

# Examining Hindrance Factors for Hiring People with Disabilities (PWDs) in Malaysia: Employer's Perspectives

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## ABSTRACT

People with disabilities (PWDs) in Malaysia face significant barriers to employment despite existing laws and policies aimed at promoting their inclusion in the workforce. This study sought to identify the key factors that hinder employers from hiring PWDs, which contributes to their ongoing marginalization in the job market. A descriptive quantitative survey was conducted with 148 employers, and Binary Logistic Regression was used to analyze the data. The study identified five major barriers: the nature of the work, a lack of qualified candidates with disabilities, the perceived high cost of accommodating disabilities, concerns about increased healthcare costs, and a lack of knowledge or information among employers. To address these challenges, the study suggests that more comprehensive policies, targeted employer education, and better support systems are necessary. The findings underscore the importance of tackling these barriers to enhance employment opportunities for PWDs and improve their quality of life in Malaysia. The study concludes that without addressing these issues, the inclusion of PWDs in the workforce will remain problematic.

**Keywords:** People with Disabilities (PWDs), Hindrance Factors, Employment, Logistic Regression, Workplace Inclusion, Disability Accommodation, Employer Perspectives.

## INTRODUCTION

Persons with disabilities (PWDs), representing 15% of the global population, approximately one billion people, face significant marginalization in social, economic, and health spheres, with limited access to public services (World Bank, 2021; World Health Organization, 2021; International Development Association; 2021). Of this population, an estimated 110 to 190 million people have serious disabilities (Basaninyenzi, 2023). PWDs encompass a diverse group with varying needs, and even individuals with the same impairment may experience it differently, often with invisible disabilities (National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities & Division of Human Development and Disability, 2020). In Malaysia, as of 2017, 453,258 PWDs were registered, with the highest numbers in the physical (35.2%), learning (34.8%), and visual (8.9%) categories, while the speech disability category had the lowest (0.5%) (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2020).

The Malaysian Persons with Disabilities Act of 2008 defines PWDs as those with long-term impairments that hinder their full participation in society and recognizes seven types of disabilities: hearing, visual, speech, physical, learning, mental, and multiple disabilities (Town and Country Planning Department Malaysia, 2020). PWDs tend to experience poorer health, limited education and employment opportunities, and are more likely

to live in poverty (WHO, 2021; IDA; 2021). They often face economic hardship and social disadvantages, exacerbated by negative attitudes and prejudices (Kwan, 2019; Almalky & Alasmari, 2024; United Nations Enable, 2023; Goodman et al., 2024). Despite ongoing discussions about improving employment for PWDs, their workforce participation remains significantly lower than for those without disabilities (Shahidi et al., 2023; Blanck, 2020; Schloemer-Jarvis et al., 2021; Olsen, 2022; Dean, 2022; Hyseni, 2023; Manaf, 2019; McDonough et al., 2021; Jani et al., 2022; Almalky, 2020; Załuska, et al., 2020), with PWDs under-represented and marginalized in employment (Manaf, 2019; Bjørnshagen & Ugreninov, 2021).

In 2019, the employment rate for working-age adults with disabilities was 31.4%, compared to a much higher rate for adults without disabilities (McDonough et al., 2021). By 2021, PWDs made up only 0.35% of the civil service workforce, well below the government's target of 1% (Ministry of Human Resource, 2021; Jamil & Saidin, 2018). Moreover, just 30.5% of PWDs are employed, while 20.8% are unemployed due to factors such as employer biases, lack of psychological support, and personal factors like disability severity and education level (Utami Dewi et al., 2020). By June 2020, only 3,615 PWDs were employed in Malaysia's public sector (Ministry of Human Resource, 2020). Countless initiatives and mandates have been implemented by the Malaysian Government to promote the concept of autonomous PWDs and to increase their prospects for suitable employment. Ministries and departments delivering assistance services to PWDs include those under the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development (KPWKM) and agencies under them, such as the Social Welfare Department (JKM). Other related services are offered by the Ministry of Human Resources (MOHR) and include PWD registration, work coach, disability equality training (DET), registration and status of PWD registration and PWD placement (Town and Country Planning Department Malaysia, 2020).

Further, Budget 2021 has proven a great concern of the Malaysian Government to enhance the welfare of the PWDs (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2020). The government has agreed to increase the monthly rate of financial assistance. Precisely, the rate for financial assistance for Persons with Disabilities (OKU) who are incapable of work is increased from RM250 to RM300. Second, the rate for incentive allowance for disabled workers is increased from RM400 to RM450. Coherently, Budget 2021 under Strategy 3: Generating and Retaining Jobs promised that the government will also continue the hiring incentive programme under PERKESO, which is now known as *PenjanaKerjaya*, with several enhancements. To promote jobs for disabled, long-term unemployed and retrenched workers, employers will be given an additional incentive equivalent to 20 per cent of the employee's monthly income making the total incentive to employers' amount to 60 per cent (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2020). According to the Ministry of Finance Malaysia, as of 24 July 2020, a total of 7,543 employees gained jobs including 66 persons with disabilities and 963 apprentices through the Hiring Incentive Programme (*PenjanaKerjaya*) (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2020). Nevertheless, the effect on enhancing the livelihoods of PWDs in Malaysia, especially those related to employment, is still doubtful. The inclusion of people with disabilities in employment appears to be problematic and frustrating (Jani et al., 2022; Morwane et al., 2021; Omar, et al., 2021; Alshoura, 2021). Hence, this study contributes to the examination of hindrance factors in hiring people with disabilities (PWDs) from the Malaysian employer's perspective.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Employment of People with Disabilities

