

EMPLOYERS' PERCEIVED EMPLOYABILITY, HUMAN RELATIONS AND PRODUCTIVITY OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY, LAGOS STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Gainful employment by individual helps to satisfy economic and social demands in any given society. However, some factors may predict unemployment of many which makes individual stands the risk of economic stress. It should be noted that many factors that put individual at risk of unemployment are coming out of negative attitudes of the society towards some attributes that make individual at variance of the norms of the society. This may be ill-conceived and concluded especially considering people with disabilities potentials. This study therefore, is on assessment of employers' perceived employability, human relation and productivity of people with disabilities using exploratory research design. Multistage sampling was employed using purposive and convenient methods to select establishments, firms, organization and 150 participants. The instruments used for data collection were employability scale (0.68), Productivity inventory (0.70), and Human relation scale (0.73). Two research questions were answered and one hypothesis tested. The finding revealed that people with disabilities suffer employment difficulty because of negative perception of employers, people with disabilities (PWDs) did not enjoy favourable human relations from employers and co-employees without disabilities and there was joint contribution of employers' perceived employability and human relation on the perceived productivity of PWDs. It becomes imperative that constant advocacy on the need for total inclusiveness of people with disabilities in all spheres of life should be the priority of both government and non-governmental organisations.

Keywords: Employability, Human relation, Productivity, People with disabilities, Perception

Introduction

Gainfully engaged in a productive work is one of the most important aspects of life of a man after undergoing some levels of training and education for a life of autonomy and economic independence. However, not everybody that is qualified and ready to work is employed due to some factors such

as competition, nature of the work, health status and economic trends in a particular sociological environment.

Like any other person without disability, individual with disability is a member of a work society and as well need employment for him to satisfy economic and social demands from members of his family, himself and society. Employment has been identified as a critical need for individuals with disabilities (Ju, 2012), given that it is an essential component of the quality of adult life (Rogan, et al., 2002). Both people with and without disabilities if employed have economic value and contribute to economic development of their environment thereby lessen the problem of underemployment. This is the reason why employments of the employable citizens become critical if those within the threshold of employment meet both education and skills qualifications at a given time and situation.

According to International Labour Organization (2015), there are an estimated one billion persons with disabilities globally, with about 80 per cent of them living in low income countries. It was estimated that out of the one billion persons with disabilities worldwide, 800 million of them are of working age and unfortunately many of them are currently facing significant challenges of securing job that commensurate with their qualifications, skills and abilities due to a number of factors ranging from attitudinal, physical to informational barriers thereby contravening the right of people with disabilities to work and employment (ILO, 2015). The ILO move to the inclusion of persons with disabilities is grounded in both assuring the rights of persons with disabilities as well as recognizing the economic benefits of inclusion which can then turn to economic benefits of nations and the world at large.

However, progress toward comprehensive employment inclusion of individual with disabilities is hindered by numerous obstacles (Fantinelli, et al., 2022). Among these are the substantial differences in perceptions of the employers and employees without disabilities on the positive benefits of

employing individuals with disabilities (IWDs). According to Ramachandra, et al. (2017), some of the barriers faced by the employees with disabilities included lack of physical access to the worksite and within the worksite, communication and information barriers and lack of training opportunities. These become problematic because employers of labour and most employees without disabilities do not count those barriers as problems that could limit the mobility and efficiencies of most employees with disabilities at their different workplaces. There is subtle discrimination on certain benefits that can improve employment sustainability of individuals with disabilities on the job. This attitude was informed by social desirability biases (Kaye, et al., 2011; Wehman, et al., 2015). The issue of discrimination and stigmatization form the basis that keep a majority of disabled women, men and children living in poverty, dependence and social exclusion (ILO, 2015).

Another major obstacle that may affect people with disabilities at work place is their perceived human relation. This perception evolves from erroneous labeling that might increase the level of discrimination and stigmatization. For instance, Brzykcy and Boehm (2022) investigated the impact of disability labels on relationship building at work among 845 employees with disabilities drawn from a representative German workforce data set; it was found that labeling leads to perceptions of fewer opportunities for relationship building. The accumulated discrimination and stigmatization propel Self-stigma with a negative consequences for decreased self-esteem and empowerment (Livingston & Boyd, 2010) and poor interpersonal relations (King and Ahmad, 2010; King et al., 2006). It should be noted that strong feelings of attachment, intimacy and commitment are important for organizational growth as they contribute to feelings of belongingness and relatedness at work which are basic for human need and key motivational factor for productivity and efficiency (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Positive environment devoid of discrimination is relevant for employees with disabilities, as this group is at risk of developing low quality interpersonal relationships at work (Dwertmann & Boehm, 2016).

