

# EMPLOYERS' PERSPECTIVE TOWARDS PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

## A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

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### Abstract

*The significance of employment for people with disabilities has gained interest among researchers. The successful inclusion of people with disabilities in the employment settings depends on the employers' perspective towards their integration in the mainstream workforce. This review examines literature over the past 25 years with an attempt to assess the employers' perspective and specifically, the factors influencing their perspective towards inclusion of people with disabilities in employment. A search of electronic databases has resulted in the selection and analysis of 44 articles. The literature indicates that employers' perspective plays an important role in providing and maintaining employment opportunities for people with disabilities. A number of factors including type of disability and demographic variables affecting employers' perspective have been identified and discussed.*

*Keywords: employer, employment, people with disabilities, perspective*

### Abstrak

*Pentingnya mempekerjakan tenaga kerja penyandang disabilitas telah menjadi perhatian para peneliti. Kesuksesan melibatkan karyawan difabel dalam ketenagakerjaan bergantung pada sudut pandang pemberi kerja terhadap integrasi mereka di dalam lingkup pekerjaan. Artikel ini meneliti literatur sepanjang 25 tahun terakhir yang bertujuan untuk menilai sudut pandang pemberi kerja terhadap inklusi karyawan difabel di dalam pekerjaan. Pencarian database elektronik telah menghasilkan seleksi dan analisis terhadap 44 artikel. Literatur mengindikasikan bahwa sudut pandang pemberi kerja memainkan peran penting dalam menyediakan dan melestarikan kesempatan kerja bagi para penyandang disabilitas. Sejumlah faktor telah diidentifikasi dan didiskusikan termasuk tipe disabilitas dan variabel demografis yang mempengaruhi sudut pandang pemberi kerja.*

*Kata Kunci: pemberi kerja, lapangan pekerjaan, penyandang disabilitas, sudut pandang*

**G**lobally, there are over one billion people with disabilities out of which 80 percent live in developing countries (WHO, 2011). Over 450 million people with-

in this population are in the working age, which provides a demographic advantage to the economies in facing the aging population issues. However, the estimates reveal that percentage

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of unemployment among people with disabilities ranges from 50 to 70 percent in the industrialised world and 80 to 90 percent in developing countries (UN Enable, 2011). In many developing countries, self-employment in the informal sector is relatively higher among those willing to work due to the attached social stigma and social desirability bias concerning disability in the organised sector (WHO, 2011). The World Health Organization (WHO, 2013) reveals that the South East Asian Region has been ranked with second highest population comprising of moderate disability (19 percent) and third highest in terms of severe disability (12.9 percent) amongst the World Health Organization Regions. The estimated disability rate in this region varies from 1.5 percent in Timor-Leste to 21.3 percent in Indonesia, referring to survey conducted at different time periods. There are claims regarding these percentages to be underestimated owing to a variety of reasons such as the definition of disability, its measurement and reporting techniques (UNESCAP, 2015; The World Bank, 2009). Therefore, the comparison of disability and employment rates among these countries becomes restricted and complicated. Another report by the International Labour Organization (2011) discloses the condition in developing countries, along with the increase in population, the pool of disabled people is also increasing, which has made them the single largest minority. Research proposes another fact that people with disabilities are at a double disadvantage on the account of disability and poverty in these low income countries (WHO, 2011). A comparison of disability and employment estimates from

different populous countries shows that in India, over 26 million people have disabilities (Census, 2011) and only minority (37.6 per cent) are employed (WHO, 2011). In another country like Indonesia, where the disability rate is around 4.29 percent, people with mild disabilities have a 64.9 percent chance of being employed and people with severe disabilities get less than 10 percent employment chance (Adioetomo et al., 2014). Specifically, a true picture of the employment rate of people with disabilities in this region is unavailable (UNESCAP, 2015). This discouraging result also points out the fact that, despite the recent economic trend and labour market conditions, the global minority is marginalised and face discrimination on grounds of disability in employment prospects (The World Bank, 2009).

It is well known fact that employment is an important factor of livelihood and self-esteem for every individual, especially people with disabilities for whom it not only provides income and security, but additionally helps to overcome social isolation, feeling of unequal status and respect that shadows disability (Schur et al., 2009). Despite the importance of employment, people with disabilities face several challenges in accessing labour market and further encounter workplace disparities in the employment cycle (Échevin, 2013; ILO Report, 2011; Schur et al., 2009). These challenges can range from lack of education (Échevin, 2013), training (Schur et al., 2009; Vandekinderen et al., 2012), lack of financial resources, workplace accommodation (Gustafsson et al., 2013; ILO Report, 2010; Marumoagae, 2012; O'Neill and Urquhart, 2011) and employers' attitude

and perceptions towards disabled people (Chima, 2001; Goss, et al., 2002; Gustafsson et al., 2013; Popovich et al., 2003; Thill, 2015; Zappella and Dovigo, 2014; Zissi et al., 2007). Several research endeavours have been made to highlight the importance of involving people with disabilities in competitive employment environment, in order to fill the supply gap to meet the economic demands in today's era (Baldwin and Choe, 2014; Kang, 2013).