Disability refers to any impairment that hinders a person's ability to perform tasks and interact with their environment (NCBDD&DHDD, 2020). According to the World Health Organization (2021), disability spans multiple dimensions, affecting vision, movement, thinking, learning, communication, mental health, and social relationships (WHO, 2020). People with disabilities (PWDs) include those with long-term physical, emotional, intellectual, or sensory impairments, which limit their full participation in society due to various challenges (WHO, 2020). Disabilities result from interactions between health conditions like cerebral palsy or depression, along with environmental and personal factors such as negative attitudes, inaccessible services, and inadequate social support (NCBDD & DHDD, 2020; WHO, 2020; Albrecht et al., 2011). PWDs face widespread stereotypes and discrimination, especially in employment, with those with intellectual disabilities being the most discriminated against (Jacob, et al., 2023). Employers often view PWDs as facing physical barriers, safety risks, and lower productivity, which limits their job prospects (Loosemore et al., 2020). PWDs have less

access to training, career opportunities, and suffer lower incomes (Specialjobs.com.my, 2024), while workplace exclusion, harassment, and bullying remain prevalent (Marzo Campos et al., 2020; Hyseni, et al., 2023; Li & Valerievna, 2023).

The COVID-19 pandemic and advancements in AI have further worsened employment challenges for PWDs, as automation and digitalization reduce job opportunities and exacerbate the employment gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged groups (Xian, 2022; Alnaggar & Abdulkader, 2023; Newman-Griffis, et al., 2023). PWDs generally achieve poorer employment outcomes than the rest of the population. As a group, they encounter issues such as unemployment or underemployment, low wages, and a lack of support in the workplace (Speach et al, 2023). In reality, like many PWDs in other parts of the world, Malaysians with disabilities have considerably higher unemployment rates than their non-disabled peers (Hyseni et al., 2023). Hence, employers' decisions are important for increasing employment rates for working-age adults with disabilities (Olsen, 2022).

### **Employer perspective of Hiring People with Disabilities (PWDs)**

The key factor in the recruitment process that determines whether or not to hire a person with a disability and the success of the PWDs in employment is the employer. Recruitment behaviours and decisions are referred to as employer behaviours and decisions, and most recruitment indicators are subjective (Nagtegaal et al., 2023), but it is worrying that most employers' perceptions of PWDs are negative perceptions, and these negative perceptions tend to be a result of hiring that is shaped by the interconnectedness throughout the employment cycle. (L'Horty et al., 2022; Bonaccio et al., 2020; Mahasneh et al., 2023). Therefore, there is a need for researchers to focus on employers' perspectives when hiring PWDs, one that is committed to creating equitable workplaces and more employment opportunities for PWDs.

Employers' perspectives greatly affect the employment prospects of people with disabilities, and some employers have prejudices against PWDs, believing that they have low work efficiency and need special care or equipment, which makes them reluctant to hire them. Nagtegaal et al. (2023) found in a review of 47 studies that employers believe that PWDs are unproductive, that PWDs cost a lot of money, and that employers' lack of understanding of PWDs leads to prejudice when hiring PWDs. Nagtegaal et al. (2023) Employers may view PWDs as a burden or fear a decrease in productivity, which can increase difficulties in employing PWDs (Pausic et al., 2021). Workplace accessibility, physical infrastructure, and productivity concerns can affect hiring decisions and the inclusiveness of the work environment (Suresh & Dyaram, 2022).

Employers' willingness and intention to hire PWDs may vary significantly depending on the type of disability, and biases and stereotypes can vary depending on the nature of the disability (Mahasneh et al., 2023; Zafar, 2019). Examples include people who use wheelchairs (Shamshiri-Petersen & Krogh, 2020; Bjørnshagen & Ugreninov, 2021), people with visual impairments (McDonnall & Lund, 2020; Papakonstantinou, & Papadopoulos, 2020), people with mental disabilities (Janssens et al., 2021) and people with developmental disabilities (Khayat-zadeh-Mahani et al., 2020). Similarly, recent data on the employment rate of PWDs show that people with hearing impairments have the highest employment rate at 52 per cent, closely followed by people with visual impairments (40.3%), cognitive impairments (31.9%) and walking impairments (23.1%) (nTIDE, 2023). This shows that not all PWDs are undesirable and that employers screen and make hiring decisions based on the type of disability.

