



Resolving a Paradox Between Unemployment and Employee Attrition: Analyzing Employers' Perspective in Recruiting Differentially Aabled

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Abstract: The hospitality industry in India has witnessed about 40 percent of employee attrition over the last five years, and the trend continues. This attrition significantly impacts the profitability and sustainability of both hospitality and tourism in India, which significantly contributes to the country's economy. While the rate of unemployment among persons with disabilities (PwDs) is high in the current study context, it allows hospitality recruiters to opt for PwDs as an alternative source of the labor pool. In the present study, we have analyzed the perspectives of recruiters in the Indian hospitality industry through the lens of the social model of disability. We have adopted a quantitative research approach and collected data from 87 employees using a survey instrument. The theory of social disability has been adopted as a theoretical framework. The result of the current study indicates that employers' negative attitude that arises due to their perceived 'aesthetic anxiety' has a significant impact on their hiring intention of PwDs.

Keywords: Persons with disability, Social model of disability, Employee turnover, Unemployment, Hotels, India.

1. Introduction

In today's business landscape, the significance of human resources as a source of competitive advantage has grown stronger. While acquiring technology and material resources has become relatively easier, the same cannot be said for human resources. This heightened importance of human resources is particularly evident in the service industry, such as hospitality, where delivering memorable experiences is crucial for sustaining a competitive edge (Book et al., 2019). The challenge faced by the hospitality has broader implications for the sustainability of the entire tourism industry, given the symbiotic relationship between hospitality and tourism (Piramanayagam & Seal, 2020). Recruiting the best employees is an ongoing challenge for every employer in hospitality. The employers in an organisation do spend much of their time on training and recruitment of new employees. Hotels find difficulty in attracting the best talent because of its poor image and long working hours. The hotel industry is further perceived as a poor paymaster and hard taskmaster and a sector that offers limited progression and promotion opportunities. The hotels are predicted to continue to face human resource challenges until an alternative solution is found. The PwDs can be a valuable alternative pool of labour, who have already proven themselves by their performance, less turnover, consistent and loyal to their organisation (Araten-Bergman, 2016; Breen et al., 2019; Ebuenyi et al., 2018; Fraser et al., 2011; von Schrader et al., 2014; Vornholt et al., 2018; Xu et al., 2022). The total contribution of tourism to GDP was US\$178 billion in 2021. India's global ranking in tourism contribution to GDP was tenth among 184 countries in 2021 (IBEF, 2023). Along with its significant growth over time, India's hospitality industry also suffers from a high employee turnover rate close to 40 percent over a decade (Datta, 2020, 2022). Compared to other service industries, employee attrition in the hospitality industry is significantly high in India (Datta, 2020).

India, a country with a population of 1210 million, has about 28.6 million PwDs, representing about 2.21 percent of the total population (Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, 2021). A study in 2019 revealed that the unemployment rate among PwDs in India is more than 70 percent (Verma & Venugopalan, 2019). Unemployment among PwDs has many adverse cascading effects on their life. High poverty, inequity in pay, poor access to quality education, access to housing, and poor sanitation further hinder the life of PwDs. Severe unemployment amongst the PwDs and the perils of high employee turnover in hospitality in the same context reveals a glaring paradox that poses a tantamount threat to the country's economic and social wellbeing. The studies conducted in the western context highlight that employers' perceived barriers and attitudes are the major deterrents in employing persons with disabilities (Piramanayagam & Seal, 2020). A paucity of literature aims to understand and overcome the paradoxical gap in the current study context. Considering the paradox and research gap, this study aimed to analyse the hospitality employers' attitude and its impact on hospitality employers' hiring intention of PwDs.