Nevertheless, research has shown that there has been little increase in the employment rate since the late 90's (after the passage of disability laws in several countries) and the increase in the disability rate has also created fiscal issues about the affordability and sustainability of rehabilitation programmes (WHO, 2013). To combat the issue of unemployment among this underutilised workforce (Lengick-Hall et al., 2008), the government of several countries have created incentives in the form of tax credits, cash incentives and awards to generate employer demand for the potential supply of talent pool. Along with several anti-discrimination policies and quota system that have been formed to fill employment gaps for the people with disabilities in the labour market (Government of India, 2008; Kang, 2013; Stone and Colella, 1996).

Additionally, numerous legal and policy initiatives have been undertaken by many developed and developing nations to enhance the integration of people with disabilities in the labour market. All the countries in the South East Asian Regions have specific organisations that are responsible for na-

tional activities pertaining to disability (WHO, 2013) and have ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which clearly mandates 'prohibit discrimination in the workplaces' and 'ensure reasonable accommodation'. Specifically, only six out of eleven countries have comprehensive disability laws and only India has specific anti-discrimination law for people with disabilities (WHO, 2013). Although legislative interventions strive to prohibit discrimination in various areas in society, including employment, people with disabilities continuously face impediments in the working environment which does not let them perform effectively or efficiently with their non-disabled counterparts. Sudibyo (2002) reflects on the reason of legal stipulations ineffectiveness, which is that people with disabilities are only viewed as customers of rehabilitation services by policy makers and employers.

The key aspect in the successful fulfillment of the policy initiatives is the view of the employers who have the onus of fulfilling this responsibility (Marumoagae, 2012). It is argued that employers' attitude and perception are critical for ensuring the successful integration of people with disabilities in the labour market as their commitment and role towards employing and ensuring equity at workplace is of utmost value (Bengisu and Balta, 2011; Échevin, 2013). Regardless of the research which points out the employers' stereotypical mindset about people with disabilities, empirical evidence suggests that the employment of people with disabilities contributes significantly to the corporate culture and the success of an organisation

(Ball et al., 2005; Samant et al., 2009). Their inclusion may provide necessary impetus for sustainable competitive advantage (Bengisu and Balta, 2011; ILO Report, 2010). Therefore, there is an increasing recognition that an inclusive, supportive and disabled friendly environment provided by the employer could supplement in empowering disabled at workplace and ensure organisational success (Ball et al., 2005; ILO Report, 2010; Marumoagae, 2012; Schur et al., 2009; Zappella and Dovigo, 2014). As a result, it becomes imperative to understand the factors that influence the employers' perspective towards hiring and retention of people with disabilities at workplace (Mitra and Sambamoorthi, 2006; WHO, 2011). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to present a review of the existing literature on employers' perspective and specifically, the factors influencing their perspective towards inclusion of people with disabilities in employment.

## PREVIOUS STUDIES AND RESEARCH GAP

In the present paper, the term disability refers to impairments, activity limitations and/or participation restriction as a result of interaction between an individual and their respective environments and/or personal factor (WHO, 2011). The term 'employment' refers to 'organizational practices of recruitment, selection and job advancement of those with a disability' (Kulkarni and Rodrigues, 2014).

The literature reveals that employers' perspective is one of the most significant factors in the dismal employment rate of persons with disabilities (Jones, 2011; Kulkarni and Valk, 2010; Leng-

nick-Hallet al., 2008; Marumoagae, 2012; Zappella and Dovigo, 2014). In general, employers hold negative perspective towards the employment and inclusion of people with disabilities in the workplace (Chima, 2011; Gustafsson et al., 2013; Huang and Chen, 2015; Lengnick-Hall et al., 2008; Pinder, 1995). A series of studies that investigate the assessment of employers' perspective towards people with disabilities has accentuated stereotypes which shows that employers harbour prejudice, negative attitudes and unwillingness to hire and integrate people with disabilities (Chima, 2001; Gustafsson et al., 2013; Harcourt et al., 2005; Kang, 2013; Robert and Harlan, 2006). Therefore, in the absence of employer willingness; the legislative norms, corporate policies and procedures aiming to integrate people with disabilities may fail and they may remain as an underutilised and overlooked talent pool (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2008; Zapella and Dovigo, 2014). Kang (2013) reflects on the reason why the desired inclusion of this talent pool is unattainable, explaining that the focus lies entirely on the development of people with disabilities and little attention is paid to the human resource needs of employers.

