

A SURVEY OF FACTORS PREDICTING EMPLOYABILITY OF PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS IN IBADAN, OYO STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examined factors predicting employability of people with special needs in Ibadan metropolis. It adopted a descriptive survey research design. Three research questions were raised and answered in the study. Participants were one hundred and fifty high-ranking officers of organizations that were randomly selected in each of five local governments within Ibadan Metropolis. A self-developed survey instrument, "Employability Assessment Scale for People with Special Needs" (EASPSN, $r = 0.91$), segmented into three sections; Employer's Attitude Assessment Scale, Employment Discrimination Assessment Scale, and Workplace Environmental Factors Assessment Scale was used to collect data for the study. Data were analysed, using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient and Multiple regressions. The results revealed that employability of people with special need positively correlates with employer's attitude ($r = .712$), employment discrimination ($r = .610$) and environmental factor ($r = .472$). Results also indicated that the three independent variables (Employer's Attitude, Employment Discrimination, and Environmental Factors) when pulled together have significant effect on employability of people with special needs in Ibadan ($\text{Adj.}R^2 = .861$). It also revealed that among the three predictors, employer's attitude is a higher potent factor ($\beta = .878$, $t = 9.934$, $P < 0.05$). It is recommended that awareness and sensitization programmes be anchored by the government to alleviate fears among employers of labour about employing people with special needs. Their rights to fair and equal wages, working hours and opportunities, and the cultural benefits of being employed in any organisation no matter their health condition, should be upheld.

Key Words: *people with special needs, employer's attitude, employer's discrimination, environmental factors, employability*

Introduction

Among us as human beings are people with vision impairment, deaf or hard of hearing, mental health conditions, intellectual disability, acquired brain injury, autism spectrum disorder and physical disability. What makes them 'people of special needs' is the fact that they require one kind of special need or the other to make up for the deficiency. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) has estimated the

number of people with special needs to be some 15% of the global population (WHO & World Bank, 2011). Most governments globally are of concern to provide education for their citizens without discrimination on grounds of any form of impairment or disability (Shikulen, 2012; Owodunni, 2017). These people with special needs are also making efforts to be educated, hoping to have gainful employments after their educational attainments, so as to get fixed

into the scheme of things. Most of them may not be able to secure gainful employments without discrimination on grounds of a form of impairment or disability, as it is a common trend among employers of labour to discriminate against people with special needs, claiming they are not employable.

Employability is about a person seeking employment having requirements and characteristics that are attractive to an employer for the employment slot. Bureau of Labour Statistics (2014) sees employability to consist of a person's "employability assets" (knowledge, skills and attitudes), "deployment" (career management and job search skills), "self-presentation" and "job getting skills" (CV writing, work experience and interview techniques). It is also a general practice to prefer someone with work experience. There are three factors determining employability as widely agreed as a benchmark; Employer's Attitudes, Environmental Factors and Employment Discrimination factors (Longhi, Nicoletti & Platt, 2010; Schalock & Verdugo, 2012).

Employers' attitudes towards people with special needs will go a long way in determining their willingness and readiness to employ them. Employers are more likely to value employees who combine knowledge of works to do with the willingness to work hard; who come to work on time and are at work when they are supposed to be; and who are responsible for their actions and behaviours (Wiegand, 2008; Aldersey, 2013; Buntinx, 2013). Yamamoto and Alverson (2013) reported in a study that involved 155 people with special needs in which most respondents believed people with special needs are subjected to unfair treatment in their respective workplaces and those significant barriers remain that obstruct people with special needs when they try to access facilities. These negative attitudes are

often expressed through the inability of co-workers to see beyond impairment, discrimination, fear, bullying, and low expectations of people with special needs (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2014; Austin & Lee, 2014).

Employers have also registered concerns over the issue of social skills of workers with disabilities and their ability to interact or get along with co-workers. Employers have expressed concerns with co-workers' acceptance or the ability of workers with disabilities to interact with co-workers (Strauser, O'Sullivan & Wong, 2010; Wehmeyer, 2013; Shogren, 2013). Findings have revealed employers' concerns over the productivity or performance of workers with special needs (Buntinx & Schalock, 2010; Thompson, Schalock, Agosta, Teninty & Fortune, 2014). This has led to a kind of negative attitudes towards people with special needs, resulting in stigmatisation and discrimination, and denying people with special needs their dignity and potentials. These attitudes are obstacles to achieving equality of opportunity and social integrations. Apart from employers, other staff members in an organization also have their attitudes towards people with special needs (Carter, Austin & Trainor, 2012). Such attitudes, if negative, can be extremely unaccommodating with high degree of stigma and shame (Giesen & Cavanaugh, 2013) and can intensify barriers and discrimination (Schalock & Verdugo, 2012).