Employee turnover is defined as an employee's voluntary job termination from the organisation. In the existing literature, employee turnover and its negative impact on organisational performance are widely discussed (Datta, 2022; Xu et al., 2022; Yin et al., 2023). Employee turnover is commonly higher in the

hospitality industry, ranging from 60 to 120 percent annually, and it is an endemic challenge (Han, 2022). The high employee turnover rate poses various challenges to hospitality firms, such as loss of productivity, low employee morale, reduced service quality, and excessive recruitment and training costs. The cost of employee turnover significantly affects the hospitality business's bottom line (Han, 2022; Xu et al., 2022; Yin et al., 2023). Hence, hotels must develop various sustainable human resource practices and strategies to look beyond just the costs to retain them (Davidson & Wang, 2011). Hotels often use part-time employees and trainees to manage employee attrition, which is always difficult to sustain throughout the year and attracts legal issues. (Davidson et al., 2010) suggest that hotels must develop innovative recruitment and selection processes to ease high turnover rates. Hayes and Ninemeier urges that hotels will continue to face human resource challenges for the foreseeable future until they find an innovative solution (Hayes & Ninemeier, 2009). An ILO report narrates that PwDs can be a valuable alternative workforce (Shenoy, 2011) to manage the perils of employee shortage and turnover. Despite PwDs being a key non-traditional pool of employment, it is an untapped labour market (Araten-Bergman, 2016). In the past literature, various benefits of employing PwDs have been recorded.

There is much evidence that expanding the human resource inventory by including PwDs helped the organizations cut costs by increased employee tenure (Graffam et al., 2002; Hernandez et al., 2012). Hull given evidence that Marriott Hotels, the world's leading hospitality service provider, has managed employee turnover by its disability initiative that insisted the manager to think creatively to accommodate the PwDs (Hull, 2007). Various foodservice organizations have used the same approach to offset high employee turnover (Chomka, 2004). The induction of PwDs also increased diversity in the workforce. Diversity helps employers reduce employee turnover, but it also provides a competitive advantage. Hiring them also increases the cost-effectiveness of an organization as it reduces the cost of re-hiring and re-training the employees. PwDs are more reliable and punctual (Graffam et al., 2002; Hernandez et al., 2012). Past research findings reveal that PwDs can be more loyal, dedicated, and show gratitude towards the organization (Houtenville & Kalargyrou, 2015; Kalargyrou & Volis, 2014). The researchers in the past found that employer's hostile attitude and perceived barriers (Dickau & Hatfield, 2019; Kalargyrou & Volis, 2014) are the critical factors that limit the employers' intention to recruit PwDs.

The term 'barriers' represents the obstacles or hurdles or difficulties of a material and immaterial nature that individuals or organizations overcome to achieve the aims. Various barriers perceived by employers in recruiting persons with disability have been listed in past literature. Shaw and colleagues (2014) classified the barriers into different categories. While the workplace or context-based issues such as work culture and social interaction are termed as meso-level barriers, the individual related issues and attitude are called as micro-level barriers. Policies, societal and cultural belief that influences the recruitment intention on PwDs is called as macro-level barriers (Shaw et al., 2014). Lack of related work experience, difficulty in assessing the ability of applicants to do the job, legal issues in recruiting the PwDs, difficulty in finding an appropriate job, prone to more accidents and subsequent safety of other employees. The need for additional effort and time spend by the supervisors, lack of knowledge to handle the employee with disability, increased cost of insurance, issue of acceptance among co-workers and customers, and finding the source of employees with disability are other barriers frequently cited by the employers in different cultural context (Ju et al., 2013; Shaw et al., 2014; Vornholt et al., 2018; Zappella, 2015). Based on the review, a hypothesis has been proposed:

H1: Employers' perceived barriers have a negative impact on the employers' intention to recruit.

The negative attitude among employers is another most important deterrent in the employment of PwDs (Coffey et al., 2014; Papakonstantinou & Papadopoulos, 2020). The term attitude defined as *"a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favour or disfavour"* (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). Lack of knowledge, frequent exposure, past experience and belief in the applicant's ability has significant influence in individuals' negative attitude towards PwDs. Employers' attitude towards recruitment of PwDs has also not been very positive. Some employers, especially in leisure and hospitality having a negative belief that PwDs can destroy hotel aesthetics (Gröschl, 2005) and may create "aesthetic anxiety" among guests (Colella & Bruyère, 2011). From the literature, the following hypothesis has been proposed:

H2: Employer attitudes have a significant impact on employers' hiring intention.

