stereotype: Traits: caring, honest, submissive, unintelligent Groups: the elderly, mentally disabled, home-makers	Social reference stereotype: Traits: caring, honest, dominant, intelligent Groups: social-in-group (e.g. students), social prototype groups (e.g. in USA, the white middle-class)
Low Warmth	Contemptuous stereotype: Traits: Selfish, dishonest, submissive, unintelligent Groups: homeless, drug addicts, welfare recipients	Envious stereotype: Traits: selfish, dishonest, dominant, intelligent Groups: lawyers, professional women, Jews

Figure 2: Stereotype Content Model (Source: Fiske, 2018)

In the stereotype content model, society always perceives people with disability with high warm which they likely express their pity but this emotion has limits. The reflection of warmth is not consistent. People who seen as incompetent and cold could perceive other people with pity, while people who look very competent and cold might prefer people who are warm and competent, called as admiring other people. This unpredicted result happened because individuals are held by their own stereotype (Wright and Cunningham, 2017). Thus, warmth could affect the employment opportunity for PWDs. Competence is different with warmth. Competence is about capabilities and assertiveness. If warmth is focusing on morale, competence is about skill, intelligence, being competent and efficient. In a normal context, competence shows the level standard of an individual based on their job and asset, but in the stereotype content model (SCM) competence is based on peoples' ability to survive (Fiske, 2018). SCM is to measure the perception of minority groups like disability and ethnicity. Level of competence could be influenced based on motivation. High motivation leads to high competence (Aktan, 2013). In this article, the employment opportunity of PWDs divided into two categories which are warmth and competence. The concepts of warmth consist of employer perception and barrier towards PWDs, while concepts of competence consist of PWD's independent and readiness for being employed.

Perception

Perception refers to the identification or interpretation of information in order to represent and understand the presented information or situation (Daniel, 2011). Due to the tendency for being included as a minority group of people and lack of disability, PWDs tend to be negatively perceived by employers (Ang, 2014). The employer is the one who has major power in deciding whether they want to give the opportunity to PWDs or shut the door of employability of them (Ang, 2014). So their perception could be one of the main keys in solving the employment issue among PWDs and consider as warmth stereotype of society (Ang, 2014). Employment could change the life of PWDs but there are a lot of employers who do not trust PWDs capability (Ang, 2014). Denials from employers give a huge impact on the economy because PWDs actually can be the help to boost the country's economy when to play their role as an employee (Ang et al., 2013, 2015). Issues of employer's denial toward PWDs are caused by employers consider it as risky hires. Hiring PWDs is a risk-taking by the company as they need to provide facilities accessible to PWDs and training for them. Most of the employer's concern on cost and the retention of disabilities employees as PWDs are seen as a fragile and needy person (Hwa, 2017). As a result, they tend to provide limited employment opportunity. Therefore, this article would like to emphasize that the employer's perception is one of the factors which can influence the employment opportunity of PWDs in public or private sectors.

Barrier

Besides perception, the other factor that can influence the employment opportunity is a barrier. It refers to any obstacles that prevent access to get employed. PWDs always related to negative impression, so it is a barrier for them to move forward. To fight their equal right, society includes employers need to understand the barrier of PWDs and help them to cope with it. There are three types of barrier which are attitudinal, communication and physical (Ang, 2014). The attitudinal barrier is about discrimination and judgment (Ang, 2014). PWDs always being compared to able-bodied individual and this gives a discriminate stigma (Ang, 2014). People keep question about their capability and capacity in handling the workload in the company (Rozali et al., 2017). The solution to this barrier is self-evaluated themselves and respects each other while discard their negative perception of PWDs.