In Malaysia, employers tend to be more concerned about hiring individuals with mental or emotional disabilities than those with physical disabilities. This may limit employment opportunities for individuals with certain types of disabilities. The majority (64%) were reluctant to hire a job applicant with mental health problems (MHP) (Janssens et al., 2021). Because people with mental disabilities can take long periods off work due to their illness. In addition, the lack of a register of PWDs (where employers cannot identify potential candidates with the right skills and abilities) is recognized as a significant barrier to employment for PWDs (Pausic, 2021). In Malaysia, the professions with fewer employment opportunities for PWDs are those where employers may have misconceptions about their abilities, which can lead to prejudice. In conclusion, employers' perceived negative experiences of recruiting PWDs, customers' negative reactions towards PWDs, and employees' perceptions of their PWD colleagues influence employers hiring PWDs.

## **Hindrances Factors of Hiring People with Disabilities (PWDs)**

Following the above mentioned, it can be seen that the views of employers on employees with disabilities are still conflicting and judgmental (Jani et al., 2022; Botha & Leah, 2020; Nagtegaal et al., 2023). Precisely, employers faced myriad challenges and barriers in hiring the PWDs (Olsen, 2022; Hyseni et al., 2023; Manaf et al., 2019; Botha & Leah, 2020; Phillips et al., 2019; Bauer & Gewurtz, 2022; Bredgaard & Salado-Rasmussen, 2021; Pérez-Conesa et al., 2020; Domzal et al., 2008; Gasper et al., 2020; Blanck & Harpur, 2020; Harpur & Blanck, 2020; Østerud, 2022; Omar et al., 2020; Ajrun, 2023). While it is true that employer bias is one of the barriers to employment for PWDs, the employment challenges faced by persons with disabilities in Malaysia are also affected by several factors, including the nature of the work, lack of qualified and education, actual cost of accommodating a disability, concern about the cost of health care coverage, fear of litigation for employers, lack of knowledge or information, discomfort or unfamiliarity, attitudes of co-workers and supervisors.

Due to the nature of the work, the requirements of the working environment, the size of the company, and the inherent factors of the industry, these factors also affect and limit the participation of PWDs in employment. A study conducted by (Hyseni et al., 2023) found that almost 75 percent of respondents (managers) argued that the nature of their work is not acceptable for people with disabilities. In line with the results, the latest study from Omar et al. (2020) found that the “nature of the work” was discovered to be the highest mean value relative to other challenges and barriers to hiring PWDs. PWDs were nearly twice as likely to report low-quality employment in the form of either instrumental (i.e., secure but trapped) or precarious (i.e., insecure and unrewarding) employment (Ajrun, 2023; Bailey et al., 2022). With fewer hours and more flexible contracts, PWDs may be motivated to choose some forms of non-standard employment (part-time, casual, and odd jobs), which facilitates the individual's ability to balance employment obligations with personal health needs. Whilst more flexible, issues of job insecurity, income instability and unpredictability cannot be balanced (Blanck & Harpur, 2020), resulting in uncontrollable problems.

Evidence from Specialjobs.com.my (2024) suggests that there are barriers to employment for PWDs in certain industries and settings and that PWDs tend to have lower rates of employment compared to people without disabilities and may have limited opportunities for career growth and professional development within a company. In particular, in the construction industry PWDs make up a very low percentage of the workforce and have few opportunities for professional development (Loosemore et al., 2020; Bailey et al., 2022). Mahasneh et al. (2023) identified sources of heterogeneity affecting employers' willingness to hire people with disabilities, including organisational size and location. The larger the organisation, the better equipped and financed it is to provide suitable workplaces and positions for PWDs (Gasper et al., 2020), whereas smaller firms are more concerned with revenue. Job insecurity and reduced job opportunities for PWDs can exacerbate the physical and mental injuries and other illnesses suffered by PWDs, and researchers need to focus on the nature of the work and heterogeneity when assisting people with disabilities in employment in order to balance the stability of employment for PWDs.

### **Lack of qualified and education**

This study identifies key barriers preventing the employment of people with disabilities (PWDs) in Malaysia, including lack of education and qualifications due to unequal access to training (Phillips et al., 2019). Despite improvements in educational attainment, a significant skills gap persists, with 50% of disabled individuals having low literacy and 55% low numeracy skills, compared to just over 20% and 25% of the total population, respectively (Mahasneh et al., 2023). A lack of vocational skills also limits employment opportunities (Nagtegaal et al., 2023), contributing to lower wages and employability (Shahidi et al., 2023). Studies show that inclusive training and improving soft skills can enhance employment prospects for PWDs (Ajrun, 2023). However, many training methods remain under-implemented (Schloemer-Jarvis et al., 2021). Employers report concerns about the cost of workplace accommodations, such as special equipment and accessible facilities (Schloemer-Jarvis et al., 2021; Olsen, 2022). These concerns are compounded by fears of higher healthcare costs (Olsen, 2022; Bauer & Gewurtz, 2022) and potential litigation risks (Olsen, 2022; Harun et al., 2020). Additionally, a lack of knowledge about hiring PWDs remains a significant barrier (Hyseni et al., 2023; Jani et al., 2022; Alshoura, 2021; Nagtegaal et al., 2023; Gasper et al., 2020). Employer attitudes, especially those

of co-workers and supervisors, also play a crucial role. Negative stereotypes and misconceptions about PWDs' abilities hinder their job development and inclusion in the workplace (Goodman et al., 2024; Botha & Leah, 2020). Managers' biases, influenced by stereotypes and concerns about productivity, further limit opportunities for PWDs (Bauer & Gewurtz, 2022).

