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Employers' Attitudes Towards Individuals With a Physical Disability During the Hiring Process

by
Alix Jean-Joseph

An Applied Dissertation Submitted to the
Abraham S. Fischler College of Education
and School of Criminal Justice in Partial
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Nova Southeastern University
2020

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Abstract

Employers' Attitudes Towards Individuals With a Physical Disability During the Hiring Process. Alix Jean-Joseph, 2020: Applied Dissertation, Nova Southeastern University, Abraham S. Fischler College of Education and School of Criminal Justice. Keywords: disability, employment, attitude, and physically disabled

Decades of research in the field of disability and employment have recorded various negative and positive employer attitudes towards the disabled. In comparison to other disability categories, the physically disabled tend to evoke more negative stereotypes, attitudes, and misconceptions in employers. Physical appearance and physical deformities continue to be a barrier to full participation in employment. Thus, additional research is needed to understand and explore how these attitudes are impacting employment experiences. The purpose of this study was to examine employers' attitudes towards individuals with a physical disability during the hiring process.

An online survey was completed with the collaboration of a veteran diversity professional. Three research questions were asked about the perceptions, selection criteria, and first impressions that employers had about the hiring process. Employers and hiring managers were asked to take a brief 15-minute survey via an online business professional network (LinkedIn). The 28-question survey was posted to SurveyMonkey and descriptive statistics were used to determine the positive and negative aspects of employers' attitudes, behaviors, and opinions towards individuals with a physical disability during the hiring process. Responses from 47 participants yielded some interesting results which included: conflicting women's attitudes, the disabled tended to be accepted but rejected, first impressions mattered, costs for accommodations tended to override intentions, diversity training was not emphasized, and finally many attitudes from the same correspondents contradicted each other. Deeper qualitative analysis is recommended to better understand how and why these attitudes take place and under what conditions.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Statement of the Problem

The American with Disabilities Act (ADA) was designed to prohibit employment discrimination towards persons with a disability, and for employers to provide reasonable accommodations to their employees as well as the public (ADA, 1990). Local, state, and federal legislation based on the ADA has aimed to make life and work better for the disabled; in addition, it has helped them to take advantage of the same or similar opportunities for employment as the nondisabled. But critics of the ADA have argued that the courts, especially the Supreme Court's vague definition of disability, limited antidiscrimination laws that affect broader issues facing the disabled (Waterstone, 2005). One of the main broader issues of interest is that laws have not necessarily impacted employer attitudes or stereotypes. Research has stated that disability stereotypes have limited access to gainful employment for persons with a disability (McMahon et al., 2008).

There have been numerous studies conducted about attitudes towards employment of individuals with a disability, which has led to a variety of conclusions towards employers' attitudes. For example, Kaye, Jans, and Jones (2011) stated many employers believed that individuals with a disability were incapable of performing specific job functions. Keys and Balcazar's (2000) review of 37 studies concluded that employers continued to show support for disabled workers, but not so much for individuals with specific disabilities. Some studies suggested that employers tend to have a more favorable view of individuals with mental and psychological disabilities than for those with physical disabilities. In addition, Antonak and Livneh's (2000) research on attitudes

towards persons with disabilities concluded that without nontraditional methods of measurements using psychometrically sound instruments, it would not be possible to obtain more conclusive answers to important research questions about employer attitudes. While employers' enthusiasm has been high to hire persons with a disability, it seems that their actions have not reflected their intentions. In 2018, it was more likely for a person without a disability to be employed than an individual with a disability, according to a Bureau of Labor Statistics Economic News Release. A college graduate with a disability was more likely to accept a lower paying job or a part-time job due to the prevailing stereotypical attitudes of employers (Honey, Kariuki, Emerson, & Llewellyn, 2014).

The negative statistics reported by the Census Bureau were also corroborated by U.K. statistics reported on the top Financial Times Stock Exchange (FTSE)100 U.K. companies. The U.K. government study stated that employer attitudes were one of the major barriers for disabled people in the workplace (Higgenbottom, 2016). Negative attitudes toward the disabled and more specifically toward the physically disabled seem to exist worldwide (Tripney et al., 2015). Attitudes towards the disabled in general have been researched and show aggregate negative and positive effects (Bulman, 2017). However, the physically disabled continue to feel stigmatized by the non-disabled. "Three out of four U.K. employees report feeling uncomfortable when dealing with a disabled colleague because they are worried they will cause offense" (Higgenbottom, 2016, p. 4). Living with a physical disability is undoubtedly a difficult and stigmatizing trait to bear (Forader, 1969). The social stigmatization of the disabled has caused the non-disabled to have little knowledge or association with the disabled, and

in addition has led them to form certain impressions, perceptions, and attitudes towards the disabled.

Society is constantly evolving, which has led to some changing attitudes towards persons with a disability as well as the way attitudes are measured. Advancements in technology have given way to innovative techniques in measuring attitudes that are both sophisticated and technical (Antonak & Livneh, 2000). Research has suggested that unique methods of measuring attitudes, in addition to traditional methods, could be helpful, especially when dealing with a sensitive topic such as a physical disability. For instance, Antonak and Livneh (2000) found that the slightest unconscious or conscious mechanism can change a respondent's attitude, thus understanding employer attitudes towards the physically disabled should be further explored for new methods of measurements. Only one other study used internet methods such as social media to recruit physically disabled participants (Graham et al., 2018). While Graham et al. (2018) reported the experiences of different types of physically disabled groups, the aim of this study is to examine employers' attitudes during the hiring process towards individuals with a physical disability via a survey linked to LinkedIn, a professional networking site.

The topic. The researcher conducted research on employers' attitudes towards persons with a physical disability. A sample of volunteer employers was requested to participate from a professional and social network population that had familiarity and experience with hiring decisions in varied industries. The sample volunteers completed an online survey that measured their attitudes towards individuals with a physical disability.

The research problem. People with a disability continue to have limited access to gainful employment due to negative perceptions, which constrict individuals with a disability to take a lesser paying job or to remain unemployed for longer periods of time. The lack of social acceptance by non-disabled co-workers has also contributed to some disabled employees' decisions of not staying in an organization or a regular job for a long period of time. While employment is a goal for the disabled, the social stigmatization in the workplace can often be a hardship to bear (Vornholt, Uitdewilligen, & Nijhuis, 2013). Furthermore, when an employee with a disability gets a job, they continue to contend with a wage gap that still exists between the disabled and non-disabled employees.

According to the 2010 Tabulation of the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community (2013), a person without a disability was more likely to be employed compared to a person with a disability. Also, according to the tabulation, half the disabled workers (52%) earned less than $25,000 compared to non-disabled workers that earned more than $25,000, which translates to an earning gap between disabled and non-disabled workers. In addition, disabled workers earned 75% less than non-disabled workers, on average. Disabled males made up 6.3% of male civil jobs, and disabled females made up 5.7% of female civil jobs (U.S. Census Bureau's American Community, 2013). According to Day (as cited in U.S. Census Bureau's American Community, 2013), "Even within the largest occupations, employed workers with disabilities, on average, earned less than similarly employed workers without disabilities" (para. 1). Some graduates with a physical disability entering the job market fear that their disability might limit them from getting a job due to their impairments or health issues (Bulman, 2017). Physical disability issues are not simply related to attitude. They are correlated

with other factors associated with the employment spectrum, from misconceptions, diversity, social expectancies, accommodations, training, and promotion of the disabled in the employment market (Kim & Williams, 2012)

Background and justification. Society has a long history of isolating and marginalizing members of society that it views as different by creating social policies and economic barriers that impede them from participation in society (Schippers & Van-Heumen, 2014). In 2019, 7.57 million disabled workers entered the workforce, which equated to less than 20.5% of people with disabilities that were working or looking for work, compared to 68.3% of people without disabilities (Office of Disability Employment Policy, 2019). Employment is an important part of life. It provides a sense of purpose as well as economic stability. For a person with a disability, employment is a representation of accomplishment and inclusion into society, which promotes a higher quality of life (Graham et al., 2018). As the job market becomes more and more competitive with each passing year, individuals with a physical disability must contend with an employment market that views them as "damaged goods" incapable of performing job tasks in a cost-effective manner or even able to make complex decisions (Boyle, 1997, p. 259).

All disability categories have experienced the long-lasting sting of these impediments (Lindsay et al., 2019). Of these categories, the physically disabled have endured most of society's contempt due to the visible nature of their disability (Tripney et al., 2015). Thus, the problem of unequal access is even worse for the physically disabled who have even greater difficulty finding and keeping a job (Graham et al., 2018). Further research has shown individuals with a physical disability were unemployed for a

longer period, forcing them to take lower-paying menial jobs (Chan et al., 2010; Bonaccio et al., 2019). Despite years of new laws and decades of research demonstrating the what, how, when, and why to improve the employment experiences of the disabled, the employment statistics for individuals with a disability, overall, remain unequal and disproportionate compared to those of non-disabled individuals (Bonaccio et al., 2019).

Deficiencies in the evidence. There have been numerous studies conducted to rationalize the factors that affect disability employment in a positive or negative way across all disability categories, but little is known about why employment rates for individuals with a physical disability remain low compared to other disabilities (Saltychev, Mattie, & Starobina, 2018). Factors such as attitudes, negative stereotypes, and misconceptions, as well as physical appearance and physical deformities, continue to be barriers to employment, which can affect employment outcomes. Additional research is needed to further understand these factors and how they influence an employer's decisions during the hiring process.

Audience. Employers will benefit from this study because they will gain a better understanding of how their attitudes could influence their decision making during the hiring process. The physically disabled will benefit from this study because they will gain an employer's perspective regarding the hiring process. Knowing the perspective of employers and the physically disabled regarding the hiring process will enable a more informed conversation about what happens during such a crucial point in the employment journey.

Setting of the Study

      The study was conducted via LinkedIn through a partnership with a veteran diversity professional who provided an email list of fellow business employers and/or professionals. Potential participants were asked via email to take part in an online survey. The 28-question survey was posted to SurveyMonkey, and descriptive statistics were used to determine the positive and negative employer attitudes of the physically disabled during the hiring process.

Purpose of the Study

      The purpose of this quantitative research study was to examine employers' attitudes towards individuals with a physical disability during the hiring process. First impressions factor into decision making, especially when selecting someone to hire. People tend to make decisions based on past experiences that evoke underlying feelings or emotions that they did not know existed (Yoo & Pituc, 2013). Disability stereotypes, attitudes, and misconceptions *all combine to further exacerbate* the problems with limited access to gainful employment for persons with a disability. Disability stereotypes, attitudes, and misconceptions have limited access to gainful employment for persons with a disability. However, for the physically disabled, physical appearance and physical deformities continue to be an even greater challenge for gainful employment (Kaye, 2009).

      Challenges to employment have forced the disabled to remain unemployed for longer periods of time due to the ongoing perception that individuals with a disability are second-class citizens who are not capable of performing job duties in an economic manner (Kaye, 2009). Despite the amount of research on employer attitudes and the

varied findings, a lack of research still exists on milestones in the employment process. The purpose of this study was to begin to address that research gap by looking specifically at employer attitudes towards the disabled during the hiring process.

Definitions of Terms

American with Disability Act. 1990. A civil rights act designed to protect disabled individules (Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990).

ADA Amendment Act (2008). An amendment designed to reinforce the powers of the ADA (ADA Amendment Act, 2008).

Attitudes Towards Disabilities. A feeling or emotion towards a person with a disability (Antonak & Livneh, 2000).

Disability (American with Disabilities Act, 1990). A physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, or as being regarded as having such an impairment (Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990).

Death Awareness. A psychological conflict with one's self-preservation instincts while at the same time knowing that death is inevitable. This conflict causes terror and then manifests into individuals embracing cultural beliefs that are counter to biological to reality (Stein & Cropanzano, 2011).

Disability (U.S.). A physical or mental impairment that limits a person's ability, senses, and movement (Kaye, 2009).

Disability (Europe). A universal term that refers to a physical limitation, impairments, or participation restriction (World Health Organization, 2019).

Disability Discriminations. Unfavorable treatment of an employee or applicant because they have a disability (Schippers & van Heumen, 2014).

Disability Stereotype. A link between the disabled and an undesirable social characteristic (Boyle, 1997).

Employers. An individual that owns or works in an administrative capacity within an organization (Bonaccio et al., 2019).

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. A federal agency that investigates discrimination claims and enforces them (Disability World, 2019).

Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504). A federal act that helps secure an equal playing field for people with a disability (Rehabilitation Act, 1973).

Section 504. A civil rights law that prohibits disability discrimination in any program and activities, public or privet, that gets federal money (Rehabilitation Act, 1973).

Stigma. A mark or shame associated with a situation (Lusli et al., 2015).

Social Stigma. The discrimination or disapproval of a person's gender, race, or health issue that set them apart from other members of society (Lusli et al., 2015).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

This study utilized the theory of planned behavior (TPB) as a theoretical framework to examine employers' attitudes towards individuals with a physical disability during the hiring process. This framework was applied to understanding attitudes towards the physically disabled in order to better analyze the employer's individual intention to engage in behavior with the physically disabled during the hiring process. The main concepts of this framework included behavior, subjective norms, perceived control over the performance of the behavior, behavioral intentions, beliefs, and changes in values (Ajzen, 1991). The key component to this framework model was behavioral intent and whether a behavior would have an expected outcome based on subjectively weighing the benefits and risks of that behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1975; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1985). Often used to predict and explain health behaviors (especially bad habits such as smoking), TPB can also be applied to an employer's perceptions to help discover the origins of his or her motivation to make decisions on the hiring of the physically disabled.

TPB is a theory that explains the correlation between a person's beliefs, motivations, and behavior. The concept of TPB began as the theory of reasonable action (TRA, 1980), which was used to predict a person's intention to take part in a behavior at a certain time and place. The theory was expected to explain most behaviors when individuals had the ability to utilize self-control. Because intent is the key component to this model, exploring the employer's intent and his or her decision making was useful to further understand attitudes towards the physically disabled, However, critics of TRA

argued that attitude theories were not good indicators of human behavior, which led to its revision into the TPB.

The TPB was introduced by Icek Ajzen in 1985 to study the link between behavioral intentions, attitudes, and belief. The theory has been used successfully to explore a variety of settings and situations. In addition, it has been applied to both clinical and nonclinical problems, such as predicting risky behaviors, drinking, smoking, and substance abuse (Novo-Corti, 2010). The TPB is based on the idea that personal attitudes motivate a person's actions, so those actions become the focus. It is believed these attitudes come from three types of input: behavioral, affective, and cognitive information. Behavioral input pertains to a person's behavior that determines his or her action, affective input refers to a person's feelings, and cognitive information input relates to a person's beliefs and knowledge (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980).