Basically, the stigma associated with disabilities is the main obstacle to the human relation and empowerment process (Dervishi, 2013), if people with disability are less discriminated at work place, less prejudiced and isolated, they will elate positively and function efficiently and job placement of persons with disabilities will not be difficult (Soresi, 2016) because studies have confirmed that

people with disabilities can also successfully perform in organization running and social relations (Barba-Sánchez et al., 2021).

Furthermore, good working environment with harmonious relationship between employers and employees and among employers can yield better efficiency and high productivity devoid of perceived negative view of some individuals inability to measure up due to some attributes that make them to be a bit different from others in an organization. Some studies discussed the relationship between diversity and performance of an organization (Fantinelli, et al., 2022). Some employers believe that disabilities may impede job performance and productivity which might be the reason why they are very reserved at employing people with disabilities. However, Narayanan and Terris (2020) argued that individuals with disabilities are a vital part of any economy and an important source of talents that can influence productivity and efficiency if they are better managed. This is in line with Richard et al., (2004) who believed that better management of diversity at workplace can positively influence organizational effectiveness, performance and productivity. Hence, organisations can achieve this by integrating individual with disabilities into equal opportunity environment in work environment (Hoffman, 2013).

Nevertheless, the stigma associated with disabilities is the main obstacle to the perceived employers' belief that productivity will be affected if PWDs are employed. However, data abound that highlight how the exclusion of PWDs from the workforce has cost the society the comparable advantage of the productive potential of PWDs (Calderón-Milán et al., 2020). It is interesting to note that the worth of people with disabilities is being appreciated in some communities as some workers have reported enjoying working with people with disabilities. In a survey of employers on the employment of people with disabilities, conducted by the University of Massachusetts' Center for Social Research and the Gallup organisation rated that work by people with disabilities as very good, and they appreciated the timeliness, good work, and efforts of their coworkers with disabilities, and saw them as part of the team. On the part of customer service, it was reported that the service received from a person with a disability were as good as or better than the services they received from others (Interagency Committee on Disability Research, 2007).

It is against the background of various treatment that literature have exemplified as regards people with disabilities in various workplaces and negative perception received in various sociological

environment by PWDs motivated the investigation of the employers' perceived employability, human relations and productivity of people with disability at the work place in Lagos State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

These questions were answered in this study.

1. How do employers perceive employability of people with disability?
2. What is the employers' perception of human relations of people with disabilities?

Hypothesis

Below hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. Employers' perception of employability and human relations will not jointly affect productivity of people with disability.

Methodology

This study employed exploratory research design investigating perceived employability, human relation and productivity of people with disabilities by employers in Lagos State, Nigeria. The population for the study consisted employers of people with disabilities. Multi-stage process was employed in sampling process. Purposive sampling was used to select the organisations and firms that employed PWDs and thereafter convenient sampling technique was used to select a total of 150 participants from the firms and organisations where participants were employed. The participants selected were either the direct superior to people with disabilities or head of the organization who voluntarily wish to participate in the study after consent form has been responded to. The instruments used for the study were: employability scale adapted from self-perceived employability scale by Rothwell and Arnold (2004), Productivity inventory adapted from productivity inventory by Goetzel, Ozminkowski and Long (2003) and Human relation scale adapted from Multidimensional attitudes scale by Findler, Vilchinsky and Werner (2007). The three instruments were revalidated to remove cultural biases yielding 0.68, 0.70 and 0.73 respectively using cronbach alpha. The instruments were administered on the participants after the basis of the research has been explained to them and their consents

have granted. The researchers waited to collect the completed instruments. One hypothesis was tested and two research questions were answered. The data collected was analysed using Percentage and Multiple regression.