In this case, except there is a regulation in which employers are mandated to give a quota of employment to qualified people with special needs, many employers might not be willing to give these people chances in their organizations. Ditchman, Wu, Chan, Fitzgerald, Lin and Tu (2014) used a scale to measure attitudes of 170 employers toward

workers with disabilities and towards the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The results showed that while 96% of the 170 employers interviewed knew of the ADA, only 36% said they would support mandated quotas for hiring people with special needs. This could be in line with the 1990 Americans with Special Needs Act that requires employers to employ fifteen or more employees to make reasonable accommodations so that quality workers with special needs have equal employment opportunity.

Environmental factors are identifiable physical, demographical, cultural, technological, regulatory or political elements that also influence decisions over who to employ in an organization. The person-environment perspective posits that harmonious interactions between individuals and the environment would lead to better work and career outcomes (Chan, Wang, Ditchman, Kim, Pete, Chan & Dries, 2014). In other words, individuals with high levels of person-job and needs-supplies fit perceptions are predicted to have high levels of career success, and vice versa. An environment has a huge impact on the experience on special needs people, inaccessible environments create barriers to participation and inclusion. Examples of the possible negative impact of the environment include a deaf individual without a sign language interpreter, a wheelchair user in a building without an accessible bathroom or elevator, and a blind person using a computer without screen-reading software. A recent phenomenon in institutions and workplaces in Nigeria is the provision of accessible routes for wheelchairs to assist people on wheelchairs as they cannot use the stairs to be able to move around. Institutions and workplaces that cannot accommodate such in their budgets, may stylishly want to

avoid employing people with special needs. However, studies have shown that necessary and reasonable accommodation is difficult to obtain or not forthcoming for many workers with special needs (Fan, Williams & Wolters, 2012; Buntinx, 2013).

Health is also affected by environmental factors, such as safe water and sanitation, nutrition, poverty, working conditions, climate, or access to health care. The environment may be changed to improve health conditions, prevent impairments, and improve outcomes for persons with special needs. Such changes can be brought about by legislation, policy changes, capacity building, or technological development leading to accessible design of the built environment and transport; signage to benefit people with sensory impairments; more accessible health, rehabilitation, education, and support services; more opportunities for work and employment for people with special needs (WHO & World Bank, 2011).

World Health Organization (2001) reported that environmental factors may act as barriers to the participation of people with special needs in their workplaces. As indicated by Schalock and Luckasson (2014), some of the most common barriers experienced by persons with special needs are lack of accessible design in their working company, lack of accessible design in equipment, lack of transportation to and from facilities, attitudes of other community members, lack of confidence in abilities, lack of knowledge about community resources, lack of skill with mobility aids, and actual or perceived lack of social support or sense of belonging.

However, Schalock, Claes and Decramer (2013) noted that the significantly lower rate of participation among people with special needs may be related to variety

of environmental and personal barriers, including architectural barriers, organizational policies and practices, discrimination, and social attitudes. In a further research by Buntinx, and Schalock (2010) through individual interviews, participants identified environmental factors which supported or hindered the employability of people with special needs. Social and institutional barriers were identified as the most significant environmental barriers.

Employment discrimination also determines employability of people with special needs. Discrimination is when an employer takes actions against an employee because of that individual's race, colour, sex, national origin, disability, age, religion, gender identity or sexual orientation of people with special needs. The Equality at Work Law of 1988 forbids discrimination by employers between employees or those seeking employment on whatever basis (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011; 2014).

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is an attempt to reduce discrimination against people with special needs in all aspects of daily life. There are three basic requirements of the ADA. Employers are to make employment decisions based on ability, treat applicants the same, and provide reasonable accommodation to people with special needs. Employers are not allowed to use employment tests or other standards that tend to screen out applicants with special needs. It is possible for an employer to deny a job based on disability if the essential functions of the job cannot be met with reasonable accommodation. Essential functions are defined as job duties intrinsic to the position, they may be the reason the job exists. Functions may also be essential to a job if there are a limited number of

employees among whom the job can be done, and the function is highly specialized (Al Ju'beh, 2015).

Buntinx (2013) reported that employment discrimination rate for people with special needs was 30% as against 71% for the non-disabled. However, it is not surprising that the unemployment rate amongst people with special needs is very much lower than those with non-special needs. Longhi, Nicoletti and Platt (2010) in a study found that several reasons involved are: employers prefer not to take people with special needs because they perceive people with special needs as burdens; special needs employees require special supervision; workers less able to get used to the work and they increase health insurance premiums. The feeling amongst employers is that people with special needs are weak, dependent and less able; thereby they tend to take a non-handicapped person rather than a candidate with special needs.