According to Ajzen's (1991) revision of the TPB, human action is driven by three beliefs: the behavioral belief, the normative belief, and the control belief. Behavioral belief is knowledge of the consequences of an action. Normative belief is the knowledge of the normal expectations of others. Control belief is knowledge that there are factors that might hinder action to be carried out. Therefore, this study was structured on the concept of employers' hiring decisions within the hiring setting of the physically disabled. Within this framework, this research explored numerous aspects of attitudes, starting with an analysis of the veiled attitudes towards the perceptions of disabled employment. Then the research focused on the attitudes towards the physically disabled, dominant social norms, and individuals' perceived control. In this study, research examined issues within the framework of employment generally, but mainly within the

framework of disabled employment. The hypothesis of the study was that, compared to other disabled jobseekers in different disability categories, the physically disabled seemed to have the lowest employment opportunities due to negative attitudes and misperceptions associated with their disability.

Research by Graham et al. (2018) pointed out that the physically disabled continued to have low employment rates compared to other disabled jobseekers in different disability groups. Hernandez et al. (2012) utilized TPB to examine employers' hiring intentions towards the disabled and found that employers' attitude had an impact on their decision to hire disabled employees. Novo-Corti (2010) used TPB to investigate the inclusion of disabled students in social settings at a university. Results showed that attitudes towards disabled students were positive, therefore surveyed participants were highly motivated to include disabled students into social activities on campus. Wilson, Thomas, and Deuling (2016) used TPB to predict an organization's behavior towards individuals with chronic health issues that posed a potential risk to the organization's bottom line. The study suggested that when employers learned that candidates have chronically ill backgrounds and deal with "death awareness" (Stein & Cropanzano, 2011, p. 3); this knowledge could impact their decisions on how much risk the company was willing to take on. The TPB framework was very useful in highlighting the way employers managed dimensions of disability and how those dimensions evoked bias in candidate rating. The TPB is an effective theory to examine intention and predict behaviors, but it has its limitations, especially in environmental and economic influences (Ajzen, 1991). Despite its minimal limitations, TPB is an empirical theory that is grounded in sound research.

The purpose of this quantitative research study was to examine employers' attitudes towards individuals with a physical disability during the hiring process. Often people tend to correlate a person's ability to their physical appearance, especially if they already have predetermined attitudes towards a specific group (Zuloaga, 2019). Negative attitudes, stereotypes, and misconceptions have been long-term barriers to employment for the disabled. But for the physically disabled, these barriers have been somewhat more difficult to overcome. Most misperceptions have led employers to believe that individuals with a disability are incapable of performing specific job functions or would cost the organization too much money to accommodate, or that there is a potential that they might sue the organization for discrimination (Schur et al., 2017). However, individuals with a physical disability must contend with employers who oftentimes view their physical appearance or physical deformity as a disability that would be too burdensome to accommodate (Annett, 2018).

According to a Census Bureau report (2018), it is more likely for a person without a disability to be employed than an individual with a disability. In 2019, over 7 million individuals with a disability were looking for work. Young adults make up a large majority of the population that is looking for employment; 1 million of this population have severe disabilities, and 2 million of this population have physical limitations (Office of Disability Employment Policy, 2019). Most college graduates with a disability believe that their disability puts them at a disadvantage compared to most college graduates without a disability and feel that it will take them a long time to find a job after graduation (Jans et al., 2012).

Evidence shows that employers can be short-sighted when it comes to individuals with a disability (Annett, 2018; Zuloaga, 2019). The disabled are an untapped resource that is very eager and willing to work. Employment for the disabled gives them a feeling of accomplishment, social normalcy, and financial stability (Saltychev et al., 2018). History has shown that social inclusion and financial stability have been a long and difficult journey for the disabled especially when societal misconception and negative stereotypes continue to plague the disabled.

Employment of the Disabled: History and Law

Society has often shunned people that it perceives to be different or out of the ordinary. Some might find negative attitudes towards society's unwanted as normal behavior because that is what members of society have always done (Lippert-Rasmussen, 2013). It is inequitable to mistreat people based on physical differences, yet these types of negative attitudes continue to materialize in society across various special interest categories such as race, religion, sexual orientation, gender, etc. However, the physically disabled still have a high bar to cross to get equal access and opportunity to employment due to the visible and often unique differences they possess. Some might say that certain types of misperception are so ingrained into society that it is now part of society's genetic makeup (Lippert-Rasmussen, 2013; Nielsen, 2012; Moore, McDonald, & Bartlett, 2017). As such, the disabled in general have had a long history of being mistreated because of their differences.

The disabled were viewed as feeble-minded individuals that contributed nothing to society and were forced to undergo sterilization (Switzer, 2003). Some were placed in sideshows as entertainment, where they were ridiculed, mocked and humiliated. The

institutionalization and segregation of the disabled were considered a humane practice (Switzer, 2003). Parents with social and economic means were able to advocate for their child and spare them from an impending hardship of being institutionalized. Children whose parents were poor were not so lucky. If a child was born with a physical deformity it was considered a punishment from God (Klages, 1999). Often time those children were also sold to circus freakshows where they were mocked and ridiculed for entertainment. If they were not in circus freakshows, they were locked away in asylums for the rest of their lives (Life in The Asylum, 1855).

Society showed further disdain for the disabled when communities would not allow the physically disabled to reproduce and forced them to undergo sterilization. The eugenics movement in the United States was the primary cause of hysteria that led to laws restricting disabled people from having children and requiring forced sterilization (Güvercin & Arda, 2008). Proponents of the movement believed that there was a link between disability and immorality resulting from genetics, which further fueled the inhumane treatment of the disabled (Güvercin & Arda, 2008). Buck v. Bell (1927) helped to solidify eugenics in the United States. The Supreme Court case ruled that forced sterilization was not a violation of constitutional rights. Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes equated sterilization to getting a vaccination. The practice was finally stopped due to the changing sentiments towards the barbaric practice. In the late 1960s, people began to equate the practice with the genocide philosophy of Nazi Germany (Switzer, 2003). Over 60,000 disabled people were sterilized by the 1970s (Adams, 2007). The horrors of institutionalization and the mistreatment of the disabled were eloquently described in Clifford Beer's (1907) *A Mind that Found It Itself*.

The disabled population continued to be marginalized and mistreated until the end of World War I when disabled veterans started to come home in which they were expecting their government would provide them with rehabilitation services for their service (Nielsen, 2012). During the 1940s and 1950s, World War II veterans pushed the government to provide vocational and rehabilitation services by shining a light on the plight of the disabled (Nielsen, 2012). By 1950, the disabled still did not have access to public transportation, bathrooms, telephones, or stores (Adams, 2007). The limited access to office buildings made it very difficult for people with disabilities to find work.

In 1954, Brown v. Board of Education (1954) deemed that separate but equal was unconstitutional. The Supreme Court ruling was the catalyst for the civil rights movement, which sparked the disability rights movement (Nielsen, 2012). The Civil Rights Act (1964) was passed in 1964, which prohibited discrimination on the basis of race, religion, or ethnicity. Disability rights advocates mobilized parents and like-minded people to lobby for initiatives to tackle the physical and social barriers facing the disabled (Nielsen, 2012). Parents began to demand that their children be taken out of asylums and placed in schools where they could be part of society (Switzer, 2003). In 1973, the Rehabilitation Act was passed and for the first time, the civil rights of the disabled were protected by law (Nielsen, 2012).

The Rehabilitation Act (Section 504) finally made it possible for the disabled to have equal access to public buildings, public communications, transportation, and stores. Section 504 also established equal employment opportunities for the disabled in federal and government-funded jobs (Nielsen, 2012). In 1975, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (1975) was passed; later in 1990, it was renamed the

Individuals with Disability Education Act (IDEA). The act ensured that disabled children have equal access to public school education. The IDEA went a step further by mandating the inclusion of children in regular classrooms and including parents into the educational plans of their children (Switzer, 2003). In 1990, the Americans with Disability Act was signed. The act solidified for the disabled equal access, equal treatment to employment and public accommodations (Switzer, 2003). The Americans with Disability Act also required a business to provide reasonable accommodation to disabled employees.

Public services like transportation, telephones, and building entryways must be modified and accessible to the disabled. This legislation granted people with a disability access to every level of society (Switzer, 2003). There is no denying the signing of the ADA brought about sweeping changes for the disabled because it did, but the legislation has done little to change the deep-rooted stereotypes that continue to be associated with disability. The negative portrayal of people with disabilities in the media and entertainment does little to change the stereotype. In part, this perception did not disappear with the stroke of a pen (Switzer, 2003).

The laws that protect the disabled have come a long way from past ideals of forced sterilization and institutionalization. The legislation has helped protect the disabled and bolster inclusion; nevertheless, stigmas that are associated with disability continue to exist (Waterstone, 2005). In the past decade, more people with a disability have used the ADA to help resolve the injustice of disability discrimination in the workplace. Employers have also used the fear of the ADA as a reason not to hire the disabled (Chia-Li & Kleiner, 1999). Critics of the ADA feel that the law does not go far

enough to protect the disabled. As the laws progressed to protect the disabled so did laws that worked around the legislation to protect employers. The Supreme Court has limited the effects of the ADA due to its limiting definition of disability (Moore et al., 2017).

The ADA's governing guidelines are separated into five sections or titles, but Titles I, II, and, III are the most relevant protection for the disabled (ADA, 1990). Title I of the ADA deals with employment issues that fare somewhat better with the courts because it provides more protection for the disabled. Title II deals with public services and Title III deals with public accommodations. It is the conflicting issues in Title II and Title III that pertain to the accommodation mandate that the court has limited (Waterstone, 2005). It includes the narrowing viewpoint of the courts and the Supreme Court interpretation of disabled in cases regarding disability discrimination. The limitations brought forth by these anti-discrimination laws have changed disabled people's lives significantly, which consequently leaves them much less protected (Moore et al., 2017). The laws that were once considered the cornerstone for disability advocacy have been limited due to the courts and the Supreme Court's narrow interpretation of disability and precedent-setting decisions on disability cases (Waterstone, 2005). Both factors have helped to perpetuate the ongoing negative attitude towards the disabled.

The ADA signified a complete shift in legislation, which provided persons with a disability greater access to employment and protection. Yet 29 years after the ADA was signed, individuals with a disability continued to have limited access to employment and protections because employers and legislators have been able to find loopholes in the law that limit the ADA's protection of the disabled (Waterstone, 2005).   For instance, in Sutton v. United Airlines (1999), twin sisters Karen Sutton and Kimberly Hinton applied

to be airline pilots at United Airlines, Inc. The sisters had a great deal of experience as

pilots and were qualified for the job. The sisters then suffered from poor vision and

needed corrective glasses to see 20/20. Because of their poor eyesight without glasses,

United Airlines, Inc. denied their application. The sisters filed a suit under the ADA.

According to the ADA (1990) disability is defined as "a physical or mental impairment

that substantially limits one or more major life activities, or as being regarded as having

such an impairment." The Supreme Court upheld the Tenth Circuit's interpretation of

disability under the ADA, stating that the sisters were not considered disabled because

their disability could be corrected with glasses.

Likewise, in Toyota Motor Manufacturing, Kentucky, Inc. v Williams (2002),

Ella Williams—an automobile assembly line worker—claimed on the job injuries, such

as carpal tunnel syndrome, and other related impairments; she sued her employer under

the ADA for failing to accommodate her. The Supreme Court reversed the Court of

Appeals decision to grant Williams a summary judgment against her employer. The

Supreme Court stated that while Williams' disability did limit her from her job duties at

work, it did not limit her ability to function normally outside of work further arguing that

she does not fall under the criteria of "disabled" under the ADA (Toyota Motor

Manufacturing, Kentucky, Inc. v Williams, 2002).

Moreover, in Chevron U. S. A. Inc. v. Echazabal (2002), Mario Echazabal, a 56-

year-old maintenance worker, was fired because he had a pre-existing medical condition

called Hepatitis C. He filed suit under the ADA. Chevron U.S.A Inc. felt that the job

was a danger to Echazabal's health. In a 9-0 decision, the Supreme Court ruled that an

employer has the right not to hire a person with a disability if they feel the job is a danger

to that person. The Bush administration was in favor of the Court's decision (Chevron U. S. A. Inc. v. Echazabal, 2002). This case is important because it set a precedent that allows employers to evoke a risk-to-others defense when they want to screen out a disabled employee that poses a risk to themselves or others on the job, which further limits access to gainful employment for the disabled. Lawmakers have shown little initiative to update disability legislation that will close loopholes that favor employers instead of employees with a disability (Schur et al., 2017).

Unfortunately, legislation that has improved the physical accessibility into businesses for the disabled has not translated into tolerance for the disabled in the workplace (Disabled World, 2019). Disability advocates hoped that after George H.W. Bush signed the ADA into law that it would be the solution to disability discrimination, but sadly this was not the case. Countless disabled workers still experience discrimination in the workplace or have trouble finding a job (Disabled World, 2019). Research has shown that whether it is done consciously or subconsciously the disabled are treated differently in the workplace (Kaye et al., 2011). In 2019, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that there were 19.1% disabled workers employed in the United States, with 31% of them working in a low paying job on a temporary basis or working a part-time job with no benefits.

In 2008, Congress acknowledged that the ADA was lacking in employment protection and passed the ADA Amendments Act (ADA Amendments Act, 2008). The amendment was designed to expand the ADA's employment protection for the disabled and clarifying disability guidelines for employers, but unfortunately, the amendment's intended purpose was never achieved and its responsibility was relegated to the Equal

Employment Opportunity Commission's (EEOC) court. The EEOC says that it is

working on new ADA regulations, but they have been reluctant to set new regulations

(Disabled World, 2019). Data has shown that there has been a steady rise of EEOC

disability discrimination claims since 2016, which is not positive news for the disabled

community (Smith, 2017). Disabled people want a respectful and equal workplace, just

like everyone else.

     While federal laws like the ADA and the Rehabilitation Act have given

individuals with disability access as well as equality in the workplace, disability

employment opportunities are still relatively low compared to non-disabled (Bureau of

Labor Statistics, 2017). There are still a significant number of disabled individuals that

are unemployed or looking for work. In a Bureau of Labor Statistics report (2016),

80.5% of individuals with a disability have stated that they consider their disability as a

barrier to gainful employment. Individuals with a disability are painfully aware of

employers' misconceptions and misgivings towards their abilities, thus they understand

that looking for work is a long and difficult process (Wilson, Thomas, & Deuling, 2016).

A person with a disability would have to apply for three times more jobs than a non-

disabled person to get one interview (Hall & Parker, 2010). In an opinion survey taken

by 2,000 disabled job seekers in the United Kingdom (UK), 51% of them indicated that

out of the numerous applications they submitted for employment, they were only able to

retain one to two interviews (Bulman, 2017).

     There are approximately one million disabled job seekers in the UK that are eager

to find gainful employment but are currently unemployed. More than 37% of the

disabled population in the UK feel that employers will not hire them because of their

disability, while two in five do not feel optimistic about finding a job in the next six months (Bulman, 2017). Disability advocacy groups are concerned that disabled people are being shut out of the job market (Darcy, Taylor, & Green, 2016). Due to the uncertainty of finding gainful employment, some disabled jobseekers have even applied for jobs that they are overqualified for and pays them less because they feel that their disability makes them less attractive than non-disabled jobseekers (Hall & Parker, 2010).