### *Research gap*

Previously, there is substantial literature on people with disabilities, but it pertains to general attitudes and very little literature has examined this issue in the organisational context (Popovich et al., 2003). Secondly, most of the research studies focus on employment experiences of people with disabilities with little focus on the needs and demands of employers (McFarlin et al., 1991; Vornholt et al., 2013). Thirdly,

the majority of previous research has focussed on whether employers hold negative attitude towards hiring people with disabilities but do not directly point the factors that help in building employers' perspective (Chima, 2001; Lengnick-Hall et al., 2008; Robert and Harlan, 2006). Fourthly, the impact of employers' demographic variables in influencing employer perspective has not received much attention. Fifthly, lack of an integrative review on the personal and contextual factors impacting employers' perspective towards the marginalised talent pool. The lack of research on underlying dimensions that constitute the employer decisions towards integration has restricted our capacity to recognise and propose interventions that address their inclusion in the mainstream workforce.

For example, the literature review done by Hernandez et al. (2000) has studied the employers' attitude towards hiring people with disabilities, but the results are narrow. The key findings such as employers global and specific attitudes towards people with disabilities, the benefits of hiring people with disabilities, role of stereotypical attitude in hiring people with disabilities do help in identifying factors. But, these findings are very narrow and call for further research.

Another review done by Vornholt et al. (2013) points out several factors that help in acceptance of people with disabilities which support the low employment trends of this work group. The findings suggest that acceptance of people with disabilities is influenced by three factors such as, variables of people with disabilities, employers and co-workers. The section on em-

ployers has received limited attention and focus lies on stigmatised attitudes, organisational cultural issues, and practices of disability management.

The central research question is, therefore, which are the factors that are likely to influence the employers' perspective for the inclusion of people with disabilities in employability settings? Consequently, there is a pressing need to classify and identify the factors that influence employers' perception towards inclusion of people with disabilities at the workplace.

## RESEARCH METHOD

### *Research procedure*

The studies for review were taken from the fields of management, human resource management, industrial relations, economics, organisational psychology, occupational health and rehabilitation and disability studies. Although the review may not be exhaustive (for example, it excludes community and ethnicity research), yet an attempt was made at the comprehensive research reflective of the employers' perspective towards people with disabilities.

The method of literature collection began with various online resources such as Taylor and Francis, Springer, Google Scholar, ERIC Database, Proquest, and PsychLit to identify articles describing employers' perspective towards people with disabilities. Keywords for the research included employers' perspective, people with disabilities, physical disabilities, mental illness, handicapped, organisations and disability, blindness, developmental disabilities, vocational rehabilita-

tion, disability and reasonable accommodation, and disability inclusion and integration. The preliminary research resulted in over 2,200 prospective articles covering a wide range of topics. To further narrow the research as per the research questions, the duplicates and irrelevant articles were excluded. The articles with their research focus on disability outside the organisational or management context such as politics (e.g. Guldvik and Lesjo, 2013) and community care (e.g. Wiesel, 2009) were not considered. A total of 156 articles concerning the employers' perspective towards people with disabilities were selected thereby limiting our research from 1991 to early 2016.

The final selection of the articles was done on the basis of the following criteria: the article was published in English and peer-reviewed journal; the study was of qualitative or quantitative nature; the research question or hypothesis has been clearly stated; and the research sheds light on the factors influencing employers' perspective towards people with disabilities. Based on the set criteria, the research resulted in a selection of 44 articles. In this synthesis, the studies included in the review involved data gathered from employers belonging to different sectors and areas discerning their perceptions of people with disabilities in the workforce or their actual experiences with employees with disabilities.

### ***Types of research design***

It is difficult to compare the studies or assess their quality because different research designs are used across studies and several types of variables have been considered. There is a lack of commonality across studies because

different methodologies have been undertaken in the studies to meet their objectives. Many researchers aiming to investigate employers' perspective towards people with disabilities have used methodologies such as conducting surveys (Kaye et al., 2011; Popovich et al., 2003; Schur et al., 2009), telephonic surveys (Diksa and Rogers, 1996), in-depth interviews (Huang and Chen, 2015; Kang, 2013; Gustaffson et al., 2013; Mik-Neyer, 2016; Zissi et al., 2007) and mixed method approach (Nario-Redmond et al., 2013; O'Neill and Urquhart, 2011). The majority of the studies that investigates employers' perspective have surveyed employer representatives such as supervisors or managers entrusted with the responsibility of hiring or accommodation (Diksa and Rogers, 1996; Kang, 2013 and Levy et al., 1992). But one shortcoming is noteworthy, that they may not have direct experience with employees with disabilities (Diksa and Rogers, 1996; McFarlin et al., 1991). Another critical shortcoming is that the limited number of studies have completed the analysis on demographic variables using statistical procedures. Also, none of the studies have used a longitudinal design. Though articles represent different regions, yet, majority of the articles; around 41 articles in this study are from developed countries and only 3 are from developing nations. Samples used in the study have considered geographical areas such as nationally (Kang, 2013; Bengisu and Balta, 2011; Harcourt et al., 2005; Riach and Rich, 2004), regionally (Gustaffson et al., 2013; Popovich et al., 2003) and locally (Wiegand, 2008; Zissi et al., 2007).