To summarise, based on the current literature, the most common conclusion that most researchers have come to is the prejudice and negative perception of PWDs by employers. Secondly, there are too many factors of heterogeneity like the job that affect the employment of PWDs. In addition, researchers have mentioned that the problem of unemployment would be reduced if PWDs had adequate education and employable skills to meet the needs of the workforce, but there is a lack of practical implementation of policies and programs to train PWDs. Employers were also concerned about the high cost and low productivity of hiring PWDs, but employer concerns about health insurance premiums were rarely mentioned. A portion of current employers' reluctance to hire PWDs is due to the fear of breaking the law caused by a lack of understanding of policies and laws. Co-workers' and managers' attitudes toward PWDs vary significantly depending on their experience working with them. Recent new research has also shown that employers make hiring decisions based on different types of disabilities. Overall, there is a lack of research focused on the employment of specific types of PWDs and how to find appropriate employment programs and skills training policies to address the employment of PWDs.

Drawing from the literature, this study constructed nine hypotheses as follows:

H1. The nature of the work is a hindrance factor for employers in hiring PWDs.

H2. The lack of qualified people with disabilities is a hindrance factor for employers in hiring PWDs.

H3. The actual cost of accommodating disability is a hindrance factor for employers in hiring PWDs.

H4. Concern about the cost of health care coverage is a hindrance factor for employers in hiring PWDs.

H5. Fear of litigation is a hindrance factor for employers in hiring PWDs.

H6. Lack of knowledge or information is a hindrance factor for employers in hiring PWDs.

H7. Discomfort or unfamiliarity is a hindrance factor for employers in hiring PWDs.

H8. Attitudes of co-workers is a hindrance factor for employers in hiring PWDs.

H9. Attitudes of supervisors is a hindrance factor for employers in hiring PWDs.

## **METHOD**

### **Research Design**

In this study, data was collected by utilizing a survey research design which is a questionnaire. The instrument used for this study was adopted from the perspectives of U.S. employers, which was also published online (Domzal et al., 2008). The questionnaire remained in English based on the perception that the meaning and transferability of the terms used in the instrument were easily understandable. The ethics approval was acquired from Universiti Putra Malaysia, Research Management Centre under the Ethics Committee for Research Involving Human Division, followed by the instrument modification, which was performed twice based on the panel's comments. After minor corrections, the instrument was then distributed to the companies using Qualtrics, an online survey database system. This research aimed to examine the possible factors that prevent employers from hiring people with disabilities (PWDs). The factors involved in this study include the nature of the work, lack of qualified people with disabilities, the actual cost of accommodating a disability, concern about the cost of health care coverage, fear of litigation, lack of knowledge or information, discomfort or unfamiliarity, attitudes of coworkers and attitudes of supervisors. Each of these items was based on a three-point Likert scale.

## Sampling Procedure and Data Collection

The implementation of a descriptive quantitative survey was done by selecting 200 out of 1,500 employers registered under the Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation (MATRADE). 200 companies were selected using a random sampling technique. It was based on the accessible online database provided by MATRADE. Although the company names were initially disorganized, the profile of the company was randomly selected based on an alphabetical order of the company's name using the ascending function in Microsoft Word, which consists of myriad types of businesses. 200 questionnaires were distributed, and 148 respondents (74%) completed the survey, which was valid with information and utilized in this research. The distribution process, as well as a collection of questionnaires, took almost a month to complete.

## Data Analysis

In this study, a descriptive analysis approach was used to interpret the data collected, which were mostly categorical. Apart from frequencies and percentages (to understand the general pattern of responses for all parts of the questionnaire), the mean and standard deviations of each variable were created by the application of descriptive statistics. In order to fulfil the main purpose of this study, a Binary Logistic Regression analysis was applied to examine the factors that hinder employers from hiring PWDs. Logistic regression is the favoured approach for bi-group (binary) dependent variables due to its robustness, ease of analysis and diagnostics (Hair et al., 2014). Logistic Regression is well suited for describing and testing hypotheses about relationships between a categorical outcome, response or dependent variable, and one or more categorical or continuous predictors, i.e., independent variables (Hair et al., 2014). Therefore, this study applied Binary Logistic Regression analysis since the outcome/dependent variable (Hiring PWDs) is binary (Yes/No) (Amoako et al., 2021).