Disability unemployment is not just a regional problem, but it is also a worldwide issue. In other underdeveloped countries, the disabled have not fared much better than those in the United States or the UK. The disabled must contend with barriers such as the country's economy, prejudices, physiological issues, education, agricultural barriers, and job availability (Relja, Popovic, & Rakic, 2018). Advocacy groups from the United Nations are concerned that disabled people's rights are not being upheld due to policies that keep them economically restrained (Relja et al., 2018). In 2015, Asian countries like Singapore and Malaysia had a 40% to 60% gap in unemployment between disabled and non-disabled workers. The unemployment rate in Singapore for disabled jobseekers was 53%, while in Malaysia the unemployment rate for disabled jobseekers was a staggering 95% (Ang, Ramayah, & Amin, 2015). Some speculate that cause for the high unemployment rate may be due to more complex issues within the government or the lack of education and skills. A lack of understanding and stereotypes is another reason why the disabled labor pool has been overlooked and underestimated, which manifests into unfounded misconceptions and negative attitudes towards the disabled (Relja et al., 2018). Regardless of these issues, the disabled in these regions have expressed a willingness to work if given an opportunity.

In society, individuals are taught to believe that hard work and determination are all they need to succeed, but negative stereotypes can turn determination to despair when work is not easily attained. A person with a disability struggles with that reality every day in the hopes of finding gainful employment. They are two to five times more likely to live in poverty compared to a person without a disability (Darcy et al., 2016). Most other minority groups have seen an uptake of employment participation since the 1980s. However, individuals with a disability have yet to see their pre-recession numbers rise, which showed disability workforce participation remained low before the 1980s and the 2015 recession (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017).

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2017), the participation rate for disabled workers fell from 39.9 % in 2009 to 35.5% in 2015. Only 35.5% of individuals with a disability between the ages of 18 and 64 had a job in 2015, compared to 76% of individuals without a disability. Throughout all educational levels in 2015, the unemployment rate was 10.7% higher among individuals with a disability, compared to 5.1% among individuals without a disability (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017). In 2018, the job market had not improved much for persons with a disability, which resulted in 31% of employees with a disability being employed part-time compared to 17% of employees without a disability (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019). The disabled are some of the poorest members of society due to lack of economic stability (Hall & Parker, 2010). With considerable consequences, the disabled are being neglected and relegated from gainful employment, which forces them to be a burden on the government for survival (Annett, 2018). If given a choice, the disabled would rather be employed than a

burden on the government, but without an opportunity that will allow them to be economically stable, they will remain in an endless loop of disparity (Annett, 2018).

While there have been significant improvements in education and accessibility for the disabled, negative attitudes, misperceptions, and stereotypes remain issues. Employers still perceive disabled jobseekers to be liabilities, not assets (Fraser et al., 2010). Disability advocates like Vocational Rehabilitation have tried to change some of the misgivings that employers have towards the disabled by off-setting some of the cost that is associated with accommodating a disabled employee (Fraser et al., 2010). However, the cost of accommodating a disabled jobseeker is still perceived negatively. An employer would rather screen out disabled employees than go through the aggravation of hiring and accommodating them.

Policy and Procedures: Employment of the Disabled

History tells a sad story about the treatment of the disabled, but the law has helped to open new opportunities for changes in policy and practice. Although the law has been used recently to support and defend employers in their approach to mitigating risks, changes are occurring in the ways policies and procedures are implemented. Financial obstacles are a part of the policy challenges to providing equitable access and opportunity to the disabled. While the ADA and the Rehabilitation Act have helped to level the playing field legally for the disabled, they have left some employers and organizations to ponder if the cost of accommodating a disabled employee is a sound decision (Hashim & Wok, 2014). There is a learning gap among employers because some automatically jump to the conclusion that they would have to spend a lot of money to bring their organization up to ADA regulation if they hired a person with a disability (Saltychev et al., 2018). Not

many businesses can afford or have the willingness to take on such a costly burden, especially small businesses. Nevertheless, some larger companies can afford to make the type of investment to hire a disabled employee, but rarely do (Wilson et al., 2016).

Since the provision of reasonable accommodation was established by the ADA, it has become a key component in hiring and retaining individuals with a disability. However, since the signing of this landmark disability legislation, there seems to be a hesitancy on the part of disabled employees and jobseekers to ask for reasonable accommodations, and more importantly, a struggle to get employers to provide them (Nevala, Pehkonen, Koskela, Ruusuvuori, & Anttila, 2015). The ADA (1990) defines reasonable accommodations as "assistance or changes to a position or workplace that will enable an employee to do his or her job despite having a disability" (para 4). Employers under the ADA must provide reasonable accommodation to disabled employees unless it causes undue hardship to their business (ADA, 1990). Reasonable accommodation becomes a necessity when there are gaps between the functions of the job and the limitations of the impairment (Anand & Sevak, 2017). The provision of accommodation was designed to lessen or eliminate environmental, social, and physical barriers that keep a disabled employee from performing his or her job duties (Anand & Sevak, 2017).

While the provision is helpful, it is also controversial, based upon the steady annual increases of complaints lodged with the EEOC (Smith, 2017). Accommodation can require employers to purchase equipment, supplies, and new technology; modify structures; change work schedules; and alter job duties to assure that a disabled employee can do his or her job. However, organizations are not obligated to report on accommodations provided, which adds to the complexity of the provision (ADA, 1990).

Because of this loophole, an organization can curtail the types of accommodation provided while staying within the framework of the provision (Disabled World, 2019).

In recent years the cost of accommodations has come down due to third-party agencies, like Vocational Rehabilitation, that help to offset the cost of accommodations. In a Job Accommodation Network (2018) report, it was revealed that of the 718 employers that were surveyed 423 (59%) stated that the accommodations needed by their employers cost them nothing. Another 261 (36%) of the employers experienced a one-time co-pay of $500 per person, and only 25 (3%) of the employers said the accommodation resulted in an ongoing annual cost of $500 (Job Accommodation Network, 2018). Nevertheless, for this provision to be fully adopted and flourish in an organization, there has to be a willingness on the part of employers and managers to implement it into their policies and procedures.

Changing an organization's policies and practices poses a difficult challenge, especially if an organization already has a set culture and value framework that does not support or understand the accommodation provision. In Nevala et al. (2015), education, training, and counseling are some of the barriers to facilitators and disabled employees. An organization's policy and practice regarding disability and diversity in the workplace are positively linked to reasonable accommodations (Anand & Sevak, 2017). At work, a disabled employee can be harassed by managers and co-workers, denied promotions, and denied accommodations. According to Disabled World (2019), non-inclusiveness and non-supportive employer cultures in the workplace can be an organization barrier to the accommodation provision, which is reflected in the 2019 EEOC data that shows that organizations have a gap in terms of understanding reasonable accommodations in the

workplace. According to Smith (2017), the non-compliant policies exhibited by an organization tend to make disabled employees afraid to ask for accommodations.

Maintaining the provision in an organization cannot be done without changing an organization's current policies and practices. To achieve this lofty goal, organizations need to start looking at the accommodation provision as a complex ongoing process and not a one-time process or training on diversity (Disabled World, 2019). Nevertheless, some organizations have put an honest effort into diversity training, but some tend to exclude or recognize disability awareness as a part of diversity inclusion and look at disability as a separate subset in the human resource cycle (Phillips et al., 2016). Most diversity programs tend to focus on the inclusion of other social groups that have a greater representation in the workplace (Lindsay et al., 2019). According to Blanck and Adya (2017), transformation of an organization's policy at the procedural level is tangible and noticeable within the construct of the organization's intentions, but it can also be perceived as shallow and does not go deep enough to reflect significant changes to the organization's mission, culture, and framework, which could lead to a reversal of the organization's policy.

Change without true intent or meaning can be perceived as hollow, therefore real change must come from the top and funnel down to the rest of the organization (Moore et al., 2017). Changing an organization's ideal of disabled employees is challenging, particularly when some of their misperceptions are derived from negative attitudes and stereotypes that tend to keep them from supporting the provision in the workplace (Graham et al., 2018). Acceptance and support of the provision tend to be challenging in larger organizations than smaller ones because of the organization's large diverse

employee population that have their own mindsets towards disability (Phillips et al., 2016). Research in Lindsay et al. (2019) suggests that large organizations that implement psychoeducational training on a regular and systematic level can tamp down an organization's hesitation to facilitating the provision of accommodations in the workplace.

An additional challenge to the accommodation provision is an organization's resources as it pertains to the employment sector and size. Larger companies have more internal resources and ADA related training capabilities and can afford to provide reasonable accommodation compared to smaller companies that have fewer internal resources, limited familiarity with the ADA, and limited finances to provide reasonable accommodations (Lindsay et al., 2019). Large companies that receive government funding are sometimes obligated to have a diverse employee population that includes employing the disabled, therefore they are mindful of the reasonable accommodation provision in the workplace (Moore et al., 2017). Other large companies that hire the disabled are sometimes offered government subsidies and tax incentives, while smaller companies are not acquainted with these types of incentives for hiring the disabled, which limits the ability to hire them (Moore et al., 2017).

Research in Bartram et al. (2018) noted that some employers that are not familiar with workplace accommodation support will rely on their internal resources to find a way to provide the provision, instead of reaching out to external vocational services to provide counseling, support, and training. Rehabilitation professionals should be more proactive in identifying businesses that are not aware of what accommodations certain disabled employees, particularly physical disabled employees, will need and how much it will cost

them. Nevala et al. (2015) noted that identifying businesses in advance can help them respond to the provision in a timely manner and avoid the risk of getting a discrimination complaint.

While the reasonable accommodation provision is an essential component to hire and retain an employee with a disability, it has come with positive and negative effects on the disabled employment experience (Disability World, 2019). The provision has helped to level the playing field for disabled employees while also being a controversial issue for organizations. Some organizations contend with the idea that accommodating a disabled employee is too costly and time-consuming, and therefore they do not have the willingness to revise their current policies and procedures to hire a disabled employee (Smith, 2017; Moore et al., 2017). For those organizations that do have a diverse employee population that includes disabled employees they treat disability awareness as a subset instead of adding it to their inclusionary employment process (Anand & Sevak, 2017).

When many employers continue to shut out the disabled (Census Bureau, 2018), disability awareness is much harder to include as a component of organizational strategy and education. The mere presence of disabled employees in the workplace can act like a tool that educates and shows others what disabled employees can do if given a chance (Bjelland et al., 2010). Graham et al. (2018) has shown that employers and managers may have a range of attitudes toward disabled employees, for instance believing that the disabled are not competent to make complex decisions and that they were hired as an act of charity instead of a sound business decision (Smith, 2017). Therefore, additional

research is needed to comprehend and explore how these attitudes are influencing the disabled employment cycle.

Research in Attitude

Attitude is defined as a belief, feeling, and action tendencies of individuals or groups towards ideas or people (Cherry, 2018). According to Telwatte et al. (2017), attitudes are formed through one's experiences with other people and sociocultural events. Some attitudes are latent feelings that are dormant unless awakened by a specific action, which in part causes a reaction (Vornholt et al., 2013). Attitudes are also complex psychological emotions that can be influenced by numerous factors, such as friends, family, social media, news outlets, and one's own belief system (Cherry, 2018). People are affected by the world around them, therefore direct and indirect influences can shape a person's attitudes towards the disabled (Vornholt et al., 2013). Andersson, Luthra, Hurtig, and Tideman (2015) highlight that employers' negative attitudes towards disabled jobseekers is a hindrance to gainful employment. According to The World Health Organization (2019), people with disabilities are threatened by negative attitudes, prejudices, and misperceptions, which is not unlike the same that is experienced by non-disabled minority groups.

However, there have been some growing shifts in attitudes and social inclusion of the disabled due to several legislative measures aimed to help them with employment (Graham et al., 2018). Unfortunately, several social barriers that are associated with negative disability characteristics continue to be a barricade to employment (Andersson et al., 2015). In addition, some organizations still have a gap between policy and practice regarding the understanding of the accommodation provision (Brennan, 2013). Research

in Telwatte et al. (2017) shows that the decision to provide or deny the accommodation provision is influenced by a variety of legal and non-legal factors. As a result, there has been an array of research conducted on attitudes towards the disabled that has shown varied positive and negative outcomes. Palad et al. (2016) argue that due to the complexity of attitudes towards the disabled, researchers need innovative methods and psychometrically sound instruments that are reliable and valid. Without innovative instruments, it will be difficult for researchers to get conclusive answers to vital research questions regarding the link between attitude and the acceptance of disabled jobseekers into the employment market (Telwatte et al., 2017). Less is known about how these influences definitively affect an employer's decision and which measurement can definitively analyze influential factors (Palad et al., 2016). Attitudes towards the disabled are a multifaceted sociological issue, that by nature is sensitive and can be easily swayed by the slightest direct or indirect influence (Copeland, Chan, Bezyak, & Fraser, 2010).

There are two challenges when it comes to measuring a person's attitude. The first issue is that a person's attitude towards an object, person, or issue cannot be observed directly, but is dependent on a person's observed behavior for instance when a person answers a questionnaire (Cherry, 2018). The second issue is that there is no direct measure that is linked with observed behavior (Cherry, 2018). The most straightforward way of finding out someone's attitude towards the disabled would be to ask them, but due to the sensitive nature of attitudes towards the disabled, people may not answer the question truthfully. Attitudes have a relationship with a person's self-image and social acceptance in society (Copeland et al., 2010). Therefore, certain responses may be answered in a way that feels socially acceptable. Given this issue, researchers have

developed various methods to measure attitudes towards the disabled, but all of them have limitations. Especially the measures that affect different mechanisms of attitude, such as cognitive, affective and behavioral, which tend to not necessarily coincide with each other (Hashim & Wok, 2014).

Direct methods are the most known and widely used measurements used to determine attitudes towards the disabled (Copeland et al., 2010). Direct methods are typically questionnaires, surveys, and interviews. Chen et al. (2016) investigated the perception of Hispanic small business owners' attitudes towards hiring disabled employees and their feelings towards the ADA. The researchers utilized two instruments to measure participant's attitudes: a 38-item Employer Attitudes Questionnaire and a 33-item Small Business Owners Survey. The researchers distributed survey packets to two selected business areas in southern Texas. Two hundred and seventeen participants participated in the study, which concluded that there was a range of attitudes that influence the hiring decisions of employers and that they have a mixed understanding of the ADA accommodation provision.