The following section of the literature

review addresses factors that are likely to impact employers' perspective toward inclusion of people with disabilities in the employment settings.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### *Factors influencing employers' perspective towards people with disabilities*

From the analysis of the literature, research reveals that employers' perspective is affected by numerous factors which may be interrelated and are presented below:

#### *Previous experience or contact with people with disabilities*

There is significant emphasis in literature on the importance of previous experience with people with disabilities that positively influences the employers' decision to hire people with disabilities (Huang and Chen, 2015; Levy et al., 1992; McFarlin et al., 1991; Stone and Colella, 1996; Wiegand, 2008). The research evidence suggests a number of reasons pointing to the importance of previous experience. First, employers who have successful previous experience with people with disabilities find it easier to integrate and accommodate people with disabilities (Gilbride et al., 2003; Popovich et al., 2003). Second, contact allows people to gather adequate information and details about a group member and see them more as individuals than members of any categorised group (Stone and Colella, 1996). Third, previous experience lessens employers' concerns and the fear of excessive employment burden (Diksa and Rogers, 1996). Fourth, experience helps to remove the stigma and negative stereotype attached to the people with dis-

abilities (Zissi et al., 2007). Therefore, employers with prior experience are more likely to come up with benefits of employing people with disabilities and also more likely to hire them again in their organisation.

#### *Type of disability*

Employers' perspective varies depending on the type of disabilities (Bricout and Bentley, 2000; Harcourt et al., 2005; Jones, 2011; Pinder, 1995; Schneider and Dutton, 2002; Zissi et al., 2007). The following views are evidence in the literature concerning the type of disability.

First, employers perceive physically or mentally challenged applicants as less employable (Harcourt et al., 2005). Second, people who suffer from blindness, low vision or psychiatric disabilities (Wiegand, 2008) are unable to savour full integration and participation at workplace (Mik-Neyer, 2016; Naraine and Lindsay, 2011; Zissi et al., 2007). Third, Pinder (1995) claims that people with invisible or hidden disabilities such as psychiatric disabilities are in a relatively disadvantageous position than their disabled counterparts. Fourth, employers perceive severely disabled workers as less employable than comparably qualified nondisabled counterparts (Bricout and Bentley, 2000). Fifth, during the hiring process people with visible disabilities are more likely to receive positive reactions to the employers than those with hidden disabilities such as deafness or psychiatric disabilities (Pinder, 1995).

Colella (2001) suggests that these different views may be a result of inadequate knowledge of their accommo-

dation and requirements for effective inclusion at the workplace. Similarly, Mik-Meyer (2016) claims that employers' perspective stems from the token status of people with disabilities. The existing social barriers concerning the type of disability are also found to affect employer's judgement (Naraine and Lindsay, 2011). However, Diksa and Rogers (1996) noted in their study that these views may be changed by dispelling the fears of concern hiring them. For example, Diksa and Rogers (1996) and Kirsh (2000) reported that employees with psychiatric disabilities were provided an inclusive atmosphere of respect and care and were accepted as a part of the diverse workforce by the employer.

Therefore, the type and severity of disability have a great influence on labour market outcomes, revealing that people with more severe disabilities and mental health are at a greater disadvantage.

#### *Work performance concerns*

The underlying factor influencing employer attitude is employers' stilted opinion concerning performance of people with disabilities with the following discussion. First, employers generally perceive people with disabilities as less productive (Bengisu and Balta, 2011; Harcourt et al., 2005). Second, they hold the stereotypical attitude towards people with disabilities pertaining to job requirements. Third, employers reveal a fear of the unknown concerning their work performance (Diksa and Rogers, 1996). Fourth, other concerns such as absenteeism, taking sick leaves, and breaks for doctors' appointments have been associated with low work performance

(Kaye et al., 2011). The previous may be attributed to pre-conceived notion of inadequate job skills held by employers (Kang, 2013; Lengnick-Hall et al., 2008) and inability to meet the job requirements (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2008).