Results

Table 1

Responses on Employability of PWDs

S/N	Statement (Employability of people with disability)	SA		A		D		SD	
		Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
1	It costs more to employ workers with disabilities.	45	30	65	43	25	17	15	10
2	People with disabilities are less dependable.	18	12	36	24	71	47	25	17
3	People with disabilities are potential liabilities in the work place.	35	23	48	32	53	35	14	9
4	Workers with disabilities become less dedicated to their job.	2	1	25	17	68	45	55	37
5	Employers are willing to hire people with disabilities under certain conditions.	48	32	67	45	22	15	13	9
6	Employers provide their own training for people with disabilities.	64	43	75	50	9	6	2	1
7	Many employers are willing to make adjustments to meet the needs of people with disabilities.	12	8	18	12	77	51	43	29
8	Hiring disabled people is not always part of long-term plan of employers.	40	27	46	31	39	26	25	17
9	Higher rate of absenteeism is associated with the employability of a person with disabilities.	5	3	8	5	88	59	49	33
10	Employers are concerned over occupational health of people with disabilities.	43	29	59	39	29	19	19	13
Average		31	21	45	30	48	32	26	17

Analysis from Table 1 showed that employers perceived PWDs as dependable, dedicated to workplace and are punctual to workplace. However, more employers opined that it cost more to employ PWDs, lay down extra conditions for hiring PWDs, shows concern over occupational health of PWDs and they are liability to the workplace. The outcome still reflected some biases when talk of employability of PWDs.

Table 2

Responses on Human Relations of PWDs

SN	Statement (Human relations of people with disability)	SA		A		D		SD	
		Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
11	People with disabilities have been discriminated against in the workplace.	54	36	69	46	25	17	2	1
12	People with disabilities are always isolated from co-workers.	19	13	25	17	67	45	39	26
13	People with disabilities have been stigmatized in the workplace.	45	30	59	39	37	25	9	6
14	People maintain high level of social distance with individuals with disability.	25	16.7	39	26	58	38.6	28	18.7
15	People with disabilities are often disregarded and considered as “second class citizens” or objects of charity giving them a feeling of insecurity.	12	8	53	35	60	40	25	17
16	People with disabilities show aggression.	36	24	54	36	35	23	25	17
17	Employers are concerned about negative responses by customers.	45	30	56	37	35	23	14	9
18	People with disabilities lack social integration in the workplace.	26	17.3	48	32	53	35.3	23	15.3
19	There is always discomfort of others over observable disabilities.	39	26	59	39	36	24	16	11
Average		33	22	51	34	45	30	20	13

Observations from Table 2 show that employers noticed that PWDs are being discriminated against, stigmatized, display aggression, concerns about negative responses from customers and discomfort about observable disabilities at workplaces. Conversely, the result shows that PWDs are not isolated, not considered as either “second class” citizens or object of charity.

Hypothesis 1: Employers perception of employability and human relation will not jointly affect productivity of people with disability.

Table 3

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square
1	.425 ^a	.180	.169

a. Predictors: (Constant), Human relations of people with disability, Employability of people with disability.

Table 3 provides the simple correlation R (0.425) and coefficient of determination R² (0.18) values. The R value as denoted R indicates that moderate level of correlation while the R² shows the extent to which the total variation in productivity of people with disability can be explained by the independent variables (i.e., Human relations of people with disability and Employability of people with disability).

Table 4

ANOVA Result

ANOVA ^a						
	Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	490.897	2	245.448	16.170	.000 ^b
	Residual	2231.343	147	15.179		
	Total	2722.240	149			

a. Dependent Variable: Productivity of people with disability

b. Predictors: (Constant), Human relations of people with disability, Employability of people with disability

Table 4 shows F calculated value to determine the extent to which the overall regression model is a good fit for the data. The independent variables (Human relations of people with disability and Employability of people with disability) statistically predict the dependent variable (productivity of people with disability) since $F(2, 147) = 3.06, p < 0.05$. As a result, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis was accepted. It was concluded that Human relations of people with disability and Employability of people with disability statistically predict the productivity of people with disability.

Table 5**Estimated Model Coefficients**

Model	Coefficients ^a		Beta	T	Sig.
	Unstandardized Coefficients				
	B	Std. Error			
1 (Constant)	8.857	2.664		3.324	.001
Employability of people with disability	.518	.091	.426	5.686	.000
Human relations of people with disability	.030	.074	.030	.400	.690

a. Dependent Variable: Productivity of people with disability

Analysis from Table 5 shows the general form of the equation as

$$\text{PPWDs} = 8.857 + 0.518 \text{ EPWDs} + 0.03 \text{ HRPWDs}$$

Where PPWDs represents Perceived Productivity of people with disabilities

EPWDs represent Perceived Employability of people with disabilities

HRPWDs represent Human relations of people with disabilities

This shows that a direct relationship exists between PPWDs (the dependent variable) and each of the independent variables, that is, EPWDs (0.518) and HRPWDs (0.03). This means that an increase in PPWDs is accounted for by increase in each of the independent variables. However, analysis in Table 9 further shows that only one of the two independent variables, that is, Employability of people with disability (PPWDs) ($t = 5.686$; $p < 0.05$) was found to be statistically significant.