Fraser et al. (2010) held a series of three semi-structured focus groups with key hiring decision makers in small and mid-sized organizations, such as Human Resources Directors, Chief Operating Officers, or Chief Executive Officers. The large survey study examined the factors affecting employers' intentions to hire and hiring of the disabled. Fraser et al. (2010) showed that employers in small and mid-sized organizations continue to have varying attitudes towards disabled employees that keep them from hiring them, as well as an unclear understanding of the accommodation provision. Araten-Bergman (2016) also interviewed human resource managers to examine their attitudes, intentions,

and the actual hiring of disabled jobseekers. Araten-Bergman (2016) used a questionnaire containing the theory of planned behavior measures, organizational characteristics, and indicators of diversity climate. A random sample of 250 managers was interviewed at two points during the study. After six months, 140 of the managers were selected to report on their hiring behavior. Results indicated that the theory of planned behavior successfully predicted managers intentions to hire disabled jobseekers, but failed to predict actual hiring.

Chan et al. (2010) also used a survey to measure hiring managers' attitudes towards disabled jobseekers, but instead of exploring all disability categories, it focused on managers' attitudes towards jobseekers with a physical disability.   Chan et al. (2010) surveyed 132 human resource managers and line managers. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and multiple regression and correlation analysis. A hierarchical regression was conducted with results indicating that hiring managers were not overly enthusiastic about hiring jobseekers with physical disabilities as reliable and productive employees. In addition, they had a limited understanding of the ADA accommodation provision.

Sundar et al. (2018) also used a survey to measure its participants' attitudes but instead of using traditional direct methods it used digital dial.   Researchers used a dual-frame, random digit dial to survey 3,013 working-age adults with a disability. They were asked about their disability, employment status, job search activities, and workplace experiences. Results from Sundar et al. (2018) argued that contemporary disability and employment research is overlooking the barriers that disabled jobseekers must overcome to find employment. The survey results showed that 42% of the participants surveyed

were working, 68.4% were looking for work, 45.3% were satisfied with their jobs, 86.6% felt accepted in their workplace, and 47.8% of the respondent used workplace accommodations.

Attitudes can result from experience or upbringing and can have a powerful influence on behavior (Cherry, 2018). Sometimes people are not even aware of how their positive or negative attitude can affect or influence the people around them. Research in Nelissen et al. (2016) argued that negative stereotypes towards the disabled are a strong influential factor that prevents managers from hiring the disabled. Attitudes towards the disabled is a delicate issue that can evoke a range of diverse emotions (Vornholt et al., 2013). Thus, due to its complex nature, researchers are exploring new ways to measure attitudes (Palad et al., 2016). While, a wide-range of research has shown wavering attitudes towards the disabled overall as delineated above, the physically disabled seem to evoke more negative attitudes and misperceptions in employers than attitudes towards other disabled groups (Chan et al., 2010). Therefore, additional research is needed to understand the variables that influence employers' attitudes towards the physically disabled, especially research that explores these attitudes during the hiring process at the front end of the employment cycle.

Attitudes Towards the Physically Disabled

The physically disabled face a unique challenge to employment compared to others in different disability categories. While the disabled overall face barriers to employment, the challenges endured by the physically disabled tend to have a sociological link to physical appearance (Fevre, Robinson, Lewis, & Jones, 2013). Society tends to use the word disability as a catchall term for disabilities that are visible

and invisible. In addition, society often views them as having limited mobility, senses, or the inability to physically take part in certain activities (Villanueva-Flores, Valle, & Bornay-Barrachina, 2017). The physically disabled still face pervasive stigmas and perceptions of being different and inferior to able-bodied individuals. These negative perception and stigmas tend to invade certain sociological cultural beliefs of what is beautiful or visually appealing (Villanueva-Flores, Valle-Cabrera, & Ramón-Jerónimo, 2015).

According to the World Health Organization (2011) report, some cultures view the physically disabled as being sickly, feeble, and fragile individuals. These negative perceptions of the physically impaired are incorrect, harmful and tend to influence the notion that they are not attractive or beautiful (Fevre et al., 2013). Therefore, people may start to see the physical disability instead of the person and their employment potential. The unique social challenge that the physically disabled face has a significant negative impact on their employment opportunities (Coffey, Coufopoulos, & Kinghorn, 2014) because they still show higher rates of unemployment in comparison to other disability categories than the non-disabled (Graham et al., 2018; Mik-Meyer, 2016; Tripney et al., 2015).

Disabled advocates are concerned that misperceptions and social stigmas towards the physically disabled continue to be a hindrance to employment (Disability World, 2019). Employers' concerns such as job performance and cost-effectiveness have long been contentious talking points for disabled advocates, but even more so when advocating for individuals with a physical disability. Rarely do employers or organizations admit the real reason why they do not hire disabled employees because

doing so will tarnish their public image or it could be perceived as discrimination (Fevre et al., 2013). Some organizations and employers often construct an elaborate excuse not to hire a person with a physical disability (Job Accommodation Network, 2019). Instead, looking behind all the elaborate excuses given not to hire the disabled, some studies suggest the real reasons are misperception and fear (Villanueva-Flores et al., 2017; McDonnall & Antonelli, 2018). Some organizations and employers have highlighted the potential high cost of accommodating a person with a physical disability as a reason not to hire them (Job Accommodation Network, 2019).

According to research from Bal et al. (2017), misperceptions are a major challenge for young adults with a physical disability to find and maintain employment. The research suggests that vocational programs designed to educate and clarify misperceptions, train facilitators, and provide support to employers help to remove employment barriers for the young physically disabled. Tripney et al. (2015) also suggest that since social challenges, specifically economic disparity, are additional barriers to employment, programs that improve and advocate the employment market for the physically disabled would better serve the needs of the physically and economically challenged (Bal et al., 2017).

Some employers believe the physically disabled would add to the burden of a loss in productivity and that they need additional supervision (Bonaccio et al., 2019). Employers are concerned about what effect a physically disabled person could have on the workplace. This is an understandable concern for the employer to have, but also a difficult one to resolve compared to other employee-related issues. The employers' concerns are presented in two ways. First, employers are concerned that they might have

to pay close attention to a physically disabled employee's work so they do not make mistakes (Graham et al., 2018). Research in McDonnall and Antonelli (2018) argued that due to a physically disabled employee's physical limitation micromanagement of that employee would cause a supervisor to fall behind on their own work.

The second concern for employers is the productivity of physically disabled employees. Coffey et al. (2014) cited that employers lacked the knowledge of what women with visual impairments can accomplish therefore they did not feel comfortable hiring them. Oftentimes employers are afraid that a disabled employee will have a harder time keeping up with the other employees (Bonaccio et al., 2019) leading them to evaluate if it is cost effective to have two different productivity standards (Hashim & Wok, 2014): one for the disabled and one for the non-disabled. In Owen's (2012) *Forbes*'s article on workplace benefits for hiring the disabled, he referred to findings in DePaul University's (2007) report, "Exploring the Bottom Line: A Study of the Costs and Benefits of Workers with Disabilities," which asserts that employers believed disabled employees were hardworking, loyal, and reliable.

Employers are also concerned that the physically disabled may not have the qualifications to do the job (Wilson et al., 2016). Most companies do not take unnecessary risks and tend to focus on the bottom line and the profitability of the organization (Owen, 2012). The participants in the Ali, Schur, and Blanck (2011) research showed that the population did not have a reluctance to work and were adequately qualified; instead research in Ameri et al. (2018) suggests that it is discrimination on the part of employers as a reason for reduced employment and lower wages and not the reluctance of physically disabled jobseekers.

Similarly, Kalargyrou (2014) found that the disabled are not only qualified, productive and eager to work, they are also better employees than the non-disabled (Owen, 2012; Villanueva-Flores et al., 2015). The negative stereotypes and misperceptions of employers play a significant role in low employment rates for the physically disabled (Ali et al., 2011). Given the number of barriers and misperceptions summarized above, the physically disabled candidate must be able to withstand a certain amount of scrutiny if they want to survive in today's job market (Hashim & Wok, 2014).

Lastly, some employers perceive that workers with a physical disability will have more absences due to chronic health conditions (Villanueva-Flores et al., 2017). According to Strindlund, Abrandt-Dahlgren, and Ståhl (2018), workers with physical disabilities had fewer absences than non-disabled co-workers. As a matter of fact, the physically disabled participants in the Minis et al. (2014) research showed that they were reluctant to ask for accommodations because it might make their work conditions worse. Therefore, these studies contradict the misperception that they would take time off work. If a person with a disability is lucky enough to find a job, they will have to learn to navigate how and when to ask for accommodations (Mik-Meyer, 2016). Physically disabled employees are aware that their disability may pose challenges to the organization's cultural behavior and yet they are still willing to overlook their own health accommodation needs to maintain employment (Leiulfsrud, Ruoranen, Ostermann, & Reinhardt, 2016). The physically disabled are over-represented as the poorest among society and the least represented in the labor market (Tripney et al., 2015). Work for a physically disabled person is important because it gives them purpose, reduces the feeling of isolation, and gives the added benefit of social interaction (Vornholt et al., 2013).

Despite the numerous attempts vocational rehabilitation programs have made to advocate and increase the employment opportunities of people with a physical disability, they still do not experience the same access to employment as other employees in other disability categories (Bonaccio et al., 2019). Research in Strindlund et al. (2018) has also shown that employers tend to harbor earnest ill-founded perceptions of individuals with a physical disability and their abilities; these negative attitudes are a result of interrelated concerns that can negatively affect the entire employment experience (Bonaccio et al., 2019).

The perceived value that is placed on physical appearance has a philosophical effect on employment opportunities for the physically disabled (Coffey et al., 2014). Research in Fevre et al. (2013) has helped to identify a sociological link between physical appearance and employment. Due to the sociological misperception of the term disability, people tend to think of the physically disabled as weak, fragile, and feeble-minded (World Health Organization, 2011). The social stigma associated with physical disabilities has led some employers to believe misleading myths regarding the employment of physically disabled employees (Bal et al., 2017). Some employers believe that physically disabled employees would cost too much to accommodate, are unqualified, would have more absences, and they would be stuck with an inefficient worker if the job did not work out. Nevertheless, these myths are harmful and incorrect, as well as a challenging issue for vocation representatives to demystify. Especially when the physically disabled are often not portrayed positively in the media (McDonnall & Antonelli, 2018). Additional research is needed to further understand how influential

factors associated with physical appearance and negative perceptions towards the physically disabled affect employers' decisions during the hiring cycle.

Research Questions

1. What are employers' perceptions of individuals with a physical disability?

2. What percentage of employers would select a non-disabled person over a person with a physical disability, even if both have equal qualifications?

3. Do employers base their hiring decision on first impressions?

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this quantitative research study was to examine employers'
attitudes towards individuals with a physical disability during the hiring process using a
Likert scale survey online. Zuloaga (2019) shows that first impressions factor into
decision making, especially when selecting someone for hire. Past empirical research
and review of literature have shown that disability stereotypes, misperception, and
negative attitudes are just some of the influential factors that have limited the access to
gainful employment for persons with a disability (Graham et al., 2018; Schur et al.,
2017). Some employers often believe misguided ideologies about the disabled: that they
are incapable of performing specific job functions, that it would cost the organization too
much money to accommodate them, and that there is a potential that they might sue the
organization for disability discrimination (Moore et al., 2017). For the physically
disabled, general employment can be difficult to achieve due to the correlation of
negative misperceptions associated with their disability and physical appearance
(McDonnall & Antonelli, 2018; Villanueva-Flores et al., 2017).

In a Census Bureau report (2018), it is more likely for a person without a
disability to be employed than an individual with a disability. In 2019 there were over 7
million individuals with a disability looking for work. Some disabled jobseekers looking
for work often feel that their disability leaves them at a disadvantage (Darcy et al., 2016).
Due to the uncertainty of finding gainful employment, some disabled jobseekers opted to
take part-time jobs that they are overqualified for or become dependents of the
government. However, despite some employers' changing attitudes, federal protections
from disabled legislation and disabled advocacy groups (Bartram et al., 2018; Leiulfsrud

et al., 2016; Relja et al., 2018), there are still a limited number of employers willing to employ an individual with a disability and even fewer employers willing to hire an individual with a physical disability (Bonaccio et al., 2019; Strindlund et al., 2018).

Participants

The target population consists of a mixture of male and female employers, specifically employers belonging to LinkedIn, a professional online network that was used as the context to gather a working purpose sample for this study. These professional employers recommend others that are like-minded and fit the eligibility criteria to participate. The target population of employers was comprised of individuals that are employers from various fields such as accounting, banking, marketing, sales, etc. The researcher conducted a non-probability, snowball sampling (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019) because the participants were likely to be equated with people that share similar characteristics that will encourage others to participate in the study (FCDNCS, 2012). A snowball sampling is the most effective since the researcher has permission to post a SurveyMonkey link within an introductory letter to the LinkedIn platform population. The researcher cannot guarantee that the sample derived will be representative of the whole target U.S. employer population but will serve the purposes of describing perceptions and exploring attitudes within the sample derived. The final sample included volunteer participants that took the survey by opening the Survey Monkey link.

The target employer sample who was sent the SurveyMonkey link for the study was assumed to interact with a large diverse U.S. employee population who work daily in a managerial capacity. The final sample that took the survey may have exposure or past experiences with hiring or employing the physically disabled. In the best case scenario,

most of the individuals who were finalized in the research sample of survey respondents would be employers who have, at some point in their careers, conducted interviews or have been part of an interviewing committee to find and hire candidates for an employment position in their respective organizations.

Instrument

Given the purpose of this study was to determine employers' attitudes towards individuals with a physical disability during the hiring process, the researcher created an instrument by ascertaining the objective of the research questions with assistance from the researcher's summative and formative committees. The formative committee consisted of a professor with vast knowledge of disability rights and a colleague with background in Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) complaints and diversity. The summative committee consisted of the researcher's Dissertation Chair, with a Juris Doctorate in law and two professors with experience in the development and implementation of survey instruments.

The researcher took the length and sentence structure into consideration when developing the survey questions. The researcher drafted a full survey to submit to the formative committee to minimize time. The formative committee was given a week to review the questions. The feedback was constructive as well as informative and was used to improve the original structure. After several iterations of the survey, it was then forwarded to the summative committee for review. The summative committee asked the researcher to go back and look at the survey objectives and make sure that the research questions matched the survey objectives. They also suggested that the demographic questions needed to reflect answers that a participant would select. The researcher made

the necessary corrections to both the demographic questions and research questions to make sure they matched the survey objectives and that they were aligned with the research questions.

After making the suggested corrections by the summative committee, the researcher forwarded the survey to the formative committee. The formative committee made several recommendations, including using appropriate response options and ensuring the questions matched the objectives. The researcher made the necessary corrections suggested by the formative committee. Reviewing the objectives and the survey questions again, the researcher made further improvements and corrections. The formative committee then accepted those changes and agreed the survey was improved sufficiently with significant corrections for its pilot testing. The researcher corrected errors, rephrased the response for questions 17 - 22, and resubmitted the survey instrument to the summative committee.