On the other hand, Gilbride et al. (2003) found that employers have a tendency to hire people with disabilities who possess soft skills such as positive attitude and are reliable employees. Similarly, a number of studies revealed that employers did not discriminate against qualified people with disabilities (Kang, 2013) and in case of adequate job matching (Gustaffson et al., 2013; Kaye et al., 2011). A Delphi study conducted in hospitality industry found that on inclusion, productivity of people with disabilities increases in line with time due to their strong determination and will power which helps in altering employers negative perspective (Bengisu and Balta, 2011). Another study by Gustaffson et al. (2013) found that employees with disabilities accomplished extraordinary tasks despite their disability setting an example of high performers and also influencing other employers to make a hiring decision in this group. Unfortunately, this also results in creation of unrealistic expectations and false perceptions of people with disabilities, such as when employers experience lower performance of a candidate, their further recruitment decisions are negatively affected (Popovich et al., 2003).

Though, the research evidence suggested that employers' preference is to hire people with disabilities, but in routine or monotonous job and

not in positions requiring career development (Gustafsson et al., 2013). Another evidence reveals that employers exhibit reserved attitude in employing people with disabilities at supervisory and management positions (Schur et al., 2009). In support of the above, research suggests people with disabilities were seen as 'second class employees' on account of the nature of tasks performed (Gustafsson et al., 2013) and rigid due to limited job functions in pace of multi-tasking needs (Kaye et al., 2011). On the other hand, a study points out how employers carry out specific human resource practices and philosophies aimed at career development of people with disabilities (Kulkarni, 2016). Therefore, in general, productivity is cited as a major barrier by employers concerning people with disabilities.

#### *Administrative concerns*

Employers exhibit several administrative concerns which are concerning people with disabilities. First, employers feel hiring people with disabilities involves more paperwork, hassles and administrative concerns such as researching legal stipulations and adequate accommodations needed by these people (Kaye et al., 2011). Second, inadequate administrative support from the government has been cited as another barrier by employers for successful employment of people with disabilities (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2008). Third, the added quota burden, charge and stringent regulations by government refrain the employer from employing people with disabilities instead of supporting the companies (Kang, 2013). Fourth, employers with an existing organizational policy of hiring find it easier to employ such

people than the organisations without supportive policies (Diksa and Rogers, 1996).

Researchers argue that employers willingness to employ people with disabilities may be done to comply with the legal stipulations (Harcourt et al., 2005). However, their willingness is an attestation that they are taking legal and moral responsibility towards the integration of people with disabilities. Interestingly, Kulkarni and Valk (2010) found that employers step towards disability inclusion is derived from the benefits they are likely to receive, such as promotion of positive public image and supportive work environment. But those undertaking responsibilities view the availability of adequate support from the human resource department concerning the legal stipulations as an essential factor to hire people with disabilities (Kang, 2013; Kulkarni and Valk, 2010).

Consequently, this kind of coercive government regulations results in assigning this group to hold part-time, a temporary job which also puts them at the receiving end of lower pay and benefits (Baldwin and Choe, 2014; Schneider and Dutton, 2002) and being fictionalised in further job promotion (Robert and Harlan, 2006; Schur, et al., 2009). This would again build ground for discrimination which may raise legal suits. This fear of legal suits of discrimination and grievances makes it hard to initially hire a person with disability and further discipline or fire them (Kaye et al., 2011). Thill (2015) claims that these employment impediments continue to exist because government regulations and organisational policies are designed on the

basis of assumed needs and not the actual needs of people with disabilities. Bualar (2015) provides another reason for existing employment barriers citing the passage of government regulations without adequate study.

Furthermore, organisational policies and practices play a significant role in the inclusion and treatment of people with disabilities. Regrettably, organisations where practices are aimed at recruiting people with disability at positions of conventional job profiles would indirectly result in discrimination (Baldwin and Choe, 2014; Schneider and Dutton, 2002; Stone and Colella, 1996).

#### *Co-worker and customer concerns*

Research evidence suggests that employers who express willingness to employ people with disabilities have cited some concerns regarding customer and co-worker reactions.

First, they find it difficult to employ them at a point of **direct contact with the customers**. Second, employers fear customers' **negative reactions** to people with disabilities which may impact the organisation's bottom line (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2008). Third, **the fear of unknown faced by co-workers and customers on behaving and communicating with people with disabilities** has an impact on employers' perspective (Colella, 2001; Lengnick-Hall et al., 2008). Fourth, supervisor and co-worker who form the basis of social inclusion and integrative work environment have a deep impact on the employer perception of people with disabilities (Chima 2001; Colella, 2001). Fifth, employers consider their reactions in the accommodation of people

with disabilities (Colella, 2001).