2. Methodology

The data for the research work are collected from the star hotels located in Bengaluru, the capital city of Karnataka, a principal state of India. The city has been purposely selected for the study as it houses international and domestic hospitality brands with wider choice and range of price. The survey study units are selected based on the hotels listed as star category hotels in Yellow pages (<https://yellowpages.webindia123.com/local-dpy/Karnataka/Bangalore/Bangalore/560001/Hotels-548/1/>). The result of an online search for hotels in the Yellow pages yielded the details of 139-star category hotels. All the 139 hotels were contacted through mails by the authors, stating the study's scope and objective. Later after a week, the managers and professionals deputed

for recruitment of employees in the respective hotels were contacted through telephone. The data collection was conducted in three phases. The first phase of data collection from 27 hotels was completed in the month of February, 2020. The second phase of data collection was conducted from 19 hotels during November 2021 after the Covid19 restrictions of travel has been removed. During the month of January 2022, the data was collected from the remaining 41star hotels. The data collection was completed using a survey instrument by making a personal visit to the hotels either by well-trained field enumerators or the researchers themselves. After testing the validity and pilot study, the review team of Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), New Delhi approved the scale developed by the researchers for the study. Three academic experts and research experts have evaluated the external validity of the data collection instrument used in this research. The total response rate for the survey is 58.27 per cent.

While the first part of the scale consists of variables aimed to measure the employers’ attitude towards PwDs, the second part of the scale has statements to measure the employers’ perceived barrier in recruiting PwDs. The third part of the scale was designed to measure the employer’s intention to hire PwDs. The last part of the scale consists of variables intent to collect the details about the respondents’ demographic profile and the data related to star category, number of hotel rooms, the total number of employees, the number of PwDs, and so on. All the three constructs, such as employers’ attitude, perceived barrier and hiring intention, are measured using a five-point Likert scale where ‘1’ denotes strongly disagree and ‘5’ indicates strongly agree. The descriptive and inferential statistic is calculated to achieve the objective of the study using IBM SPSS Version 25.0.

3. Results and Discussion

Characteristics of study units and the respondents

In the sample, three fourth of employers were male and aged between 24 to 54. The average age of the respondents is about 34. Almost 70 per cent of the respondents are from three, and two-star hotels, and about 15 per cent of the respondents are from luxury hotels consisting of five and five-star deluxe hotels. The average number of rooms available in the study units is 144.5, ranging between 30 to 357. More than half of the respondents have currently recruited PwDs in their respective hotels. The socio-demographic and characteristics of the respondents is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Socio-demographic profile and characteristics of the respondents.

Characteristics	Frequency	Percent	Characteristics	Frequency	Percent
Gender			Current employment of PwDs		
Male	65	74.7	Yes	42	51.7
Female	22	25.3	No	45	48.3
Age			Type of Disability		
Mean	33.9		Physical Disability	16	24.8
Minimum	25		Sensory Disability	47	49.0
Maximum	54		Multiple Disability	24	26.2
Star Category			Number of Employees with disability (if employed)		
Five-star Deluxe	4	4.7	Average	1.75	
Five Star	9	10.3	Minimum	1	
Four Star	13	14.9	Maximum	8	
Three Star	30	34.5	Total	145	
Two Star	31	35.6	Level of Employment		
Type of Hotel			Entry Level	114	78.62
Independent	29	33.3	Supervisory	28	19.32
Chain	58	67.3	Managerial	3	2.06
Number of Rooms			Previous work Experience of Employing PwDs		
Average	144.4		Yes	41	47.1
Minimum	35		No	46	52.9
Maximum	357				
Total	12563				
Number of Employees					
Average	136.8				
Minimum	30				
Maximum	515				
Total	11909				

Source: Researcher’s (2023).