To maximize time and efficiency, the researcher recruited five individuals with similar employer characteristics for the pilot testing. All five pilot survey reviewers had non-profit, educational, and business hiring experience. These survey participants and reviewers worked at the following types of entities: an accounting firm, a federally funded service provider, university human resources and two from county government human resources. The diversity of pilot survey reviewers and participants lent a useful blend of variety to the types of employment contexts in which the physically disabled could be found during the actual survey provision. The survey was administered in person. After completing the survey, reviewers and participants were asked the following questions:

1. Were the instructions clear and easy to understand?

2. Were the questions confusing or hard to understand?

3. Were the directions on how to respond clearly stated and easy to understand?

4. Were the response choices mutually exclusive or thorough?

5. Did you have difficulties answering any of the questions?

6. Were the questions presented in a logical order?

7. How long did it take you to complete the survey?

8. Do you feel like your privacy was respected and protected?

9. Do you have any suggestions regarding the addition or deletion of a question, clarification of instruction, or improvements of the format?

Feedback from the participants was mostly positive. The participants understood the questions and were able to answer them. The Likert scale options were clear, and the choices were thorough. Three out of the five participants had some concerns regarding questions 17 – 22. They felt that the instructions regarding the two candidates were too general. They suggested that the instructions should give a more precise description of their qualifications and the job that they are applying for, so questions 17- 22 would make more sense. They also suggested that the researcher might want to eliminate question 25 for brevity. They had no issue with the logical order of the questions nor their privacy. All five participants indicated that it took them about 15 to 20 minutes to complete the survey. The researcher highlighted the instructions for questions 17 – 22, added the qualifications of the candidates for employment, and gave a better description of the job they are applying for. The researcher also eliminated question 25. After applying the changes from the pilot test, the researcher then submitted the revised survey to the

formative and summative committees for approval. After a thorough review by the
formative and summative committee, the researcher's chair approved the revised survey.

The quantitative measure was comprised of eight close-ended items and 24 Likert
scale items. The measure consists of three types of Likert scale questions, utilizing a 3-
point scale, 4-point scale, and 5-point scale. The first Likert scale ranges from *yes* to *not
sure*. The second Likert scale is correlated with the items. The survey was completed in
15 minutes.

Procedures

Design. This study was a quantitative, non-experimental, cross-sectional survey
design administered to one group of people (employers with hiring experience) during a
one time period implementation. The survey illustrated current employer attitudes
towards a person with a physical disability during the hiring process. The researcher
circulated an online survey via a social media platform regarding employers' attitudes,
behaviors and opinions towards individuals with a physical disability during the hiring
process (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

Data collection procedures. After IRB approval, the researcher created a post on
LinkedIn. The post included a written statement sharing a brief description of the
research purpose and scope. The participants were then asked to fill out a brief 15-
minute online survey. The statement assured employers that all procedures of anonymity
were followed because no names or locations were requested, only general business field
in which they are employed.

In addition, to increase survey participation, the researcher included a brief
statement appealing to employers regarding the social and economic inclusion of the

disabled. When the participants moved past the written statement and proceeded to take the online survey, the participation letter was included on the first page of the survey for them to review in full prior to continuing. After the statement was read online, the employer was asked to click on the link to fill out a SurveyMonkey online survey. The survey took less than 15-minutes to complete.

Data analysis plan. The researcher utilized letters and numbers to code each category of the survey before creating the frequency and percentage tables. The data was automatically sorted by SurveyMonkey. To clean the data, the researcher recoded and computed new variables to address any issues that came up during data accuracy validation.

The purpose of the quantitative research study was to determine employers' perceptions and attitudes of individuals with a physical disability during the hiring process. Research Question 1: What are employers' perceptions towards individuals with a disability? The researcher conducted a frequency analyis on each of the 8 Likert-scale response options for each survey item that was relevant to this research question. The researcher reported the frequency (i.e., number of respondents checking a response option) and the percentage equivalent to the frequency. This process will be repeated for each survey item relevant to the research question on hiring decisions. A summary of all responses will be used to respond to the research question.

Research Question 2: What percentage of employers would select a non-disabled person over a person with a disability, even if both have equal qualifications?   The researcher conducted a frequency analyis on each of the five Likert-scale response options for each survey item that was relevant to this research question. The researcher

reported the frequency (i.e., number of respondents checking a response option) and the percentage equivalent to the frequency. This process will be repeated for each survey item relevant to the research question on hiring decisions. A summary of all responses will be used to respond to the research question.

Research Question 3: Do employers base their hiring decisions on first impressions? The data analysis for the ordinal descriptive question was descriptive statistics. The researcher conducted a frequency analyis on each of the five Likert-scale response options for each survey item that was relevant to this research question. The researcher reported the frequency (i.e., number of respondents checking a response option) and the percentage equivalent to the frequency. This process will be repeated for each survey item relevant to the research question on hiring decisions. A summary of all responses will be used to respond to the research question.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this quantitative research study was to examine employers'

attitudes towards individuals with a physical disability during the hiring process. Past

observational research and review of literature have shown that disability stereotypes,

misperception, and negative attitudes are just some of the persuasive factors that have

limited the access to gainful employment for the disabled (Schur et al., 2017; Graham et

al., 2018). Zuloaga (2019) concluded that first impressions factor into decision making,

especially when picking someone for employment.   For the physically disabled, general

employment can be difficult to achieve due to the association of negative misperceptions

associated with their disability and physical appearance (McDonnall & Antonelli, 2018;

Villanueva-Flores et al., 2017).

This study is a quantitative, non-experimental, cross-sectional survey design

administered to one group of people (employers with hiring experience) during one time

period survey implementation. The survey will illustrate current employer attitudes

towards a person with a physical disability during the hiring process. The researcher

circulated an online survey via a social media platform regarding employers' attitudes,

behaviors and opinions towards individuals with a physical disability during the hiring

process (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

Demographic Characteristics

The Employment Attitude Survey was administered via a professional online

network platform (LinkedIn). Participants were provided a link through their email to

SurveyMonkey and asked to take a survey. The online survey was active for three weeks

to ascertain a large sample size. The survey sample consisted of 47 participants: 33

females, and 12 males. Only 2 out of the 47 respondents declined to answer questions 1

to 19. The sample age range among respondents consisted mostly of Generation Y 24 to

34 (31.1%), Xennials 34 to 44 (24.4%), Generation X 45 to 54 (17.8%) and Baby-

boomers 55 to 64 (22.25%). The race/ethnicity of the sample group was comprised of

white (42.2%), Black/African American (40.0%), and only a few identified as Hispanic

(8.9%) or Other (8.9%). The sample group of employers was derived from a wide range

of industries with 57.8% identifying themselves as working in non-traditional industries

(as illustrated in the Table).

Table

Place of Employment/Business

Industry	Male	Female
A. Financial Services	0	1
B. Real Estate	0	2
C. Hospitality	0	1
D. Communications and/or Broadcast	0	1
E. Agribusiness	1	1
F. Industrial/Manufacturing	0	1
G. Information Technology	2	0
H. Consulting Services	2	4
I. Construction	1	0
J. Health Care	0	1
K. Retail	0	1
L. Telecommunications	0	0
M. Other	6	20

Data Analysis

Presented below are the following data results from the Employee Attitudes

Survey. The results of each of the survey items are in sequence. The items are presented

in the order that matches back to the original three research questions.

Research Question 1. What are employers' perceptions of individuals with a physical disability? First, survey questions 6, 7, and 8 asked about employers' knowledge of diversity in order to try and establish a baseline of reference with the survey respondent. Survey questions 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14, were created to inquire more specifically about the respondents' perceptions of the physically disabled. The survey results for items 6 to 14 are reflected in a frequency table (see Appendix B Table B1, p. 104). The results from the following survey items help give insight into the attitudes that encourage or reinforce employer's perceptions of both diversity and individuals with a physical disability. Survey item 6 asked participants do you think that most organizations in your industry offer diversity training? Most (55.6%) survey respondents thought that organizations do offer diversity training, and very few (8.9%) were unsure. A little over a third of the respondents did not think that most organizations offered diversity training. In other words, many of the respondents feel that organizations in their industry provide diversity training.

Survey item 7 asked participants, if yes (to the previous question) do you think that most organizations in your industry make their diversity training mandatory? Most respondents (65.9%) do not think that diversity training is mandatory, while over a third (34.1%) did think that their organization made diversity training mandatory. Survey item 8 asked participants do you think hiring managers in your industry generally know what their organization's diversity objectives are? Many respondents (40.0%) did not know what their organization's diversity objectives were. Fewer (28.9%) did know and the remaining were not sure (31.1%). Survey item 8 results indicate that most participants

feel that hiring managers in their industry do not know what their organization's diversity objectives are.

Survey item 9 asked participants have you observed/heard that hiring managers tend to feel uncomfortable when interviewing an individual with a visible disability? A large portion of the respondents (33.3%) never saw/heard of a hiring manager's tendency to feel uncomfortable while interviewing a person with a visible disability. Whereas 31.1% rarely saw/heard of hiring managers tended to feel uncomfortable. Only 24.4% felt that this tended to happen occasionally, and 11.1% felt that hiring managers did often feel uncomfortable while interviewing a person with a visible disability. Survey item 9 shows that many of the participants have not observed/heard that hiring managers tend to feel uncomfortable when interviewing an individual with a visible disability. Survey item 10 asked participants have you observed/heard that hiring managers tend to rush through an interview with an individual with a visible disability? A large portion of the respondents (57.8%) never witnessed/overheard of a hiring manager rushing through an interview with a person with a visible disability. Around 24.4% rarely witnessed/overheard a hiring manager rushing through an interview. An equal amount of respondents (8.9%) did sometimes or often encounter/hear of hiring managers rushing through an interview with an individual with a visible disability. Hence, survey item 10 shows that majority of the participants have not observed/heard that hiring managers tend to rush through an interview with an individual with a visible disability.

Survey item 11 asked participants have you observed/heard that hiring managers have difficulty making eye contact with an individual with a visible disability?   Majority of respondents (57.8%) never saw/heard of hiring managers not making eye contact with

an individual with a disability during an interview. However, 20.0 % did sometimes see/hear of hiring managers' inability to make eye contact, 13.3% rarely saw/heard it occurred, and 8.9% saw/heard it often occurred. The results from survey item 11 indicate that majority of the participants have not observed/heard that hiring managers have difficulty making eye contact with an individual with a visible disability. Survey item 12 asked participants have you observed/heard that hiring managers want candidates to be candid about their disability when applying for a job? Most of the respondents (48.9%) did sometimes observe/hear of hiring managers wanting disabled applicants to be candid depending on the job, whereas 33.3% did not observe/heard hiring managers to find it necessary. Additionally, 17.8% did observe/hear that hiring managers felt it was always necessary for an applicant to be candid about their disability. Survey item 12 specifies that majority of the respondents have observed/heard that hiring managers want candidates to be candid about their disability when applying for a job.

Survey item 13 asked participants have you observed/heard that hiring managers take into consideration an individual's need for accommodations before hiring? Majority of the respondents (51.1%) did sometimes witness/hear hiring managers consider a disabled applicant's accommodation needs before hiring, but it depended on the job. One third (26.7%) of the hiring managers they witnessed/heard believed it was not necessary, and a few (22.2%) of the hiring managers they witnessed/heard thought that it was always necessary to consider a disabled applicant's accommodation needs before hiring. Survey item 13 indicated that majority of the respondents have observed/heard that hiring managers take into consideration an individual's need for accommodations before hiring. Survey item 14 asked participants do you believe that organizations should be more open

to hiring non-traditional applicants such as, older college graduates or those who have gaps in their employment history? A majority (62.2%) believed that they should not be reluctant, 31.1 % thought it depends on position/job, 6.7% felt that they should be reluctant, and not one person 0% felt that they should be somewhat reluctant. Survey item 14 shows that majority of the respondents believe that organizations should be more open to hiring non-traditional applicants such as, older college graduates or those who have gaps in their employment history.

Research Question 2. What percentage of employers would select a non-disabled person over a person with a physical disability, even if both have equal qualifications? Survey items 15, 16, 17, 18, and 19 were designed to understand the perceptions of employers that would select a non-disabled person (candidate A) over a person with a physical disability (candidate B) for a position in their organization. The results from survey items 15 to 19 are reflected in the frequency and percentages table located in Appendix C Table C1, p 107. Survey item 15 asked participants do you anticipate that hiring managers would be more likely to hire candidate A than candidate B? Most (42.2%) respondents felt that hiring managers would be more likely to hire candidate A than candidate B, 37.8% felt that it depended on their qualifications, fewer (8.9%) felt that hiring managers were not more likely to hire candidate A than candidate B, another 8.9% felt that it depends on candidate B's qualifications and her disability, and only 2.2% thought it depends on candidate B's disability. Survey item 15 results show that a large portion of the participants surveyed felt that hiring managers would be more likely to hire candidate A than candidate B.

Survey item 16 asked participants do you anticipate that hiring managers would be more likely to think candidate A is more capable of being socially accepted by co-workers and clients than candidate B? More than half (62.2%) believe that hiring managers were more likely to think candidate A would be more socially accepted by co-workers and clients than candidate B, oddly 24.4% were not sure, 11.1% believed that hiring managers were not more likely to think candidate A will be more socially accepted by co-workers and clients than candidate B, and only 2.2% thought that it depended on candidate B's disability. Based on the results from survey item 16, the respondents anticipate that hiring managers would be more likely to think candidate A is more capable of being socially accepted by co-workers and clients than candidate B.

Survey item 17 asked survey participants do you anticipate that hiring managers would be more likely to think candidate A is more qualified for employment than candidate B? Interestingly 42.2% felt that it depends on the qualifications of both candidates, while 33.3% felt that hiring managers were more likely to think candidate A would be more qualified for employment than candidate B, whereas 15.6% anticipated that hiring managers would not be more likely to think candidate A is more qualified for employment than candidate B, only 8.9% were not sure, and 0% did not feel that it depends on candidate B's qualifications and her disability. The results from survey item 17 indicate that respondents anticipate that hiring managers would base their decision on both candidates' qualifications.

Survey item 18 asked survey participants do you think that hiring managers would be more likely to think candidate A will be more productive at work than candidate B? Largely 44.4% thought that hiring managers would be more likely to think candidate A

will be more productive at work than candidate B, fascinating that 37.8% felt that it depends on candidate B's disability and the tasks that will need to be completed, a few (11.1%) were not sure, and only 6.7% were sure that hiring managers would not be more likely to think candidate A will be more productive at work than candidate B. The results yielded in survey item 18 show that respondents think that hiring managers would be more likely to think candidate A will be more productive at work than candidate B.

Survey item 19 asked survey participants do you think that hiring managers would be more likely to think Candidate A is more capable of completing their job responsibility than candidate B? Most (40.0%) agreed, 24.4% neither agreed nor disagreed, 17.8% disagreed, 13.3% strongly agreed, and 4.4% strongly disagreed to survey item 19. Based on the results from survey 19 the survey participants think that hiring managers would be more likely to think candidate A is more capable of completing their job responsibility than candidate B.