Kang (2013) provides reason for not employing people with disabilities at the customer contact point by stating customers' sensitivity towards disability and difficulty faced by people with disabilities in serving customers directly. Employers are found to harbour concerns over **the impact of under-performance of people with disabilities on co-workers and their ability to comply with the rules and regulations** which obstructs employers hiring decision (Stone and Colella, 1996). The discomfort of co-workers and supervisors is attributed to potential danger and safety concerns encountered while working with people with disabilities (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2008). Some employers also feel that the entry of this workforce may **affect the morale and productivity of their non-disabled counterparts** (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2008), therefore, co-workers are concerned about an increase in workload, inadequate reward and recognition (Stone and Colella, 1996). Robert and Harlan (2006), in their study found that employees with disabilities routinely encounter marginalisation, fictionalization, stilted interaction and harassment in their day to day interactions with co-workers and supervisors. Therefore, the employers' abstain from including diverse workforce which also comprises of people with disabilities because of the assumption that they may create negative environment, lower morale and lower level of social togetherness at workplace (Naraine and Lindsay, 2011; Samant et al., 2009).

Nonetheless, employers recognise the need to hire people with disabilities

due to social responsibility and accountability to stakeholders and the direct association with positive customer response (Samant et al., 2009). They have expressed their willingness to integrate people with disabilities to build a company image that promotes diversity, creative workforce to the employees and the community at large (ILO, 2010).

#### *Accommodation and cost concerns*

It is apparent from the literature that employers face concerns pertaining to accommodation cost, costs in terms of loss due to industrial accidents, injuries or insurance costs of employing people with disabilities. First, the employers feel that expensive workplace accommodation and necessary equipments come as a package with the hiring of people with disabilities (Bengisu and Balta, 2011; Lengnick-Hall et al., 2008; Robert and Harlan, 2006). The accommodation seems expensive as it includes access to organisational facilities, work schedule modification, assistive equipments and devices, job restructuring (Bricout and Bentley, 2000; Collella, 2001).

Second, employers face added concerns over the possibility that employees claiming disabilities will somehow unjustly benefit from the accommodation stipulation (Collella, 2001). Third, they feel that accommodated work situation may result in change in the work in-puts and outcomes for person being accommodated, their co-worker and/or supervisor, or a change in workplace policy or procedures (Collella, 2001; Gustaffson et al., 2013). Fourth, employing people with disability incurs additional burden of health care costs (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2008).

Despite all these findings, it is noteworthy that employers have reported workplace accommodations to be actually low and reasonable (Robert and Harlan, 2006). Samant et al. (2009) also confirm the same in their study that organisations such as Microsoft, Sears and Manpower indicate the accommodation cost for disabled people to be lower than assumed. Similarly, Lengnick-Hall et al. (2008) also claim that though costs may be incurred while accommodating, but they tend to be low in comparison to the benefits derived after employing this talented pool in the organisations.

Hence, the evidence suggests that workplace accommodation for employees with disabilities may be seen as unfair, unjustified, and expensive by some employers whereas practical benefits of accommodation are vivid, clear, involving minor costs and resulting in higher benefits (Gustafsson et al., 2013; Marumoagae, 2012; Samant et al., 2009).

Therefore, the findings suggest that employers hold different views about people with disabilities depending on the factors discussed above. They have cited both benefits and concerns regarding the inclusion of people with disabilities (Gustaffson et al., 2013; Marumoagae, 2012; Nario-Redmond et al., 2013). While understanding the factors that affect the employers' perspective towards inclusion of people with disabilities in employability settings is important, yet, they alone do not provide a complete picture. Therefore, it becomes imperative to study a host of employer related variables that are likely to impact the employers' perspective towards this overlooked

Table 1. Factors affecting Employers' Perspective towards People with Disabilities

Factors	Relevant Research
Previous Experience with PWD	Baldwin & Choe, 2014; Colella, 2001; Diksa & Rogers, 1996; Gilbride et al., 2003; Gustafsson et al., 2013; Hunag & Chen, 2015; Kregel & Tomiyasu, 1994; Levy et al., 1992; McFarlin et al., 1991; Popovich et al., 2003; Stone & Colella, 1996; Wiegand, 2008; Zissi et al., 2007.
Type of Disability	Baldwin & Choe, 2014; Bricout & Bentley, 2000; Chima, 2001; Colella, 2001; Diksa & Rogers, 1996; Gustafsson et al., 2013; Harcourt et al., 2005; ILO, 2010; Jones et al., 2011; Kirsh, 2000; Mik-Neyer, 2016; Naraine & Lindsay, 2011; Pinder, 1995; Riach & Rich, 2004; Schneider & Dutton, 2002; Wiegand, 2008; Zissi et al., 2007.
Work Performance Concerns	Bengisu & Balta, 2011; Diksa & Rogers, 1996; Gilbride et al., 2003; Gustafsson et al., 2013; Harcourt et al., 2005; ILO, 2010; Kang, 2013; Kaye et al., 2011; Kulkarni, 2016; Lengnick-Hall et al., 2008; Popovich et al., 2003; Schur et al., 2009; Stone & Colella, 1996.
Administrative Concerns	Baldwin & Choe, 2014; Bualar, 2015; Harcourt et al., 2005; Kang, 2013; Kaye et al., 2011; Kulkarni & Valk, 2010; Lengnick-Hall et al., 2008; Robert & Harlan, 2006; Schneider & Dutton, 2002; Schur et al., 2009; Stone & Colella, 1996; Thill, 2015; Zappella & Dovigo, 2014.
Co-worker & Customer Concerns	Chima, 2001; Colella, 2001; ILO, 2010; Kang, 2013; Lengnick-Hall et al., 2008; Naraine & Lindsay, 2011; Samant et al., 2009; Stone & Colella, 1996.
Accommodation and Cost Concerns	Bengisu & Balta, 2011; Colella, 2001; Gustafsson et al., 2013; Marumoogae et al., 2012; Lengnick-Hall et al., 2008; Robert & Harlan, 2006; Samant et al., 2009.