To apply the analysis, four basic assumptions must be met for logistic regression including independence of errors, linearity in the logit for continuous variables, absence of multicollinearity, and lack of strongly influential outliers (Cooray & Senaviratna, 2019; Stoltzfus, 2011). Amongst the assumptions, multicollinearity has become a prominent concern in logistic regression (Hair et al., 2014; Cooray & Senaviratna, 2019). Multicollinearity is the extent to which a variable can be explained by the other variables in the analysis (Hair et al., 2014). Large VIF values also indicate a high degree of collinearity or multicollinearity among the independent variables (Hair et al., 2014). Generally accepted levels of multicollinearity (tolerance values up to .10, corresponding to a VIF of 10) almost always indicate problems with multicollinearity, but these problems may also be seen at much lower levels of multicollinearity and multicollinearity (Hair et al., 2014). Values of VIF exceeding 10 are often regarded as indicating multicollinearity (Cooray & Senaviratna, 2019).

Next, the statistical results were tested using a two-tailed approach, where a P value of less than 0.05 was considered statistically significant. This threshold ensures that the findings are robust and unlikely to be due to random chance. The analysis revealed that several factors, including the nature of work and the lack of qualified candidates, had significant impacts on employers' decisions to hire people with disabilities (Field, 2024; Meyers et al., 2013). Data analysis was carried out using the statistical software IBM SPSS® Statistics (version 22). Cronbach's alpha test, an instrument of reliability in science education research, was used to ensure that the items were homogeneous, measuring the concept of interest (Taber, 2018). Cronbach's alpha is a measure of reliability varying from 0 to 1, with values from 0.60 to .70 considered to be the lower limit of acceptability (Hair et al., 2014; Field, 2024). It is noted that the reliability of the research concept lies between 0.873 and 0.887. Therefore, no item has been removed. The items were transferred to form concrete concepts for further analysis.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Demographic Trend of Respondents

This section portrays the statistics of respondents to this study. The involvement of the President/Owner category had the highest number of respondents, accounting for 22.3% of the total responses. On the other hand, the Assistant Director and the Vice President categories had the lowest representation, each contributing

only 0.7% of the total respondents. This highlights the uneven distribution of respondents across various positions within the companies surveyed, with top leadership roles being more prominently represented. To better understand the composition of respondents in the study, Table 1 presents the demographic variables, including position in the company, years with the company, company size, and industry type. This data helps contextualize the results of the study by providing insights into the type of companies and respondents surveyed, highlighting that most respondents (22.3%) were in President/Owner positions, and most companies (80.4%) had between 1 to 10 years of experience in operation. Also, nearly half (47.3%) of the companies surveyed were classified as medium-sized businesses. The majority of employers (80.4%) reported (1-10 years) service life in their businesses. For the size of the companies, 47.3% of the respondents were in the “medium” category, followed by 44.6% of those in the “small” category. Only 8.1% of the employers came from the “large” company category. Employers admitted that the majority of them (132 persons), which is equivalent to 89.2%, did not hire PWD employees. On the other hand, just 16 out of 148 employers (10.8%) reported that they currently have PWDs as their employees.

Table I. Demographic Distribution of Respondents

Demographic Variables	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
<b>1. Position in Company</b>		
President/Owner	33	22.3
Human Resource Officer	23	15.5
Assistant Director	1	0.7
Assistant Manager	3	2
Vice President	1	0.7
Director	23	15.5
Manager	31	20.9
Supervisor	4	2.7
Other	29	19.6
<b>2. Years with Company</b>		
1-10 years	119	80.4
11-20 years	18	12.2
21-30 years	10	6.8
31-40 years	1	0.7
<b>3. Company Size</b>		
Small (5-14 employees)	66	44.6
Medium (15-249 employees)	70	47.3

Large (250+ employees)	12	8.1
<b>4. Industry</b>		
Aerospace	2	1.4
Agriculture Produce	4	2.7
Apparel, Garments, & Accessories	8	5.4
Automotive, Parts & Components	3	2
Beverages	7	4.7
Building & Construction Material & Hardware	9	6.1
Chemical, Minerals, & Alloy	5	3.4
Computer Hardware	1	0.7
Computer Software	9	6.1
Consumer & Industrial Electrical & Electronic Products	2	1.4
Electrical & Electronic Parts and Components	1	0.7
Fashion Accessories & Textiles	9	6.1
Footwear	4	2.7
Furniture	2	1.4
Gift, Souvenir & Jewellery	1	0.7
Gloves	1	0.7
Household Products	3	2
Machinery and Equipment & Automation	5	3.4
Medical Products	1	0.7
Oil and Gas Products	2	1.4
Packaging & Containers	3	2
Palm Oil Products	3	2
Pharmaceutical, Toiletries & Cosmetics	9	6.1
Plastic Products	3	2
Prepared Food	4	2.7



Rubber Products	1	0.7
Stationery	1	0.7
Telecommunication	3	2
Textiles, Yarns & Other Related Materials	3	2
Toys and Sports Equipment	1	0.7
Transport Equipment & Parts	2	1.4
Wood Products	3	2
Other	33	22.3
<b>5. Current Employees with Disability</b>		
Yes	16	10.8
No	132	89.2
Note: N=148		