Research Question 3. Do employers base their hiring decision on first impressions? Survey items 20, 21, 22, 23, and 24 were constructed to explore the hypothesis that employers base their hiring decision on first impressions. The results from survey items 20 to 24 are reflected in the frequency and percentages table located in Appendix D Table D1, p. 110. Survey item 20 asked survey participants: An applicant comes dressed for the interview in casual attire. Do you think that a hiring manager will think this person is professional? Half (55.6%) felt that a hiring manager would not think this person was professional. Only 37.8% thought it depended on the job he/she was applying for. A small few (4.4%) thought that a hiring manager would think this person is professional, fewer still (2.2%) thought a hiring manager will think this person is

somewhat professional, and 0% were not sure what a hiring manager would think. Survey item 20 concluded that more than half of the participants surveyed believed that the applicant would be perceived as unprofessional.

Survey item 21 asked participants: An applicant comes in for an interview and says that their priority is their family. Do you think this will affect the hiring manager's decision to hire the candidate for the position? The majority (34.8%) felt that it would somewhat affect his/her candidacy, while 23.9% did not think it would affect his/her candidacy. Fewer (17.4%) perceived that it would affect his/her candidacy, 13.0% felt it depended on his/her qualifications, and only 10.9% were not sure. Survey item 21 showed that majority of the participants surveyed felt that it would affect a hiring manager's decision to hire the candidate.

Survey item 22 asked survey participants: An applicant comes into an interview with tattoos on their hands, neck, and face. Do you think a hiring manager will think this candidate would be a good candidate for employment? Interestingly half (54.4%) felt that it depended on the candidate's job qualifications whereas 37.0% thought that a hiring manager would not think this applicant would be a good candidate for employment. Not as many (8.7%) felt a hiring manager will think this applicant would be a good candidate for employment, and 0% were not sure what a hiring manager would think. Survey item 22 results concluded that half of the participants surveyed think that a hiring manager would select the applicant, but based on their qualifications instead of their appearance.

Survey item 23 asked survey participants: An applicant comes in for an interview with multiple facial piercings. Do you think a hiring manager will feel that this candidate would be a good person for employment? Surprisingly most (48.9%) felt that it depends

on his/her qualifications, and 36.2% believed that a hiring manager would not think the applicant would be a good person for employment. A few (8.5%) anticipated that a hiring manager would think the applicant would be a good person for employment, and 6.4% were not sure what a hiring manager would think. Survey item 23 results revealed that most participants predicted that a hiring manager would base their decision on his/her qualifications.

Survey item 24 asked survey participants if an applicant states during an interview that he/she has low vision and that it is difficult to read print unless it is magnified/enlarged. Do you think a hiring manager would still select this candidate? More than half (51.1%) believed that it would depend on his/her qualifications, and one third (25.5%) anticipated that a hiring manager would still select this candidate. Fewer (17.0%) thought that a hiring manager would not select this candidate, and only 6.4% were unsure what a hiring manager would do. Survey item 24 results showed that more than half of the participants perceived the applicant would be selected by a hiring manager, but again based on their qualifications.

There were six themes found in the quantitative data analysis that exhibit latent attitudes. These attitudes may potentially hinder progress on fair employment opportunities for the physically disabled. Also found were attitudinal conflicts that may inhibit optimal employment opportunities for the disabled. These themes will be discussed and explored in the next chapter. The theoretical framework, TPB, will be revisited to help further understand and explain the data. Future recommendations for research will then follow the discussion of findings.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

  The purpose of this quantitative research study was to examine employers'

attitudes towards individuals with a physical disability during the hiring process. People

tend to make decisions based on past experiences that evoke under lying feelings or

emotions that they did not know existed (Yoo & Pituc, 2013). In other words, first

impressions can factor in decision making, especially when selecting someone to hire.

Furthermore, disability stereotypes (Lippert-Rasmussen, 2013), attitudes (Waterstone,

2005), and misconceptions (Nielsen, 2012) all combine to exacerbate the problems with

limited access to gainful employment for persons with a disability. Despite the amount

of research on employer attitudes on hiring various demographics including the disabled

(whether physically disabled or otherwise), a lack of research still exists on their

employment attitudes on the physically disabled during the milestones in the employment

process (Chan et al., 2010; Bonaccio et al., 2019). The purpose of this study was to begin

to address this research gap in employer attitudes by looking specifically at employer

attitudes during the hiring process, as determined through responses to an online survey.

Summary of Findings

  Research Question 1. What are employers' perceptions of individuals with a

physical disability? Survey questions 6, 7, and 8 asked about employers' knowledge of

diversity training (Lindsay et al., 2019) in the workplace to try and establish a baseline of

reference with the survey respondent. While landmark legislation like the ADA has

improved the physical accessibility into businesses and job protections for the disabled

(ADA, 1990), it has not necessarily translated into tolerance for the disabled in the

workplace (Disabled World, 2019). The results from the following survey items help give insight into the attitudes that encourage or reinforce employers' perceptions (Phillips et al., 2016; Lindsay et al., 2019) of both diversity and individuals with a physical disability. Results from the participants indicated that they felt that their organizations within their respective industries do provide diversity training, but they do not make it mandatory nor do they know what their diversity objectives are. According to Blanck and Adya (2017), an organization's diversity policy at the procedural level is tangible and noticeable within the framework of the organization intentions, but it can also be perceived as shallow and does not go deep enough to reflect significant changes to the organization's mission, culture, and framework. In Nevala et al. (2015), training, counseling, and education are some of the barriers to employers and disabled employees. An employer's policy and practice regarding disability employment and diversity in the workplace are positively linked to reasonable accommodations (Anand & Sevak, 2017). Thus, the results of these questions about the knowledge employers have (or do not have) about their diversity training suggest that unless employers explicitly share and implement diversity training and policies successfully, the goal of reasonable accommodations for the physically disabled may be far behind.

Survey questions 9 to 14 inquire more specifically about the respondents' perceptions of the physically disabled. Overall participants believe that hiring managers have a positive perception of individuals with a physical disability but take into consideration their accommodation needs before hiring. Some landmark legislation has helped to level the playing field legally for the disabled but also has left many employers and organizations without guidance on how to mitigate and reasonably accommodate the

cost of hiring a disabled employee (Wilson et al., 2016; Hashim & Wok, 2014).

Financial obstacles are a part of the policy challenges to providing equitable access and

opportunity to the disabled. Accommodating a disabled employee can require an

employer to purchase equipment, supplies, new technology, modifications to structures,

changing work schedules, changing job duties all in part to assure that a disabled

employee can do their job (Disabled World, 2019). Learning gaps among employers

regarding the accommodation provision have led to misconstrued ideas about how much

it will cost to accommodate a physically disabled employee (Saltychev et al., 2018).

There are not many businesses that can afford or have the willingness to take on such a

costly burden, especially small businesses (Saltychev et al., 2018). In recent years, some

organizations and employers have highlighted the potential high cost of accommodating a

person with a physical disability as a reason not to hire them (Job Accommodation

Network, 2019). Therefore, this data suggests employers may be helped by receiving

education on the costs and procedures for hiring and accommodating the physically

disabled.

     Research Question 2. What percentage of employers would select a non-disabled person over a person with a physical disability, even if both have equal qualifications? The physically disabled still face pervasive stigmas and perceptions of being different and inferior to able-bodied individuals (McDonnall & Antonelli, 2018; Villanueva-Flores et al., 2017). These negative perceptions and stigmas tend to invade certain sociological cultural beliefs of what is beautiful or visually appealing (Villanueva-Flores et al., 2015). Survey items 15, 16, 17, 18, and 19 were designed to understand the perceptions of employers that would select a non-disabled person (candidate A) over a

person with a physical disability (candidate B) for a position in their organization. Overwhelmingly, the survey participants believed that hiring managers would select a nondisabled candidate over a physically disabled candidate. Research by Coffey et al. (2014) also corroborates that the unique social difficulties that the physically disabled face has a significant negative impact on their employment opportunities because they still show higher rates of unemployment in comparison to other disability categories than the non-disabled (Graham et al., 2018; Mik-Meyer, 2016; Tripney et al., 2015).

The data in Graham et al.'s (2018) study also helps add to the same conclusion that the non-disabled would be hired over a physically disabled person even when qualifications are equal. Graham et al. (2018) hypothesized that the reasoning for this may be that employers and managers may have certain attitudes toward disabled employees, for example assuming that they are not competent to make complex decisions or unable to complete essential job duties (Smith, 2017). Interestingly, the results from the survey in this study would agree with Graham et al. (2018). The data here in this study suggest that the data from survey items 15, 16, 18, and 19 could be summarized in the following ways: hiring managers felt that a physically disabled candidate would be less capable, less responsible, less socially accepted, and less productive, confirming that employers may assume disabled employees are not as competent, generally speaking. The researcher expected negative attitudes from survey respondents on this question, but never expected how pervasive the negative attitudes would be across survey item questions in this set. These survey questions were specifically designed to begin to tease out the nature and form of an employer's attitudes about the physically disabled versus a

non-disabled candidate. Therefore, purposefully, these survey items addressed competency, responsibility, social acceptance and productivity.

Surprisingly, after all the negative conclusions responded by survey participants and in contradiction to the disaggregated results, the same respondents felt that hiring managers would still base their decisions on both candidates' job qualifications. When asked which candidate would be more qualified, the data here suggests that further inquiry may be needed to parse out why and when employers' attitudes reflect a lack of confidence in the physically disabled and how these attitudes are directly related to decision making processes during hiring. This is a good entry point for additional qualitative inquiry that includes face to face interviews or focus groups, for example, that would clarify answers and better capture attitudes with recorded observations. A richer fuller qualitative picture might add to the description and understanding of these conflicting attitudinal phenomena.

Research Question 3. Do employers base their hiring decisions on first impressions? Often people tend to correlate a person's ability to their physical appearance, especially if they already have predetermined attitudes towards a specific group (Zuloaga, 2019). Survey items 20, 21, 22, 23, and 24 were constructed to explore the hypothesis that employers base their hiring decision on first impressions. Interestingly majority of the respondents did not feel that a hiring manager would have an issue with facial piercings or tattoos on an applicant's face and neck. Other research (Timming, 2015) suggests that having a tattoo can reduce your chance of getting a job, but it depends on where the tattoo is, what it depicts and if the job involves dealing with customers. However, this survey study suggests these respondents perceived that hiring

managers would base their decision on the applicant's job qualifications, not the tattoos or facial piercings.

As reiterated earlier in Zuloaga's (2019) research, first impressions factor into an individual's thought process, particularly when picking someone for employment. A person's appearance can recall underlying beliefs, feelings or attitudes they did not know existed, which winds up shaping an individual's perceptions (Yoo & Pituc, 2013). Oddly when the respondents were asked about attire or work restrictions due to family obligations, they felt that hiring managers would have an issue with that. Also, when the respondents were asked about accommodating a candidate that has low vision with large print, they did not seem to have an issue with that scenario either. The data suggests that respondents think that, in the case of low vision accommodations, hiring managers would base their decision on the applicant's job qualifications as well. Oddly when the respondents were asked about clothing attire or work restrictions due to family obligations, they felt that hiring managers would have an issue with that. Mixed findings were found in this survey data regarding first impressions and negative attitudes about the physically disabled, depending on the context of the question. Mixed findings on complex social and psychological inquiry are often the case in social science research (Cherry, 2018). In this study, one of the conclusions that may concur with mixed findings in other social science research is that sometimes what you look like matters and sometimes it does *not matter*. Zuloaga's (2019) research suggests that first impressions factor into an individual's thought process, particularly when picking someone for employment. A person's appearance can recall underlying beliefs, feelings or attitudes they did not know existed, which wind up shaping an individual's perceptions (Yoo &

Pituc, 2013). The results here produced some interesting findings. Some expected and some unexpected. Interpretation of the findings will help clarify and understand the significance of the findings in the study.

Interpretation of Findings

This study involved three research questions designed to address the various issues of perceptions of the physically disabled, their selection criteria, and the first impressions associated with an employer's attitude towards the physically disabled and employment during the hiring process. The Employee Attitude Survey had 47 respondents from varied employment categories and some interesting themes emerged from the interpretation of the findings. Some of the themes were expected; however, other attitudes were unpredictable, more specifically survey questions 6 to 24. The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) was used to help interpret this data and the participants' attitudes towards the physically disabled.

The TPB is based on the idea that personal attitudes motivate a person's actions so those actions become the focus. It is believed these attitudes come from three types of input: behavioral, affective, and cognitive information. The behavioral input pertains to a person's behavior that helps determine their actions, the affective refers to a person's feelings, and the cognitive information relates to a person's beliefs and knowledge (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). In other words, if a person has an employer's attitude about the physically disabled, it may come from learned behaviors among others within their social or professional circle or within their organization and around work colleagues found in the hiring process that may share similar attitudes. Latent attitudes may also come from

their own individual feelings and lastly from beliefs, knowledge, and information received about the physically disabled.

Themes

      Conflicting attitudes from women. Women overwhelmingly made up 73.3% of the sample population and were the group with the highest degree earned, doctorates (57.6%). Men made up the other 26.7% of the survey population. Women within the sample group tended to be empathetic towards hypothetical scenarios regarding first impressions. For instance, in survey items 22 (56.2%), 23(60.6%), and 24 (60.6%) women perceived that it depended on an applicant's qualification instead of their appearance when picking someone for a job. Although, when it came to hypothetical scenarios regarding selecting between a candidate with a visible physical disability and a non-disabled candidate for employment, they were not so sympathetic. For example, in the survey items related to the selection criteria of a nondisabled versus a physically disabled person, women selected a non-disabled candidate instead of a candidate with a physical disability for employment. Interestingly, they also perceived that hiring managers would base their decision on the applicant's qualification even though they would select a non-disabled candidate over one with a physical disability. This contradiction in selection criteria represents an opportunity to further understand the nature of this finding that suggests some conflicting latent attitudes. Also, age could be a factor in the data that could be further studied. Over half the women respondents were older than 34 years old. The two primary female age groups among the sample population were Xennials 34 to 44 years old (27.3%) and Baby-boomers 55 to 64 years old (27.3%).

Diversity provision. The Employee Attitude Survey questioned participants first about their knowledge of diversity to establish a baseline and to gauge their understanding of diversity in their workplace. A little more than half of the participants (55.6%) in the study were knowledgeable in regard to diversity in their workplace, but they were not required to attend the training. This leads to the idea that some hiring managers may not be emphasizing diversity training in the workplace. According to Disabled World (2019), non-inclusiveness and non-supportive diversity training in the workplace can be an organizational barrier to its diversity goals. This is reflected in the 2019 EEOC data that shows that organizations have a gap in terms of understanding reasonable accommodations in the workplace. According to Smith (2017), the non-compliant policies exhibited by an organization tend to make employment difficult for the disabled. The findings in this study may suggest that the absence of the provision of diversity training helps to maintain negative attitudes associated with the disabled (Disabled World, 2019). The data here suggests that organizations would benefit from looking more deeply at their diversity implementation and how it may or may not affect the accommodation of the disabled. Undoubtedly, working optimally with both a diverse and disabled population can only occur when the complex processes of hiring are implemented in an ongoing iterative process and not as a one-time process or training (Disabled World, 2019). The attitudes recorded in this study suggest that diversity and inclusion practices still have a long way to go in full implementation.