Perceived Barriers in Recruiting the Employees with Disability

In the past literature, it is highlighted that perceived barriers are an important factor that deters the employers' willingness to hire persons with a disability in the organisation. A list of sixteen barriers was identified through a review of the literature. The respondents are requested to record their agreement and disagreement on the statement related to various perceived barriers. The descriptive statistics on the perceived barrier in a hotel is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Employers perceived barrier in recruiting people with disability .

Sl.No	Perceived Barriers	Mean (Standard Deviation in Bracket)
1.	Lack of necessary knowledge	4.35 (0.75)
2.	Job and skill mismatch	4.24 (0.91)
3.	The additional cost of accommodating PwD	3.45 (0.80)
4.	Lack of related work experience	4.02 (0.86)
5.	The burden of safety-related issues	3.94 (0.95)
6.	Legal issues in handling employee with disability	3.26 (0.90)
7.	Concern on the safety of other employees	3.86 (0.96)
8.	Planning of work schedules	2.98 (1.06)
9.	Discomfort and unfamiliarity in managing PwD	2.40 (1.57)
10.	Co-worker's acceptability	3.86 (1.21)
11.	Guest Acceptability	4.71 (1.02)
12.	The extra effort by supervisors	3.58 (0.75)
13.	Finding the source of recruitment	4.68 (1.15)
14.	Evaluation of performance	2.96 (0.64)
15.	Cost of healthcare	2.34 (0.75)
16.	The additional cost of training	4.42 (1.26)

Source: Researcher's (2023).

The most significant perceived barrier among the hotel industry employers is guest acceptability, followed by a concern of lack of necessary knowledge to do the job. The other significant barriers that act as major determinant are job and skill mismatch, the additional cost of training, finding the source of recruitment and lack of work-related experience among PwDs.

Dimensions of Perceived Barriers

As the barriers have more variables, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was adapted to understand various principal dimensions within employers' perceived barriers (Field, 2013). The result of EFA yielded four different dimensions of barriers named as 'organizational barriers', 'individual barriers', 'external barriers' and 'cost-related barriers'. The total variance explained by all four dimensions is about 75.60. The Eigenvalue of dimension varies between 4.62 to 1.96. A barrier listed as 'Cost of healthcare' is removed from the analysis as it has lower factor loading, which is less than the cut off value of 0.7. The Cronbach alpha value between 0.702 and 0.934 indicates the good reliability aspect of individual factors extracted through factor analysis. The results of the factor analysis on employers' perceived barriers is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Result of EFA on employers perceived barrier.

List of Perceived Barriers	Factor Loading	Eigen Value	Cronbach Alpha	Variance Explained	Mean (SD)
Organisational barriers		4.627	0.934	28.920	4.65
The additional cost of accommodation	0.912				
Burden of safety-related issues	0.897				
Legal issues	0.859				
Safety of other employees	0.820				
Co-worker's acceptability	0.817				
Extra effort by supervisors	0.802				
Individual Barriers		3.273	0.846	20.453	4.22
Lack of related work experience	0.847				
Job and skill mismatch	0.846				
Lack of necessary knowledge	0.827				
External Barriers		2.229	0.785	13.932	3.52
Guest Acceptability	0.854				
Finding the source of recruitment	0.830				
The additional cost of training	0.807				

List of Perceived Barriers	Factor Loading	Eigen Value	Cronbach Alpha	Variance Explained	Mean (SD)
Job related barriers		1.968	0.702	12.302	2.97
Planning of work schedules	0.868				
Discomfort and unfamiliarity	0.786				
Evaluation of performance	0.701				

Source: Researcher's (2023).

Employers' attitude and hiring intention

The employers' attitude is measured using ten statements, and the hiring intention is measured using five statements. The descriptive statistics on employers' attitude towards persons with disability is presented in Table 4. The result of descriptive statistic present in Table 4 reveals that employers have both negative and positive attitude towards persons with disability in the context of employment. The most critical negative attitude towards persons with disability is that employers believe that persons with disability will make the guests uncomfortable. They also believe that a person with a disability has a higher level of absenteeism, poor time management, and very difficult to train them for the job. In terms of a positive attitude, employers believe that they are loyal to the organisation and more reliable.