### Descriptive Analysis

This study mainly focused on the employer’s feedback on hiring people with disabilities (PWDs). 9 items were discussed, explicitly on the challenges and barriers faced by employers to the employment of PWDs. Table II presents the mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) values for various factors that were identified as potential hindrances to employers hiring people with disabilities (PWDs). These factors include the nature of the work, lack of qualified candidates, costs of accommodation, and attitudes of co-workers and supervisors. In 148 questionnaires that were filled out and returned, the highest and lowest mean values were identified. A particular question was asked to assess the challenges and barriers in the employment of PWDs, which was “How much of a challenge is present in the following factors of your company's employment of people with disabilities?”. Precisely, the highest mean value (M = 2.09, SD = 0.466) was attributed to the "lack of knowledge or information" of each company responding to the survey, while three other variables reported with the lowest mean values were "discomfort or unfamiliarity", "co-worker attitudes" and "supervisor attitudes" (M = 1.92, SD = 0.459), (M = 1.88, SD = 0.507), and (M = 1.88, SD = 0.507), respectively. Precisely, on average, all the employers preferred a "lack of qualified people with disabilities" about PWDs as the most challenging factor in hiring PWDs. This is in line with research performed by Phillips et al. (2019) and Utami Dewi et al. (2020), where the lack of qualified people with disabilities is the key challenge facing employers in hiring PWDs.

Table II. Descriptive Statistics of Factors Hindering Employers from Hiring PWDs

Item	Mean (M)	Std. Dev. (SD)
<b>Nature of the work</b>	2.02	0.473
<b>Lack of qualified people with disabilities</b>	2.15	0.486
<b>Actual cost of accommodating disability</b>	1.97	0.458
<b>Concern about the cost of healthcare coverage</b>	2.01	0.481

<b>Fear of litigation</b>	1.95	0.486
<b>Lack of knowledge or information</b>	2.09	0.466
<b>Discomfort or unfamiliarity</b>	1.92	0.459
<b>Attitudes of co-workers</b>	1.88	0.507
<b>Attitudes of supervisors</b>	1.88	0.507

### Binary Logistic Regression Analysis

The Binary Logistic Regression analysis was employed to identify and examine the key hindrance factors influencing employers' decisions regarding the hiring of people with disabilities. This statistical approach was chosen for its robustness in analyzing binary dependent variables, in this context, whether employers hired PWDs or not. Through this analysis, five main factors emerged as statistically significant, providing a clearer understanding of the barriers faced by employers. Nine independent variables were included in this study. They comprised the nature of the work, lack of qualified people with disabilities, the actual cost of accommodating a disability, concern about health care coverage, fear of litigation, lack of knowledge or information, discomfort or unfamiliarity, and attitudes of coworkers and supervisors.

Table III provides the collinearity statistics for the independent variables considered in the study, which include factors that may influence employers' decisions to hire people with disabilities (PWDs). The Tolerance and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values help assess multicollinearity among the variables. The multicollinearity assumption is tested by computing the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) and the Tolerance Statistic. Much better diagnostics are produced by tolerance and VIF values (Cooray & Senaviratna, 2019). Based on Table 3, all the independent variables exceeded the tolerance value of 0.10 (0.16 – 0.608) and none have VIF greater than 10 (1.644 to 6.234). Therefore, it proves that the multicollinearity assumption is met (Hair et al., 2014; Cooray & Senaviratna, 2019).

Table III. Collinearity Statistics for Factors Affecting Employers' Decision to Hire PWDs

No.	Variables	Collinearity Statistics	
		Tolerance	VIF
	(Constant)		
1	Nature of the work	0.608	1.644
2	Lack of qualified people with disabilities	0.561	1.784
3	Actual cost of accommodating disability	0.336	2.98
4	Concern about the cost of health care coverage	0.284	3.525
5	Fear of litigation	0.345	2.901
6	Lack of knowledge or information	0.549	1.821
7	Discomfort or unfamiliarity	0.39	2.567
8	Attitudes of coworkers	0.186	5.378

9	Attitudes of supervisors	0.16	6.234
Note: Dependent Variable: Hiring PWDs			

Table 4 presents the results of a logistic regression analysis, showing the influence of various factors on employers' decision to hire people with disabilities (PWDs). The coefficients (B), standard errors (S.E.), Wald statistics, significance values (Sig.), and odds ratios (OR) with confidence intervals (C.I.) are provided to assess the strength and direction of the relationship between each factor and the hiring of PWDs. The results were tested using the two-tailed where a P value of <0.05 was considered statistically significant (Bjørnshagen & Ugreninov, 2021; Field, 2024; Meyers et al., 2013). Table 4 shows that the nature of the work (OR = 19.389; 95% CI 0.764 - 491.826; p = 0.023), lack of qualified people with disabilities (OR = 8.073; 95% CI 1.006 - 64.785; p = 0.030), actual cost of accommodating disability (OR = 8.073; 95% CI 1.406 - 46.351; p = 0.049), concern about the cost of health care coverage (OR = 0.012; 95% CI 0.001 - 0.191; p = 0.008), and lack of knowledge or information (OR = 0.031; 95% CI 0.002 - 0.517; p = 0.042) factors are significant toward employers hiring PWDs with p-values less than 0.05. The remaining independent variables, fear of litigation, discomfort or unfamiliarity, attitudes of coworkers, and attitudes of supervisors, do not significantly affect employers hiring PWDs since their p-values are greater than 0.05. Therefore, it can be concluded that the nature of the work, lack of qualified people with disabilities, the actual cost of accommodating a disability, concern about the cost of health care coverage, and lack of knowledge or information are the hindrance factors for employers on hiring PWDs.