Source: Author (2016)

talent pool.

### **Employer related variables**

The following section discusses specific employer related variables that might influence the employers' perspective towards inclusion of people with disabilities. Although, the literature does not provide much information regarding employer variables that attempts to determine the relationship between such variables and people with disabilities. However, some researchers have identified age, educational level, sector of service, etc. that impact employers' attitude towards people with disabilities. A synthesis of the findings has been discussed below:

#### **Sector of service**

Literature provides evidence that generally, employers in the public sector are more receptive and comfortable in interacting with people with disabilities than those in the private sector. Initiatives for hiring people with

disabilities are primarily undertaken in Public Sector Undertakings (PSU) to comply with legal rules and regulations and their institutional milieu (Government of India, 2008; Kulkarni and Rodrigues, 2014). Harcourt et al. (2005) presents opposing view that with respect to discrimination in hiring, public sector organisations are not different from private sector organisations. The reason is lack of awareness about good employer obligations amongst managers of public sector organisations. Recently, the growing concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives has captured the interest of the private sector, which pushes them to indulge in disability inclusion activities to follow the meritocracy principle (Kulkarni & Rodrigues, 2014).

#### **Business Size**

The research shows that business size has an impact on employment decision. A study by Gustafsson et al.

(2013) found that employers from larger business organisations hire people with disabilities from a viewpoint of corporate social responsibility (CSR) in comparison to smaller organisations. Goss et al. (2000) noted that large enterprises are more capable than small enterprises in hiring people with disabilities and attend to their continued employability in the organisation. It assumes the possibility of effective employability of people with disabilities in larger enterprises is due to specialist HR (human resource professional) role and responsibility and the professional network accessibility which helps to set and maintain standards. In case of smaller organisations, both the above studies also found that an employer of smaller organizations is more likely to hire a person with disability if they have positive experience along with control over the hiring process. On the other hand, a study by Kregel and Tomiyasu (1994) did not reveal any significant relationship between the size of the employer and their perspective towards inclusion of people with disabilities in the workplace.

#### *Educational level*

Employers with higher levels of education tend to exhibit a more favourable attitude towards people with disabilities, at large (Gilbride et al., 2003). This finding corroborates the view that education aids in understanding disability and creates tolerance and acceptance towards people with disabilities (Stone and Colella, 1996).

#### *Gender*

An attitudinal study by Popovich et al. (2003) revealed that women indi-

cated more affective reactions towards people with disabilities than their male counterparts. In addition, they also exhibited a positive attitude towards accommodation for people with disabilities in the workplace.

In conclusion, this study is a contribution to the existing research on employers' perspective towards people with disabilities. The factors that are likely to influence the employers' perspective have been identified and discussed along with the employers' demographic variables.

#### *Discussion*

The aim of this study was to assess the employers' perspective and identify the factors that influence the employers' perspective towards inclusion and integration of people with disabilities. In summary, it is found that previous experience with disabled people generates a more favourable perception towards employing people with disabilities.

Second, the disability type of the candidate has an impact on employment inclusion. For example, higher concern has been found in hiring people with mental or hidden disabilities than people with physical disabilities. This is because of the stereotype assumptions about people from a particular disability type and lack of knowledge about their accommodation and work expectancies.

Third, employers have raised several apprehensions regarding the work performance of people with disabilities. They hold stigmatised perceptions about their potential or ability which are not a resultant of personal experi-

ences but derived from existing stereotype opinions. Though some employers reveal a lack of discrimination in the case of the adequate skill set, but those expressing favourable attitude, prefer to hire them in positions of routine or monotonous jobs.

Fourth, employers fear litigation concerning hiring and firing of people with disabilities. The legislative support such as the employment quota is seen as a burden, charge from the employers' perspective. Though, it is seen as a barrier by a majority of the employers, but those complying with these regulations, consequently, employ these people in temporary job positions with lower pay and lack of career development options. It is also unclear whether the inclusion motive is based on legal and moral responsibility or derived from enhancing their public image and confirming to stakeholder expectation, in general.