Table 4. Employers' attitude towards persons with disability.

Sl.No	Statements related to attitude and Hiring Intention	Mean (Standard Deviation in bracket)
Attitude		
1.	PwDs are loyal to their organisation	3.98 (0.80)
2.	PwDs turn out to work of higher quality	3.51(0.96)
3.	PwDs are more reliable	3.72 (1.01)
4.	PwDs have a low level of absenteeism	2.98 (1.02)
5.	PwDs have poor time management*	3.48 (0.79)
6.	PwD are consistent in their performance	3.06 (0.92)
7.	PwDs are easy to train for jobs	2.22 (1.08)
8.	PwDs need more supervision*	3.09 (0.99)
9.	PwDs bring diversity	3.24 (0.92)
10.	PwDs make guests uncomfortable*	4.16 (0.87)
Hiring Intention		
11.	I Prefer to hire PwDs over others if I get a chance	3.54 (1.02)
12.	I Recommend others to recruit PwDs	3.63 (1.22)
13.	I am interested in hiring PwDs in my organisation	3.59 (0.98)
14.	High probability of hiring PwDs in my organisation	3.46 (0.76)
15.	Within the forthcoming 6months, I plan to hire PwDs	3.49 (0.98)

* Negatively worded statements

Source: Researcher's (2023).

Effect of employers' perceived barriers and attitude on hiring intention

Multiple regression was employed to analyse the effect of employers' perceive barrier and their intention to hire PwDs. The overall score is calculated for various dimensions of perceived barrier, attitude and hiring intentions before the regression analysis. The result of the multiple regression is presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Effect of Perceived Barriers and Employers' Attitudes on Hiring Intentions

Variables	B	Standard error	Beta	t value	P value
Constant	3.991	0.911		4.380	0.000**
Organisational barriers	-0.324	0.133	-0.389	-2.435	0.021*
Individual Barriers	-0.284	0.151	-0.298	-1.877	0.070
External Barriers	-0.374	0.170	-0.346	-2.199	0.036*
Job related barriers	0.066	0.203	0.027	1.805	0.081
Employers attitude	-0.525	0.146	-0.700	-3.597	0.001**

Dependent variable: Employers' Intention to hire persons with disabilities

Source: Researcher's (2023).

The multiple regression results reveal that perceived organisational barriers, external barriers, and employers' attitude have a significant negative impact on employers' hiring intention of PwDs. Employers' attitude alone able to explain the 52.5 per cent of change in the recruitment intention. In terms of perceived barriers, individual-related barriers and job-related barriers do not significantly affect hiring intention. The

adjusted R^2 value of 0.546 shows that the estimated model has good fit, and the independent variables in the model can explain a 54 per cent change in the employers' hiring intention. The significant value of F ratio 14.633 of ANOVA reflects that independent variables are good predictors of the dependent variable, 'employers hiring intention of PwDs. Based on the result of regression analysis, both hypothesis H_1 and H_2 are accepted.