The communication barrier might exist from the prejudice instinct of society and based on the people with the disability condition itself. In the employment sector, the communication barrier is the most scared by employers because in achieving organisation goals, communication is a must. Employers have a perspective that PWDs is problematic and disappointing (Noor et al., 2018). This judgment mostly penetrates into society, so even PWDs are being hired, their colleagues feeling hard to communicate with them. Most of them experience social exclusion because of those negative perspectives and make them hard to stay in their job and start to isolate themselves (Islam, 2015). Communication barrier could be prevented by understanding each other situation and company could provide training for employees aware about the communication barrier of PWDs (Lewer and Hradung, 2013). For physical barriers, employers think it is quite costly and fussy to build their company in terms of the disability-friendly environment. In Malaysia, there is a law that state every building need to build based on a disability-friendly environment (Ta et al., 2011, 2013). Cater to the barrier of PWDs could define the warmth perception of society toward them.

Readiness

The state of being fully prepared or ready to do something is what we refer to as readiness. The readiness of PWDs can boost through education and support medium. Hiring PWDs in employment sector will give more benefit than harm because a lot of effort had been made to ensure their readiness, so with some believes they could contribute a better performance and creativity in their job (Lavasani, Wahat and Ortega, 2015). Education is the starting point for PWDs being

independent and able to mingle in society. The educational institute such as Special Education Secondary Schools, offering the vocational subject that enhances the skills of PWDs and integrates their readiness towards employment (Nasir and Efendi, 2016; Yusof et al., 2012).

ICT knowledge also has been implementing in PWDs education as nowadays it is a technology trend. The innovative learning mediums are Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL), function as electronic signing storybook, CD-ROM, talking software, hypertext dictionary support, speech prompts, adaptive software, visual representations and multisensory input for deaf and hard of hearing students (Donne and Briley, 2015). Education can ensure the readiness of PWDs to go into society and makes employers feel assertive to offer the position to them. The supporting medium like job coaches, training and job fair will help them to be more ready and ensure there are places for them in the employment sector. Therefore, readiness would be one of the important factors that could influence the employment opportunity among PWDs.

Independent

The difficulty for PWDs to penetrate within society and a low result on employers have an interest in hiring them makes be independent is the only solution. PWDs have to search for their own path of life. Entrepreneurship represents the independent of PWDs. Vocational training nurtures the entrepreneurship of PWDs and considers as the stepping stone to turn over their life. Entrepreneurship starts to be the apple of the eye of marketers and consider as one of the value sources to sustain in the market. Provide training, facilities, and education for PWDs will make them more understand and adapt to business-minded think alike (Rozali et al., 2016, 2018).

There will be a risk for failure when doing business, but with consistent effort, it can be managed. Being independent means they have full control over their career path without being discriminated by employers or coworkers. If they feel stress while working, they have to deal with themselves and they even earn their wages, but they need to buy their own lunch (Asia Community Service, 2016). Entrepreneurship is one the solution for PWDs being independent and responsible for their own employment opportunities.

Suggested Methodology

To empirically explore the contextual framework of developed in this article, the qualitative design is suggested. Likely participants may include Human Resource Managers who may be selected voluntarily using purposive sampling technique. Two instruments could be used. Firstly participants may be interviewed to define either the factors that influence perception of the employment opportunity of people with disabilities or the perceptions of employers based on the warmth component of SCM. Another instrument is review dossier. The purpose is to ensure that the competence components in SCM do indeed influence employers perception in determining the PWDs employment opportunity.

Conclusion

People with disabilities are being judged based on social perception. From it, a lot of negative skeptics exist like discrimination towards PWDs which will impact their employment opportunity. Even some of the previous study tend to explore the employment opportunity among PWDs in Malaysia but the variety is limited. Most of the study focuses on the employer's perception who considers a society that also being judgmental towards PWDs. Therefore, further study on the factors contributes to employment opportunity among PWDs in the public or private sector are highly recommended. As highlighted in this article, warmth and competence factors would become the significant factors that could predict their employment opportunity. Although, PWDs usually categories as a minority group and perceived as unfortunate people. They need to overthrow the perception by showing off their competence, like enhancing their readiness in education and supported medium like job coaches, training, job fair and also learn to be independent in their life. Readiness and independent is the key



factors to improve the negative perception of society. To make PWDs being brave in the fight for their right in employment opportunity, they need to feel accepted within society. Therefore, the future researcher is suggested to focus on social perception as a whole like the role of teachers, employers, family, and government in improvising the employment opportunity of people with disabilities.

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