However, Austin and Lee (2014) found that discrimination against people with special needs in the work force also appears in sub-groups of people with disabilities. That is, employers tend to discriminate against people with disabilities according to their specific disabilities. Schalock and Luckasson (2014) set out to assess how employment discrimination of people with special needs affect the chances of that person being given employment. It was found that applicants with visible disabilities that were also neurological were turned down more often. It was also found that the type of disability determines chances of getting the job as employers tended to prefer applicants with physical impairments over those with an intellectual impairment.

Undisputable data on the employment of people with special needs in Ibadan are difficult to come by, but the available data

indicate people with special needs have poorer employment outcomes than normal people (Schalock & Verdugo, 2013). In developing countries, 80-90% of people with special needs of working age are unemployed (Longhi, Nicoletti & Platt, 2010). This study, therefore, intends to investigate the factors predicting employability of people with special needs in Ibadan Metropolis.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated and answered in the study:

1. What is the pattern of relationship among the independent variables (employer's attitude, employment discrimination and environmental factor) and the dependent variable (employability)?
2. What is the joint effect of employment discrimination; environmental factor and employer's attitude on employability of people with special needs?
3. What is the relative contribution of environmental factor, employer's attitude and employment discrimination to the prediction of employability of special need people?

Methodology

The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. A total of one hundred and fifty (150) participants (30 high-ranking variable (employability)?

officers of organizations) partook in the study. Participants were randomly selected in each of five local governments within Ibadan Metropolis (Ibadan North, Ibadan North West, Ibadan North West, Ibadan South East, and Akinyele). They were employers of labour and with lots of experience encountered with people with special needs regarding employment. All participants provided their free and informed verbal consents. A self-developed survey instrument, Employability Assessment Scale for People with Special Needs (**EASPSN**, $r = 0.91$), segmented into three sections; Employer's Attitude Assessment Scale, Employment Discrimination Assessment Scale, and Workplace Environmental Factors Assessment Scale was used to collect data for the study. Responses were based on Likert-scale items of SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, UD=Undecided, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree with all items pertaining to employability of people with special needs. Data were analysed, using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient and Multiple regressions.

Result

Research question 1: What is the pattern of relationship among the independent variables (employer's attitude, employment discrimination and environmental factor) and the dependent

Table 1: Correlation matrix showing the relationship between study variables

Variables	Mean	Std.Dev	1	2	3	4
Employability	56.2470	7.2304	1.000			
Employer's attitude	27.2778	8.10268	.712**	1.000		
Employment discrimination	46.0253	6.08771	.610**	.496**	1.000	
Environmental factor	27.0404	5.17397	.472**	.341**	.214*	1.000

*Correlation is significant at 0.05(2-tailed)

Table 1 depicts the relationship of each independent variable with the dependent variable (employability); employability of people with special needs positively correlates with employer's attitude ($r = .712$, $P < 0.05$); employment discrimination ($r = .610$, $P < 0.05$) and environmental factor ($r = .472$, $P < 0.05$). This implies that a unit increase in employer's attitude, decrease in employment discrimination and favourable

environment condition will increase the likelihood of employability of people with special needs and moderate the tendency to enjoy gainful employment respectively.

Research Question 2: What is the joint effect of employment discrimination; environmental factor and employer's attitude on employability of people with special needs?

Table 2: Summary of regression for the joint contributions of independent variables to the prediction of employability of people with special needs

R =.729
 R Square =.563
 Adjusted R square =.861
 Std. Error =3.01948

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	11155.857	2	5577.928	461.214	.000 ^a
	Residual	1777.866	147	12.094		
	Total	12933.722	149			

Table 2 reveals significant combined effect of the independent variables (employer's attitude, employment discrimination and environmental factor) to the prediction of employability of people with special needs. The result yielded a coefficient of multiple regressions $R = 0.729$ and multiple R-square = 0.663. This shows that the three variables combined accounted for 86.1% ($\text{Adj.}R^2 = .861$) variance in the prediction of employability of people with special needs. The other factors accounting for 13.9% variance in the prediction of employability

of people with special needs in Ibadan metropolis is beyond the scope of this study. The ANOVA result from the regression analysis shows that there was a significant effect of the independent variables on the dependent variable, $F(2,147) = 461.214$, $P < 0.05$.

Research Question 3: What is the relative contribution of environmental factor, employer's attitude and employment discrimination to the prediction of employability of people with special needs?