Severe unemployment among the disabled on one side and enduring high employee turnover leads to a paradox. Resolving this paradox is vital for the sustainable benefit of hospitality and the wellbeing of PwDs. This research study aimed to identify the employers' attitude, perceived barriers, and intention to recruit PwDs as a first step towards solving this paradox. The study's primary finding reveals that employers' perceived concern in recruiting PwDs are 'PwDs' lack of knowledge and work experience', 'requiring additional training that increases the cost', and 'issues in finding the source of pool of PwDs'. Employers do believe that their customers will not prefer to get serviced by PwDs. The findings are in line with previous research findings (Colella & Bruyère, 2011; Dickau & Hatfield, 2019; Kalargyrou & Volis, 2014). While employers believe that PwDs would be loyal, and more reliable, they have a negative attitude that PwDs are poor in time management, tough to train, and have a high level of absenteeism. Another important negative attitude is that they believe that PwD will make the guest uncomfortable. The finding of this study is in coherence with the results of (Coffey et al., 2014; Hernandez et al., 2012; Strindlund et al., 2018). In the analysis of the perceived barrier and employer attitude, employers' attitude has a major negative effect on their intention than employers' perceived barriers. The result also reveals that employers' perceived barriers to individual-level abilities and knowledge have no significant negative impact on employers hiring intention. This finding of the study is contradicting with the earlier results of (Dickau & Hatfield, 2019; Hernandez et al., 2008). The study's outcome has multiple theoretical implications for disability-related research in hospitality and practical implication for managing employee turnover in the hotel industry. First, in terms of theoretical perspective, the present study able to identify the unique set of employers perceived barriers that influence the employers' intention to recruit the PwDs. The result of the study indicates that concern on guest acceptability and perceived human resource management issues are the critical factors that determine the recruitment intention of employers in hotels. The second theoretical contribution of the study is that it can distinguish that a PwD' ability was not a major factor, but the employers' attitude acts as a major barrier in recruiting PwD. The third theoretical contribution of the study is that it provides empirical evidence on the presence of "aesthetic anxiety" (Colella & Bruyère, 2011) in the current cultural context which has been recorded in the western context. The findings of the study reminds us that the disability of an individual arises due to society and not from physical or health disability.

The findings of this study also have implications for the PwDs who aim to build their career in the hospitality industry. The major implication for the PwD is that they must demonstrate they are knowledgeable, skilled, and capable of fulfilling the job requirements. They should enable the employers to understand that they are adequately skilled, low levels of absenteeism in the past, and are effective in managing their time and work while they are applying for a job in a hotel. In terms of implication for the employers, they must look into PwD as another pool of human resources, as they are no way inferior to other employees in terms of skills, competence, dependability, and loyalty. Employers must believe that hiring qualified workers with a disability will increase organisations' diversity. The major implication for the policymakers is to educate the employers to do away with their misconceptions and negative attitudes towards PwDs. Policymakers, government, or other existing bodies who govern the hospitality industry and the welfare of PwDs must develop policies to address the issues. The policymaker or the government may initiate two key strategies to address the issues. It may be by providing incentives or making it mandatory to employ PwD in hotels. Instead of statutory, the government may facilitate the recruitment of PwDs as a corporate social responsibility option for the corporates. The department or government body taking care of PwDs must provide skill development initiatives to empower PwDs. Existing programs on hotel management of the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), Government of India, may be customised to fulfill the requirement of PwDs considering the requirement of the industry. The body also must create awareness on employment opportunities among PwDs, simultaneously collaborating with hotel companies for jobs. The synergy derived by creating initiatives specific to hotels and PwDs helps all the stakeholders to address the paradox that is essential for the well-being and survival of hotels and the PwDs.

The empirical findings of this research should be interpreted in the light of the limitations of the current study. The cross-sectional research design of the study limits the study to explore the impact of environmental factors and the changes in independent and dependent variable over a period of time. Therefore, studies in the future can adapt longitudinal research to explore the causality between the independent and dependent variable. Another limitation of the study is that the data is collected from a single city, which limits the generalization of the findings. The low sample size is another concern. However, the sample size of more than 25 is adequate for any data analysis, including regression, as sample units are not clustered (Jenkins & Quintana-Ascencio, 2020). The moderating role of employers' organizational size and past experience in working with persons with a disability are not analyzed in the study. Therefore, we encourage research studies in the future on the role of various moderating and mediating variables that influence the relationship between independent and dependent variables.

4. Conclusion

The study highlights that employers' major concerns are customer acceptance and 'aesthetic anxiety,' which need to be studied further to address the employers' attitude that acts as a major barrier in the recruitment of persons with disabilities in hotels. Despite the limitations, this research contributes valuable insights on narrowing down the factors that hinder recruiting persons with disabilities in hotels. By addressing these barriers, recruiters can effectively reduce employee attrition, while persons with disabilities will proactively reduce unemployment.

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