Table IV. Logistic Regression Analysis of Factors Influencing Employers' Decision to Hire PWDs

No.	Variables	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Odds Ratios (OR)	95% C.I. for EXP(B)	
								Lower	Upper
1	Nature of the work	2.965	1.65	3.23	1	0.023	19.389	0.764	491.826
2	Lack of qualified people with disabilities	2.088	1.063	3.863	1	0.030	8.073	1.006	64.785
3	Actual cost of accommodating disability	2.088	1.063	3.863	1	0.049	8.073	1.406	46.351
4	Concern about the cost of healthcare coverage	-4.387	1.662	6.968	1	0.008	0.012	0.001	0.191
5	Fear of litigation	2.576	1.753	2.161	1	0.142	13.150	0.424	408.194
6	Lack of knowledge or information	-3.467	1.707	4.126	1	0.042	0.031	0.002	0.517
7	Discomfort or unfamiliarity	8.911	4.174	4.557	1	0.172	7411.019	2.074	26488077
8	Attitudes of coworkers	-1.006	4.647	0.047	1	0.829	0.366	0	3301.5
9	Attitudes of supervisors	0.959	5.359	0.032	1	0.858	2.61	0	95007.702
	Constant	7.294	3.05	5.719	1	0.017	1471.057		

Based on the results of our investigation, employers admitted that the majority of them (132 persons), which is equivalent to 89.2%, did not hire PWD employees. Nevertheless, only 16 out of 148 employers (10.8%) reported that they currently have PWDs as their employees, which is considered very low. Reflecting on the Malaysian situation, while the government has adopted legislation and myriad policies, as well as programs and incentives for employers, the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in jobs appears to be problematic and frustrating. Therefore, this study conducted the Binary Logistic Regression analysis, and the relevant five hindrance factors were supported, highlighting the challenges faced by employers in hiring PWDs.

According to the respondents, a lack of qualified people with disabilities is a significant barrier to their employment. Employers frequently cited the lack of supply of qualified workers with disabilities as a major impediment to hiring and retaining PWDs (Schloemer-Jarvis et al., 2021; Olsen, 2022) found that many employers assumed (or claimed they believed) that workers with disabilities "don't take their weight," "can't do a job at 100%," or "might not have the same potential" as other staff. This belief is reinforced by the fact that PWDs referred to vocational rehabilitation agencies are often perceived as less skilled and having a lower employment history than other applicants (Østerud, 2022; Omar et al., 2020). This challenge is not only recognized by employers but also acknowledged by the PWDs themselves, who face difficulties competing in the job market due to limited education and skills (Botha & Leah, 2020; Ajrun, 2023). For many PWDs, specific physical or intellectual differences further restrict their job options, and biased mindsets among employers exacerbate these challenges, leading to continued exclusion from the mainstream labour market.

Another profound challenge identified in this study is the lack of knowledge or information among employers regarding the employment of PWDs. Problems arise when companies do not have adequate knowledge and skills to manage disabled employees effectively. This lack of understanding contributes to the hesitancy in hiring PWDs, as the process is perceived as risky due to the limited knowledge employers have about job applicants. This finding is consistent with myriad research studies conducted over the decades, which highlight the confusion and uncertainty that characterize the hiring process for PWDs (Olsen, 2022; Hyseni et al., 2023; Jani et al., 2022; Almalky, 2020; Gasper et al., 2020; Bailey et al., 2022). However, employers who have prior knowledge or experience working with PWDs tend to hold more favorable attitudes towards hiring them (Almalky, 2020; Blanck & Harpur, 2020).

The nature of work itself is another significant barrier to hiring PWDs, as employers often conclude that disabled people may not meet the same standards as other workers. They express concerns that PWDs may have issues with illness and absenteeism or may not be able to fulfill the basic duties of employment or other tasks necessary to be effective employees in an increasingly demanding workplace. This challenge is supported by previous research, where nearly 75% of managers argued that the nature of their work is not suitable for PWDs (Hyseni et al., 2023). Similarly, Domzal et al. (2008) found that nearly three-fourths (72%) of all companies cited the nature of their work as too challenging for people with disabilities. The perception that the label "workers with disabilities" implies a lack of ability contrasts sharply with the roles that all workers are expected to play within organizations (Xian, 2022; Bailey et al., 2022).