Table 3: Summary of regression for the relative contribution of the independent variables to the prediction of employability of people with special needs

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
(Constant)	-22.660	1.839		-12.324	.000
Employer attitude's	.943	.097	.878	9.934	.000
Employment discrimination	.680	.084	.511	8.119	.000
Environmental factor	.634	.099	.440	6.994	.000

Table 3 shows that the three predictor variables (employer's attitude, employment discrimination and environmental factor) are potent predictors of employability of people with special needs. The result also reveals that among the three predictors, employer's attitude ($\beta = .878$, $t = 9.934$, $P < 0.05$), is a better potent factor than employment discrimination ($\beta = .511$, $t = 8.119$, $P < 0.05$) and environmental factor ($\beta = .440$, $t = 6.994$, $P < 0.05$). This shows that employers discriminate against employability of people with special needs with their negative attitudes during the process of employment.

Discussions of the findings

Research Question One is about the relationship among the independent variables (employer's attitude, employment discrimination and environmental factor) and the dependent variable (employability). Results in Table 1 showed that there is a relationship between independent variables (employer's attitude, employment discrimination and environmental factor) and the dependent variable (employability). The findings showed that employer's attitude, decrease in employment discrimination and favourable environment condition will increase the likelihood of employability of people with special needs and moderate the

tendency to enjoy gainful employment respectively. This result corroborates with the findings of Longhi, Nicoletti and Platt (2010); Schalock and Verdugo (2012); Fan, Williams and Wolters (2012); Buntinx (2013) and Al Ju'beh (2015), who found that employer's attitude, employment discrimination and the environmental factor contribute to employability of people with special needs.

Research Question Two is about the joint effect of employment discrimination; environmental factor and employer's attitude on employability of people with special needs. Results in Table 2 showed that there is a significant effect of the independent variables (employer's attitude, employment discrimination and environmental factor) to the prediction of employability of people with special needs. This result supports the findings of Buntinx and Schalock (2010); Schalock and Verdugo (2013), that employment discrimination, environmental factor and employer's attitude have significant effects on employability of people with special needs. People with special needs should rather be given a fair share of the society after all the efforts to attain educational qualifications and be found ready to be integrated into the scheme of things. Thompson, Schalock, Agosta,

Teninty and Fortune (2014) have reported that the word unjust or prejudicial treatment against people with special needs should be eradicated among employers of labour in any organisation, therefore, the word non-partisanship should be adopted during the process.

Research Question Three is on the relative contribution of environmental factor; employer's attitude and employment discrimination to the prediction of employability of special need people. The findings from Table 3 showed that the three predictor variables (employer's attitude, employment discrimination and environmental factor) are potent predictors of employability of people with special needs. This is in line with the findings of Yamamoto and Alverson (2013) and that of Austin and Lee (2014) that employer's attitude is one of the determinant factors for hiring people with special needs. Longhi, Nicoletti and Platt (2010); Schalock, Claes and Decramer 2013; as well as Wehmeyer (2013) found out that employment discrimination is one of the potent factors towards people with special needs during the process of employment. It implies that most people with special needs are less talented, most of them are not easy to supervise in a working place, lazy, truant in an office and always complaining because of their health conditions. Also, Yamamoto and Alverson (2013) have reported that environmental factor could not be left out during the employment process of people with special needs. This implies that the serene working environment, conducive working environment, adequate facility, attractive salary for them, regular payment because of their health status, free medical check-up etc., all these should be considered before hiring people with special needs in any organisation. The result is in line with that of

Schalock and Luckasson (2014) that came to conclusion that there is high likelihood that employer's attitude towards employability of people with special needs and evidence of increased employment discrimination and environmental factor manifest during the process of employment.

Conclusion

This study investigated the factors predicting employability of people with special needs in Ibadan Metropolis. From the study, it was discovered that the three variables combined accounted for variance in the prediction of employability of people with special needs. Other factors accounting for variance in the prediction of employability of people with special needs in Ibadan Metropolis are beyond the scope of this study. It was further discovered that the most potent factors were employer's attitude, employment discrimination, and environmental factor.

Recommendations

- (i) More research attempts should be focused on enlightening employers, organisations and government on the factors predicting employability of people with special needs.
- (ii) Specifically, awareness and sensitization programmes should be done to intimate employers of labour about people with special needs in order to know that employing them would be beneficial to both parties and would make persons with disabilities to be less dependent.
- (iii) Special need people should have a right to fair and equal wages, working hours and opportunities, and the cultural benefits of being employed in any organisation no matter their health condition.

- (iv) Public or private organisations should firstly consider people with special needs for employment as a result of their health status, once they are academically efficient.

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