Intentions are cheap. Survey items 9 to 14 revealed that participants believed that hiring managers had a positive perception of individuals with a physical disability but consider the cost of their accommodations prior to hiring. It is not uncommon for

employers' enthusiasm to be high when it comes to hiring persons with a disability. The sad truth reflected in this data is that more often than not their intentions do not reflect their actions (Smith, 2017). The TPB shows that behavioral intention is predictable if all of the constructs in the problem contain favorable behaviors. As found in the attitudinal data here, if the concept of diversity is not championed in the workplace less effort would be made to change outcomes for the disabled (Ajzen, 1991). The survey data here also showed diversity was not required in some cases and respondents thought hiring managers may still hesitate to hire the disabled due to the concerns for the cost of accommodations. Since the provision of reasonable accommodation was established by the ADA, it has become a key component in hiring and retaining individuals with a disability. However, since the signing of this landmark disability legislation, there seems to be a hesitancy on the part of jobseekers and disabled employees to ask for reasonable accommodations and more importantly a struggle to get employers to provide them (Nevala et al., 2015). The broader research in this area supports the challenges and obstacles experienced by the physically disabled and the disabled in general to get fair employment opportunities.

In 2019, it is more likely for a person without a disability to be employed than an individual with a disability, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics Economic News Release (2018). A college graduate with a disability is more likely to accept a lower-paying job or a part-time job due to the prevailing stereotypical attitudes of employers (Honey et al., 2014). In other words, intentions are good and nudged by law, but as of yet insufficient and cheap in the light of the findings of this study. It is understandable then that an individual with a physical disability expects that their disability can be a

barrier to gainful employment due to their accommodation needs (Disabled World, 2019).

Accepted but rejected. Results from survey items 15, 16, 18, and 19 showed respondents thought hiring managers' attitudes could be summarized in the following ways: they felt that a physically disabled candidate would be less capable, less responsible, less socially adept, and less productive. The survey evidence items regarding productivity, social acceptance, capability, and responsibility were meant to address common themes that challenge incompetence regardless of ability. However, the negativity shared among employers was not surprising (Graham et al., 2018; Mik-Meyer, 2016; Tripney et al., 2015). Most misperceptions associated with disabled employment have led employers to believe that individuals with a disability are incapable of performing specific job functions, it would cost the organization too much money to accommodate, or that there is a potential that they might sue the organization for discrimination (Schur et al., 2017). However, a person with a physical disability has to contend with employers, which oftentimes view their physical appearance or physical deformity as a disability that would be too burdensome to accommodate (Annett, 2018). When examining the results through the lens of TPB it is understandable how the attitudes exhibited by the respondents were predictable (Ajzen, 1991). This data supported the conclusions hiring managers would select a non-disabled versus physically disabled candidate because they may believe they are unable and incompetent as suggested by these specific survey items. Therefore, the physically disabled remain superficially accepted but rejected in the employment market.

Attitudinal contradictions. Survey item 17 showed another contradiction in attitudes that bears additional analysis. When participants were asked which candidate would be more qualified, surprisingly, 42.2% of respondents believed that hiring managers would base their decision on both candidates' job qualifications. In contrast, the data suggests they would still hire a non-disabled person over a physically disabled person when the qualifications were equal. The survey results for item 17 were unpredictable and contradictory. The attitudes expressed were beliefs that the physically disabled were less capable, responsible, socially acceptable, and less productive. The participants in the sample population believed that hiring managers would base their decisions on the candidates' job qualifications while simultaneously sharing unfavorable conceptualizations of the physically disabled. Further research into these results is needed to understand the significance of the data. Thus, stakeholders may benefit from further inquiry to parse out why and when employers' attitudes reflect a lack of confidence in the physically disabled and how these attitudes are directly related to decision making processes during hiring. This is a good entry point for additional qualitative inquiry that includes face to face interviews or focus groups, for example, that can better capture attitudes and record observations that might add to the description and understanding of these phenomena.

At first sight. At first sight, sometimes looks matter and sometimes they do not. Survey items 20, 21, 22, 23, and 24 were designed to explore the theory that employers base their hiring decision on first impressions. According to Zuloaga's (2019) research, first impressions factor into decision making especially when selecting someone for a job but it depends on the context (Timmings, 2014). The survey results for items 20 and 21

showed predictable TPB behavioral norms (Ajzen, 1991). For instance, when the

respondents were asked about attire or work restrictions due to family obligations, they

felt that these conditions would affect the decisions made by hiring managers. Research

from Yoo and Pituc (2013) showed that people tend to form their decisions from past

experiences, social surroundings, and education that remain dormant until it is evoked.

Interestingly, in survey items 22 and 23 majority of the respondents did not feel that a

hiring manager would have an issue with facial piercing or tattoos on an applicant's face

and neck. They believed that hiring managers would base their decision on the

applicant's job qualifications. The results from survey items 22 and 23 were

unpredictable outcomes because one or two of the TPB constructs in the survey inquiry

were unfavorable (Ajzen, 1991). Survey item 24 also had an interesting result. When

respondents were questioned about hiring and accommodating a candidate that has low

vision with large print, they did not seem to have an issue with that scenario either. They

also perceived that hiring managers would base their decision on the applicant's job

qualifications.

The result from survey item 24 are interesting because of the predictable TPB

behavioral constructs towards the physically disabled (Ajzen, 1991). The respondents

perceive that hiring managers would base their decision on the applicant's qualification

when they also perceive that a hiring manager would select a non-disabled candidate over

one with a physical disability. The results lead to the interpretation that while certain

disability categories face employment difficulties the physically disabled seem to have a

harder time finding employment. Research in Lindsay et al. (2019) indicates that all

disability categories are no stranger to employment impediments that cause economic

barriers, but out of all the disability categories, the physically disabled continue to endure

challenges due to the visible nature of their disability (Tripney et al., 2015). Thus, the

problem of unequal access is even worse for the physically disabled who have even

greater difficulty finding and keeping a job (Graham et al., 2018).

Context of Findings

The findings of the Employer Attitude Survey will demonstrate how other

research relates to the study's six themes. Evidence in this study could help bridge the

research gap that exists on milestones in the employment process by looking specifically

at employer attitudes during the hiring process. There have been numerous studies

conducted about attitudes towards individuals with a disability and employment, which

has led to a variety of conclusions towards employers' attitudes. For example, many

employers believe that individuals with a disability are incapable of performing specific

job functions (Kaye, Jans, & Jones, 2011). Keys and Balcazar's (2000) review of 37

studies concluded that employers continue to show support for disabled workers but not

so much for individuals with specific disabilities. Some of the studies suggested that

employers tend to have a more favorable view of individuals with mental and

psychological disabilities than for those with physical disabilities. However, evidence in

this study will correlate with existing research on employer's attitudes towards the

disabled, while highlighting unanticipated attitudinal contradictions to pervasive

misperceptions about the physically disabled.

Survey evidence in the study on women's conflicting attitudes showed

fascinating results towards the disabled. Women tended to be more empathetic towards

hypothetical scenarios regarding first impressions, but when it came to hypothetical

scenarios regarding selecting between a candidate with a visible physical disability and a non-disabled candidate for employment, they were not so sympathetic. There were no studies specifically that referred to gender differences in attitudes towards the physically disabled during the hiring process. Further qualitative research is needed to study demographic data more closely, including gender and age differences.

Survey evidence relating to the diversity provision suggests that hiring managers were not reinforcing diversity training in their organizations. The absence of diversity programs and training only helps to maintain negative attitudes associated with the disabled (Disabled World, 2019). Research in Moore et al. (2017) emphasized that change without true intent or meaning is hollow, therefore real change must come from the top and funnel down to the rest of the organization. Saltychev et al. (2018) showed that there is a learning gap among employers because some automatically jump to the conclusion that they would have to spend a lot of money to bring their organization up to ADA regulation if they hired a person with a disability. Lindsay et al. (2019) also suggest that large organizations that implement psychoeducational training on a regular and systematic level can tamp down an organizations' hesitation to facilitate the provision of accommodations in the workplace.

Evidence in the study concluded that even though participants believed that hiring managers did not have a negative attitude towards the disabled, they still did consider the cost of accommodation before hiring them. Relja et al.'s (2018) research indicated that a lack of understanding and stereotypes contribute to why the disabled labor pool has been overlooked and underestimated, which manifests into unfounded misconceptions and negative attitudes towards the disabled. Telwatte et al. (2017) show that the decision to

provide or deny the accommodation provision is influenced by a variety of legal and non-legal factors. Smith's (2017) research suggested that some organizations contend with the idea that accommodating a disabled employee is too costly and time-consuming, which leads to an unwillingness to revise their current policies and procedures to hire a disabled employee.

Evidence in the study agreed, in part, with previous research about employers' attitudes towards the physically disabled. Participants believed that hiring managers had preconceived misconceptions towards an applicant with a physical disability, believing that the physically disabled applicant would be less capable, less responsible, less socially adept, and less productive. Palad et al. (2016) concluded that a wide range of research has shown wavering attitudes towards the disabled overall as delineated above; the physically disabled seem to evoke more negative attitudes and misperceptions in employers than attitudes towards other disabled groups. Coffey et al.'s (2014) research cited that employers lack knowledge of what women with visual impairments can accomplish therefore they did not feel comfortable hiring them. Bonaccio et al. (2019) showed that some employers believe the physically disabled would add to the burden of a loss in productivity and that they need additional supervision. According to research from Bal et al. (2017), misperceptions are a major challenge for young adults with a physical disability to find and maintain employment. Also, research in Ameri et al. (2018) suggests that it is discrimination on the part of employers as a reason for reduced employment and lower wages and not the reluctance of physically disabled jobseekers. But when it came to qualifications participants perceived that hiring manages would base their hiring decision on an applicant's job qualifications instead of their physical

appearance. This is in stark contrast to the attitudinal evidence both in this study and in previous research. There were no studies found that specifically referred to attitudinal differences towards the physically disabled *during the hiring process*. Thus, more studies would help provide additional insights into this employment milestone. Further qualitative research is needed to study this issue.

Evidence in the study showed that participants did take issue with casual attire but did not care when it came to facial piercings and facial tattoos, choosing instead to suggest that hiring managers would base the decision on job qualifications. The perceived value that is placed on physical appearance has a philosophical effect on employment opportunities for the physically disabled (Coffey et al., 2014). Research in Fevre et al. (2013) has helped to identify a sociological link between physical appearance and employment. Zuloaga (2019) shows that first impressions factor into decision making, especially when selecting someone for hire. Survey evidence also showed accommodating an applicant with low vision may not be a problem and that hiring managers would base the decision on job qualifications. Most research supports the notion that employers still struggle with the extent and nature of the accommodations provided to the disabled, especially to the physically disabled. The visibly impaired may have a threshold disability in which an accommodation is not seen as burdensome as others. Perhaps this may explain the data on the low vision question in this study. Other research such as Vornholt et al. (2013) showed that attitudes towards the disabled are a delicate issue that can evoke a range of diverse emotions. Research in Strindlund et al. (2018) has also shown that employers tend to harbor earnest ill-founded perceptions of individuals with a physical disability and their abilities; these negative attitudes are a

result of interrelated concerns that can negatively affect the entire employment experience. Villanueva-Flores et al. (2017) indicated that society often views the physically disabled as having limited mobility, senses, or the inability to physically take part in certain activities. Overall, the findings are interesting because participants had misgivings regarding hiring a candidate with a physical disability, which indicates that hiring managers may still harbor unresolved and negative latent attitudes towards individuals with a physical disability.

Implications of Findings

The findings of the Employer Attitude Survey expanded on prior research relating to attitudes that affect the physically disabled and their employment experience. The implication of the research findings corroborates other research that reinforces the narrative that negative attitudes, misperceptions, and stereotypes are barriers to gainful employment (Telwatte et al., 2017). The findings here also help illustrate where employers' attitudes may be falling short and where additional research is needed.

Survey findings demonstrated pervasive negative attitudes still exist in the employment market for the physically disabled and for the accommodations the physically disabled expect during the hiring process. Current legislation and current diversity practices in some organizations do not go far enough to change the current mindset towards the accommodation provisions required by law for both diversity and the disabled. Survey findings showed that respondents believed that hiring managers had positive views towards the physically disabled but did not think they could perform certain job tasks (Annett, 2018; Zuloaga, 2019). Additional research is needed to understand the attitudinal conflicts that are associated with the physically disabled where

being accepted may demonstrate surface hiring practices but ultimately being rejected is what happens, as corroborated by this study and the state of knowledge in this field. Attitudes are complex psychological emotions that can be influenced by numerous factors, such as friends, family, social media, media, and one's own belief system (Cherry, 2018). People, in general, tend to place a perceived value on first impressions that affect their opinions towards someone or an action (Coffey et al., 2014). Survey findings showed that respondents had conflicting viewpoints regarding first impressions as indicated by the state of knowledge. They anticipated that hiring managers would find fault with a person's attire and declaration of family obligations, but they would not find fault with facial tattoos or face piercings. Also, women exhibited some conflicting attitudes towards the physically disabled. Women, in general, are nurturing influences (Wroblewski, 2019) and tend to be more empathetic to certain issues as exhibited in the study. Findings indicated that women tended to be more empathetic towards hypothetical scenarios regarding first impressions, but when it came to hypothetical scenarios regarding selecting between a candidate with a visible physical disability and a non-disabled candidate for employment, they were not so sympathetic. Additional research is needed to further understand how these attitudinal conflicts associated with physical appearance and negative perceptions towards the physically disabled affect employers' decisions during the hiring cycle.

Limitations of the Study

Limitations to this study involved the feasibility of surveying participants during a limited time frame, sample size, the reporting of truthful responses, and initial research findings for attitudinal conflicts. The results cannot be generalized to the broader

employer population because of the small population demographic sample. Constraints

of time, resources, and population availability forced a snowball sampling to achieve this

study's immediate contribution. Also, due to the sensitive nature of participants'

potential fear of appearing insensitive (Copeland et al., 2010) and the nature of providing

attitudes on a physical aspect of another person's appearance, the study was limited in

great part by the nature of the questions and how participants would answer honestly and

transparently (Hashim & Wok, 2014). The researcher may have faced unspoken

hesitations from the employer population due to the negative condemnation associated

with negative attitudes towards individuals with a physical disability. Participants may

have not answered truthfully on the survey in fear of coming across as un-empathetic or

politically incorrect.