Employers also expressed significant concern about the costs associated with hiring PWDs, particularly regarding healthcare and workplace accommodations. Many employers believe that investments in disabled-friendly facilities would incur additional and high costs. While some studies refute these concerns (Omar et al., 2021) recent research has shown that accommodation costs remain a major concern for employers (Manafet al., 2019; Jani et al., 2022; Bjørnshagen & Ugreninov, 2021; Gasper et al., 2020). Employers also see their duty to provide "reasonable accommodation" as a significant financial burden, which they perceive as counterproductive to their bottom line. The most common accommodations include the purchase of new appliances, but employers worry that making the entire workplace accessible could dramatically increase costs. Additionally, respondents addressed concerns about the cost of healthcare coverage for PWDs, associating disabilities with poor health and increased healthcare costs (Olsen, 2022; Bauer & Gewurtz, 2022).

The actual cost of accommodating PWDs, such as modifying the work environment or providing assistive technologies, was found to negatively impact employers' willingness to hire PWDs. Despite evidence that these costs are often overestimated, they remain a deterrent for many employers. Recent research indicates that the cost of accommodations is a significant concern, with employers viewing it as a financial burden that may

outweigh the benefits of hiring PWDs (Manafet al., 2019; Jani et al., 2022; Bjørnshagen & Ugreninov, 2021; Nagtegaal et al., 2023). This perception underscores the need for policy interventions and support programs that can reduce the financial impact on employers and promote more inclusive hiring practices.

## DISCUSSION

This study identifies key barriers preventing Malaysian employers from hiring people with disabilities (PWDs), including the nature of the work, a lack of qualified candidates, perceived high accommodation costs, concerns over healthcare coverage, and limited employer knowledge. Despite legislation promoting PWD inclusion, these obstacles persist, with employers often seeing a mismatch between job demands and PWD capabilities, potentially due to stereotypes rather than actual assessments. These findings align with research from other countries, which also cite costs and employer perceptions as major barriers (Blanck, 2020; Alshoura, 2021; Specialjobs.com.my. 2024; Pausic et al., 2021; Bauer & Gewurtz, 2022). However, this study adds insight into Malaysia's unique context, where cultural and economic factors, along with low employer awareness about disabilities, intensify the problem. Unlike Western contexts with stronger awareness and legal enforcement (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2020; Town and Country Planning Department Malaysia; 2020; Manaf et al., 2019; Jani et al., 2022; Jamil & Saidin, 2018; Utami Dewi et al., 2020; Ministry of Human Resource, 2020; Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2020; Omar et al., 2021; Alshoura, 2021). Malaysia requires improved educational initiatives to correct misconceptions. The study suggests that employers need tailored programs to increase disability awareness, while policymakers should enforce legislation more rigorously and offer incentives to cover accommodation costs. Expanding education and training for PWDs could also bridge the qualification gap. While the study offers valuable insights, its sample may not represent all industries, and the cross-sectional design limits its generalizability, especially considering external factors like the COVID-19 pandemic. Future research should adopt a longitudinal approach and examine the effects of specific disabilities on employment outcomes. The exclusion of PWDs from the workforce perpetuates economic and social inequalities, and addressing these barriers would foster a more inclusive labor market in Malaysia, benefiting both PWDs and society by promoting diversity, innovation, and economic growth.

## CONCLUSION

Many persons with disabilities continue to face significant exclusion in various areas of the labor market. Despite efforts by the Malaysian government to implement laws and policies that support the inclusion of people with disabilities in the workforce, the results remain disappointing. This study highlights that a combination of structural barriers and employer perceptions are key contributors to this ongoing exclusion, indicating that more focused efforts are necessary to create meaningful change. The isolation of people with disabilities (PWDs) continues to happen without limitations. In Malaysia, although the government has implemented laws and various policies as well as programs, the participation of persons with disabilities in employment continues to be problematic and disappointing. Employers insist on hiring people with disabilities. It is proven based on the results conducted in this study. Based on the employer profiles, only 10.8% of the employers are currently hiring PWDs. Therefore, this study examined the challenges faced by employers in hiring the PWDs. Five main hindrance factors of employers hiring PWDs were identified in this study. They comprised the nature of the work, lack of qualified people with disabilities, the actual cost of accommodating a disability, concern about the cost of health care coverage, and lack of knowledge or information. The findings would have several implications for employers. First, organisations should increase the number of employees with disabilities. Opportunities and chances should be given to them since many of the PWDs are unemployed. Hence, enhancing their quality of life. The identified factors that hinder employers from hiring PWDs showed that the employers are not well-versed and well-equipped in terms of knowledge and information about PWDs. Thus, it contributes to other hindrance factors. This research was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic. Facing the COVID-19 pandemic, more than 1 billion people worldwide living with disabilities were experiencing greater difficulty accessing vital services and opportunities in education and employment. It is proposed that future studies should examine the employer's perspectives that hinder them from hiring the PWDs in the post-COVID-19 pandemic. It is also a good way to synchronise outcomes with people with disabilities' expectations of employability.

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### Conflict Of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

### Data Availability Statement

Data analyzed in the current study can be obtained from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

### Ethics Statement

This study used primary data and is thus exempt from Institutional Review Board approval.

### Informed Consent

This study used secondary data so informed consent was not needed.

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