Discussion of Findings

The findings revealed that people with disability though enjoy some measure appreciation at work place, nevertheless, the age long perception that individuals with disabilities may constitute economic burden when employed still stands out from various opinions gathered. For instance, the perceived cost of hiring PWDs, notion that they are liabilities, lack of will to hire individuals with disabilities considering certain conditions, inability to meet the needs employees with disabilities and fear of occupational health of these categories of employees constitute the bane to the employability of people with disabilities in Nigeria. From the notions of the respondents, it can be empirically argued

that people with disabilities suffer employment difficulty contrary to the stated conditions by International Labour Organisation that at least certain percent of employment opportunity be reserved for people with disabilities in any given environment. This finding is contrary to recommendation by International Labour Organisation that posited in the promotion of equal opportunity and treatment for persons with disabilities in the world of work (ILO, 2015). The attitudes demonstrated by employers of labour as evident in their different opinions accounted for the finding by ILO (2015) that around 800 million of people with disabilities that are of working age, significant numbers of them face obstacles to equal opportunities in the world of work because of attitudinal, physical and informational barriers permeated by employers perception of employment success of these individuals. The findings further revealed that people with disabilities may not enjoy favourable human relations from employers and co-employees without disabilities. This position is coming out of different notions generated by employers of labours in this study. Some of these perceptions are: people with disabilities are being discriminated at workplace, people with disabilities are stigmatised, people with disabilities are aggressive, concern about customers' negative response about the presence of people with disabilities at work place and discomfort exhibited by other employees and customers over observable disabilities. All these notions affect free interaction between individuals with disabilities at work place and those without disabilities. It is a common response from anybody to complement negative response with equivalent negative reaction. If the workplace is not welcoming, there is tendency for people with disabilities to equally develop some unwelcoming action which make people to perceive employees with disabilities in a bad light. The finding in table 2 corroborates the study by Brzykcy and Boehm (2022) who investigated the impact of disability labels on relationship building at work among 845 employees with disabilities drawn from a representative German workforce data set; found that labeling leads to perceptions of fewer opportunities for relationship building. The accumulated discrimination and stigmatization propel self-stigma with a negative consequences for decreased self-esteem and empowerment (Livingston & Boyd, 2010) and poor interpersonal relations (King and Ahmad, 2010; King et al., 2006).

In addition, the study found that the independent variables (Perceived employability and human relation of PWDs) jointly predicted perceived productivity of PWDs by employers of labour. This finding revealed the fact that the negative patent on individual with disabilities influence the way people think about how productive they may be. This negative mindset may also influence the way

people with disabilities may perceive their confidence at workplace thereby affecting their performance. This corroborates the myriad of data that highlight how the exclusion of PWDs from the workforce has cost the society the comparable advantage of the productive potential of PWDs (Calderón-Milán et al., 2020). It should be noted that it serves the economy of any nation a great disadvantage when some viable workforce are left unemployed despite their productive potentials because of the erroneous notion emanating from the levels of variance in their physical, intellectual, social and psychological differences from societal norms.

Therefore, it becomes imperative for any nation that wants to enhance and sustain economic growth to harness all productive workforces without resenting any group of people because of variance in physical, psychological, mental, social and ethnic coloration. This is because productivity is enhanced by a work environment that is devoid of segregation and labeling but with adequate motivation that will bring the best out of every worker in the establishment.

Conclusion

This study investigated the employers' perceived employability, human relation and productivity of people with disabilities in the workplace in Lagos State using exploratory research design. The results revealed that employers of labour believed that people with disabilities may constitute economic burden with poor human relation which may affect their productive potentials at workplace. Further to this, the inferential statistics revealed joint contributions of the perceived employability and human relation to productivity of PWDs. This emanated from age long belief that PWDs are infertile and less productive compared to their non-disabled counterparts.

Recommendations

Advocacy on the need for total inclusiveness of people with disabilities in all spheres of life should be the priority of both government and non-governmental organisations. Seminars, conferences and one on one interaction should be carried out on the potentials abilities of people with disabilities to reorient employers of labour, well-meaning individuals in the community, students, parents and the society at large. More importantly, labour law that advocate for a certain percentage of employment for people with disabilities in any given country should be activated and made functional. This will help individuals with disabilities to seek redress in-case there is injustice in the process of securing employment by PWDs.

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