Another limitation is that participants may not have felt certain that the data

would remain completely anonymous and they would not be identified individually

regardless of confidentiality assurances and notifications. The researcher had designed

the survey to protect the anonymity of each participant by not asking for individual

identifying variables such as name, location, or company title. Only general information

such as employer category and other umbrella terms had been requested that do not

identify participants individually to add a layer of anonymous protection.

Future Research Directions

The results from this study also showed that respondents had conflicting

viewpoints regarding the physically disabled, especially first impressions. Additional

qualitative research is needed to further understand how attitudinal conflicts associated

with physical appearance and negative perceptions towards the physically disabled affect

employers' decisions during the hiring cycle. Further research may also be needed to comprehend how gender and other demographic differences in attitudes affect the physically disabled during the hiring process.

The results from this study also elaborate on the need for additional research on the learning gap among employers regarding the acceptance and inclusion of the physically disabled into the employment market (Saltychev et al., 2018). Even though some employers have positive views of the disabled, hiring managers still report having certain pervasive negative attitudes about the physically disabled and their capacity, skills, and competency. Further research aimed at understanding the nature and form of the attitudinal conflicts is needed to explore hiring practices more deeply. Towards this endeavor, there are organizations in the private sector that are beginning to measure and critically evaluate how disability diversity, inclusion and equity factors impact organizations. Some examples are PWC (Karren & Lee, 2016), People Fluent ("The four maturity stages," 2015), Deloitte (Bourke & Bernadette, 2018), Korn Ferry (2016), and Owen (2012) all of which highlight the cost benefits of diversity and inclusion into an organization. These models of maturity in diversity and inclusion perhaps lend optimism to the idea that the physically disabled will soon also be a 'category' to be counted in a more formal and scientific manner.

In summary, this study provided additional insight into the idea that legislation designed to protect the employment rights of the disabled and diversity practices has fallen short on its initial goals. Descriptive, explanatory and deeper implementation research on practices and the ADA's implementation of the law is needed to inquire how employers implement the law. Much more needs to be studied on how we can find better

ways to strengthen implementation guidance from the laws and any other guides that are

meant to benefit disabled jobseekers.

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Appendix A

Employer Attitude Survey

EMPLOYER ATTITUDE SURVEY

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this brief survey. Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability. Please note this survey is completely anonymous so please answer as honestly as you can. Participants will remain anonymous and will not be identified individually. Data will be collected and analyzed as a group. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Alix Jean-Joseph, Nova Southeastern University doctoral candidate at jalix@mynsu.nova.edu.

Please answer the demographic questions to the best of your abilities.

1. What is your gender?

    A. Male

    B. Female

2. What is your age?

    A. 20 to 29

    B. 30 to 39

    C. 40 to 49

    D. 50 to 59

    E. 60 +

3. Please specify your race/ethnicity.

    A. White (non-Hispanic)

    B. Black/African American

    C. Hispanic/Latino

    D. Native American /Alaskan Native

    E. Asian

    F. Other

4. What is the highest degree you have completed?

    A. High School/GED

B. Associate's

C. Bachelor's

D. Masters

E. Doctorate/Professional

F. No of the above

5. What type of business do you own/work for?

A. Financial Services

B. Real Estate

C. Hospitality

D. Communications and/or Broadcast

E. Agribusiness

F. Industrial/Manufacturing

G. Information Technology

H. Consulting Services

I. Construction

J. Health Care

K. Retail

L. Telecommunications

M. Other_____

6. Do you think that most organizations in your industry offer diversity training?

A. Yes

B. No

C. Not sure

7. If yes, do you think that most organizations in your industry make their diversity training mandatory?

A. yes

B. No

8. Do you think hiring managers in your industry generally know what their organization's diversity objectives are?

    A. Yes

    B. No

    C. Not Sure

Please answer the questions to the best of your ability.

9. Have you observed/heard that hiring managers tend to feel uncomfortable when interviewing an individual with a visible disability?

    A. Yes, often

    B. Yes, sometimes

    C. Rarely

    D. Never

10. Have you observed/heard that hiring managers tend to rush through an interview with an individual with a visible disability?

    A. Yes, often

    B. Yes, sometimes

    C. Rarely

    D. Never

11. Have you observed/heard that hiring managers have difficulty making eye contact with an individual with a visible disability?

    A. Yes, often

    B. Yes, sometimes

    C. Rarely

    D. Never

12. Have you observed/heard that hiring managers want candidates to be candid about their disability when applying for a job?

    A. Yes, always

    B. Yes, sometimes depending on the job

    C. No, it is not necessary

13. Have you observed/heard that hiring managers take into consideration an individual's need for accommodations before hiring?

    A. Yes, always

    B. Yes, sometimes depending on the job

    C. No, it is not necessary
    D.

14. Do you believe that organizations should be more open to hiring non-traditional applicants such as, older college graduates or those who have gaps in their employment history?

    A. They should be reluctant

    B. They should be somewhat reluctant

    C. They should not be reluctant

    D. It depends on the position/job

Please take a few minutes to look at the two potential candidates for an executive position. Both candidates are equally qualified for an executive administrative position in an investment firm. Based on your first impressions of the two candidates, please answer the following questions?

Candidate A   Candidate B

15. Do you anticipate that hiring managers would be more likely to hire candidate A than candidate B?

    A. Yes, hiring managers are more likely to hire candidate A than candidate B

    B. No, hiring managers are not more likely to hire candidate A than candidate B

    C. It depends on candidate B's disability

    D. It depends on their qualifications

    E. It depends on candidate B's qualifications and her disability

16. Do you anticipate that hiring managers would be more likely to think candidate A is more capable of being socially accepted by co-workers and clients than candidate B?

    A. Yes, hiring managers are more likely to think candidate A will be more socially accepted by co-workers and clients than candidate B

    B. No, hiring managers are not more likely to think candidate A will be more socially accepted by co-workers and clients than candidate B

    C. It depends on candidate B's disability

    D. I am not sure

17. Do you anticipate that hiring managers would be more likely to think candidate A is more qualified for employment than candidate B?

    A. Yes, hiring managers are more likely to think candidate A is more qualified for employment than candidate B

    B. No, hiring managers are not more likely to think candidate A is more qualified for employment than candidate B

    C. It depends on the qualifications of both candidates

    D. It depends on candidate B's qualifications and her disability

    E. I am not sure

18. Do you think that hiring managers would be more likely to think candidate A will be more productive at work than candidate B?

    A. Yes, hiring managers are more likely to think candidate A will be more productive at work than candidate B

B. No, hiring managers are not more likely to think candidate A will be more productive at work than candidate B

A. It depends on candidate B's disability and the tasks that will need to be completed

C. I am not sure

19. Do you think that hiring managers would be more likely to think Candidate A is more capable of completing their job responsibility than candidate B?

A. Strong agree

B. Agree

C. Disagree

D. Strongly disagree

E. Not sure

20. An applicant comes dressed for the interview in casual attire. Do you think that a hiring manager will think this person is professional?

A. Yes, a hiring manager will think this person is professional

B. a hiring manager will think this person is somewhat professional

C. No, a hiring manager would think this person is unprofessional

D. It depends on the job he/she is applying for

E. I am not sure

21. An applicant comes in for an interview and says that their priority is their family. Do you think this will affect the hiring manager's decision to hire the candidacy for the position?

A. It would affect his/her candidacy

B. It would somewhat affect his/her candidacy

C. It would not affect his/her candidacy

D. It depends on his/her qualifications

E. I am not sure

22. An applicant comes into an interview with tattoos on their hands, neck, and face. Do you think a hiring manager thank this candidate would be a good candidate for employment?

    A. Yes, a hiring manager will think this applicant would be a good candidate for employment

    B. No, a hiring manager will not think this applicant is a good candidate for employment

    C. It depends on his/her qualifications

    D. I am not sure

23. An applicant comes in for an interview with multiple facial piercings. Do you think a hiring manager feel that this candidate would be a good person for employment?

    A. Yes, a hiring manager will think the applicant would be a good person for employment

    B. No, a hiring manager will not think the applicant would be a good person for employment

    C. It depends on his/her qualifications

    D. I am not sure

24. An applicant states during an interview that he/she has low vision and that it is difficult to read print unless it is magnified/enlarged. Do you think a hiring manager would still select this candidate?

    A. Yes, a hiring manager would still select this candidate

    B. No, a hiring manager will not select this candidate

    C. It depends on his/her qualifications

    D. I am not sure

Appendix B

Frequency and Percentages: Employers' Perceptions of Individuals With a Physical

Disability

Table B1

Frequency and Percentages: Employers' Perceptions of Individuals with a Physical Disability

Items	Frequency	%
6. Do you think that most organizations in your industry offer diversity training?		
• Yes	25	55.6%
• No	16	35.6%
• Not sure	4	839%
7. If yes, do you think that most organizations in your industry make their diversity training mandatory?		
• Yes	15	34.1%
• No	29	65.9%
8. Do you think hiring managers in your industry generally know what their organization's diversity objectives are?		
• Yes	13	28.9%
• No	18	40.0%
• Not sure	14	31.1%
9. Have you observed/heard that hiring managers tend to feel uncomfortable when interviewing an individual with a visible disability		
• Yes, often	5	11.1%
• Yes, sometimes	11	24.4%
• Rarely	14	31.1%
• Never	15	33.3%
10. Have you observed/heard that hiring managers tend to rush through an interview with an individual with a visible disability?		
• Yes, often	4	8.9%
• Yes, sometimes	4	8.9%
• Rarely	11	24.4%
• Never	26	57.8%
11. Have you observed/heard that hiring managers have difficulty making eye contact with an individual with a visible disability?		
• Yes, often	4	8.9%
• Yes, sometimes	9	20.0%
• Rarely	6	13.3%
• Never	26	57.8

12. Have you observed/heard that hiring managers want candidates to be candid about their disability when applying for a job?

- Yes, always   8   17.8%
- Yes, sometimes depending on job   22   48.9%
- No, it is not necessary   15   33.3%

13. Have you observed/heard that hiring managers take into consideration an individual's need for accommodations before hiring?

- Yes, always   10   22.2%
- Yes, sometimes depending on job   23   51.1%
- No, it is not necessary   12   26.7%

14. Do you believe that organizations should be more open to hiring non-traditional applicants such as, older college graduates or those who have gaps in their employment history?

- They should be reluctant   3   6.7%
- They should be somewhat reluctant   0   0.0%
- They should not be reluctant   28   62.2%
- It depends on the position/job   14   31.1%

Appendix C

Frequency and Percentages: What Percentage of Employers Would Select a Non-Disabled Person Over a Person With a Physical Disability, Even if Both Have Equal Qualifications?

Table C1

Frequency and Percentages: What percentage of employers would select a non-disabled person over a person with a physical disability, even if both have equal qualifications?

Items	Frequency	%
15. Do you anticipate that hiring managers would be more likely to hire candidate A than candidate B?		
• Yes, hiring managers are more likely to hire candidate A than candidate B	19	42.2%
• No, hiring managers are not more likely to hire candidate A than candidate B	4	8.9%
• It depends on candidate B's disability	1	2.2%
• It depends on their qualifications	17	37.8%
• It depends on candidate B's qualifications and her disability	4	8.9%
16. Do you anticipate that hiring managers would be more likely to think candidate A is more capable of being socially accepted by co-workers and clients than candidate B?		
• Yes, hiring managers are more likely to think candidate A will be more socially accepted by co-workers and clients than candidate B	28	6532%
• No, hiring managers are not more likely to think candidate A will be more socially accepted by co-workers and clients than candidate B	5	11.1%
• It depends on candidate B's disability	1	2.2%
• I am not sure	11	24.4%
17. Do you anticipate that hiring managers would be more likely to think candidate A is more qualified for employment than candidate B?		
• Yes, hiring managers are more likely to think candidate A is more qualified for employment than candidate B	15	33.3%
• No, hiring managers are not more likely to think candidate A is more qualified for employment than candidate B	7	15.6%
• It depends on the qualifications of both candidates	19	42.2%
• It depends on candidate B's qualifications and her disability	0	0%
• I am not sure	4	839%

18. Do you think that hiring managers would be more likely to think candidate A will be more productive at work than candidate B?

• Yes, hiring managers are more likely to think candidate A will be more productive at work than candidate B	20	44.4%
• No, hiring managers are not more likely to think candidate A will be more productive at work than candidate B	3	6.7%
• It depends on candidate B's disability and the tasks that will need to be completed	17	37.8%
• I am not sure	5	11.1%

19. Do you think that hiring managers would be more likely to think Candidate A is more capable of completing their job responsibility than candidate B?

• Strongly agree	6	13.3%
• Agree	18	40.0%
• Neither agree nor agree	11	24.4%
• Disagree	8	17.8%
• Strongly disagree	2	4.4%

Appendix D

Frequency and Percentage: Do Employers Base Their Hiring Decision on First

Impressions?

Table D1
Frequency and Percentage: Do employers base their hiring decision on first impressions?

Items	Frequency	%
20. An applicant comes dressed for the interview in casual attire. Do you think that a hiring manager will think this person is professional?		
• Yes, a hiring manager will think this person is professional	2	4.4%
• A hiring manager will think this person is somewhat professional	1	2.2%
• No, a hiring manager will think this person is unprofessional	25	55.6%
• It depends on the job he/she is applying for	17	37.8%
• I am not sure	0	0.0%
21. An applicant comes in for an interview and says that their priority is their family. Do you think this will affect the hiring manager's decision to hire the candidacy for the position?		
• It would affect his/her candidacy	8	17.4%
• It would somewhat affect his/her candidacy	16	34.8%
• It would not affect his/her candidacy	11	23.9%
• It depends on his/her qualifications	6	13.0%
• I am not sure	5	10.9%
22. An applicant comes into an interview with tattoos on their hands, neck, and face. Do you think a hiring manager thank this candidate would be a good candidate for employment?		
• Yes, a hiring manager will think this applicant would be a good candidate for employment?	4	8.7%
• No, a hiring manager will not think this applicant is a good candidate for employment	17	37.0%
• It depends on his/her qualifications	25	54.4%
• I am not sure	0	0.0%
23. An applicant comes in for an interview with multiple facial piercings. Do you think a hiring manager feels that this candidate would be a good person for employment?		
• Yes, a hiring manager will think the applicant would be a good person for employment	4	8.5%
• No, a hiring manager will not think the applicant would be a good person for employment	17	36.1%
• It depends on his/her qualifications	23	48.9%
• I am not sure	3	6.4%

24. An applicant says during an interview that he/she has low vision and that it is difficult to read print unless it is magnified/enlarged. Do you think a hiring manager would still select this candidate?

- Yes, a hiring manager would still select this candidate   12   25.3%
- No, a hiring manager would not select this candidate   8   17.0%
- It depends on his/her qualifications   24   51.1%
- I am not sure   3   6.4%