Fifth, employers' inclusion decision is deeply impacted by customer and co-worker reactions. The fear of negative reactions and interactions results in reluctance in hiring this talent pool. Employers' perception of stilted work related and personal outcomes for customers, co-workers and supervisor is evident, but these concerns have not been empirically tested and are only, theoretical explanations.

Sixth, the employers face cost concerns in regards of hiring and due accommodations for people with disabilities citing it as unfair, unjustified and expensive. Though, practical benefits of accommodation of people with disabilities may be higher and involve minor cost, but the lack of awareness

raises their concern.

Seventh, employers' perspective is also affected by a range of variables, such as, employers with higher levels of education and women, in general, exhibit favourable attitudes towards inclusion of people with disabilities in the workplace. Research also shows that impact of organisational characteristics on employers' perspective, such as, public sector organisations and larger organisations are more likely to indulge in disability inclusion activities. Therefore, the identification of factors influencing the perspective of employers helps in understanding the areas requiring attention by the government, disability employment agencies and employees with disabilities.

Most notably, it seems that the employers focus lies on disability in entirety and not on ability. As a result, it becomes inevitable to educate employers about different conditions of disability (Harcourt et al., 2005), measures and official policies for providing equal opportunity (Thill, 2015; Zissi et al., 2007) and how their skills and abilities can be capitalised on to create organisational value (Ball et al., 2005; Samant et al., 2009; Zappella and Dovigo, 2014). The employment of people with disabilities would be easier if suitable and sufficient information about people with disabilities with the requisite skill and knowledge in the labour market was provided by the concerned government authorities or specialised employment exchanges (Kang, 2013; Kulkarni & Valk, 2010; Zissi et al., 2007). Many human resource professionals believe that more initiatives must be taken by the organisations and government to

include people with disabilities at the workplace (Kang, 2013; McFarlin et al., 1991). For example, the success stories of organisations employing people with disabilities may be shared with the other organisations to create employment opportunities and their due accommodation.

A direct effort needs to be made to foster a positive employer attitude and changing the stereotypes against people with disabilities. Stone and Colella (1996) recommend effective communication and training programs aimed at providing adequate information on interacting with people with disabilities at the workplace. This would result in creating a positive cycle of attitudinal change. The use of disability advocates has proven beneficial in developed nations (Thill, 2015) and they can be employed in developing nations to organise mentoring programs in affiliation with employers having prior experience with employees with disabilities, which may prove as the benefit. This inclusion and equality initiative may impact in the changing the employers' perspective, thereby improving the employment rate of people with disabilities.

The government policies may be improved in ways, such as training managers or supervisors on disability issues, campaigns drawing public awareness and addressing policy restructuring that ease the financial burden and lawsuit fears (Kaye et al., 2011). Another aspect that needs more attention is effective communication to employers that people with disabilities can be loyal, productive and equally efficient by giving adequate examples. Employers must seek the help of dis-

ability experts to ensure fair treatment of people with disabilities and solve accommodation related queries.

The research has a few limitations that need to be stated. The research procedure was limited to research articles in English language within a particular time period. This may have resulted in the exclusion of relevant and important studies from the previous time period and other languages within the scope of our study. This may have also resulted in exclusion of research done in these emerging economies, since most of the results have been derived from those of developed countries.

Although research on employers' perspective towards disability inclusion has gained momentum in the recent times, yet more studies are required that focus on the formation of positive attitudes towards inclusion of people with disabilities in the work settings. Based on the findings in the review, the factors affecting the employers' perspective need to be empirically tested, for example, more specific information should be obtained on the impact of co-worker reactions and quality of their employment experiences with disabilities of different types. If training is an important factor in modifying employers' perspective about assumed accommodation costs, work performance concerns, unfounded administrative concerns, how can we facilitate the implementation of inclusive programmes at workplace. Other employment factors that have an effect on attitudes, such as organisational policies, procedures and culture, legislative policies and accommodation arrangements, need to be explored. Future research can also fo-

cus on longitudinal case studies of employers' perspective and their current practices as they move towards inclusive employment. These studies could investigate transformation across time and allow for a thorough examination of the employers' perspective towards this whole process.

## CONCLUSION

Employers' perspective is critical for ensuring the successful integration of people with disabilities in the labour market. Understanding the factors that influence the employers' perspective

may be vital in improving the employment experiences of people with disabilities and their respective employers. Focussed approach to allay employer concerns and legislative intervention to enhance skills and abilities of people with disabilities may help in improving their participation in the labour market. Interventions for their inclusion in employment settings can be explored and developed with the objective of improving employment outcomes for both employers and people with disabilities.

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