

Factors affecting the intention to hire people with Down syndrome: Hierarchical Multiple Linear Regression Analysis



Md. Mizanur Rahman^a   | Chuong Hock Ting^b  | Razitasham Safii^a  | Rosalia Saimon^a  |
Yoke Yong Chen^b  | Sharifa Ezat Wan Puteh^c  | Abg. Safuan Adenan^a 

^aDepartment of Community Medicine and Public Health, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, 94300, Kota Samarahan Sarawak, Malaysia.

^bDepartment of Psychological Medicine, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, 94300 Kota Samarahan Sarawak, Malaysia.

^cDepartment of Community Health, Faculty of Medicine, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Selangor, Malaysia.

Abstract The employability of people with Down syndrome remains a critical issue because misconceptions and discrimination often overshadow their abilities and potential in the workforce. This study used hierarchical multiple linear regression and moderation analysis to investigate factors influencing the intention to hire people with Down syndrome. A cross-sectional design with convenience sampling was used to collect data from 660 respondents from employers, employees, and community members via Google Forms. Data on demographics, organizational culture, knowledge of legislation, and attitudes were collected using a validated questionnaire. Hierarchical multiple linear regression analysis was performed using SPSS version 29, where the intent to hire was the dependent variable. However, the moderation analysis was performed using SmartPLS version 4. A p -value $< .05$ indicated statistical significance. Regression analysis identified several significant predictors of the intention to hire people with disabilities (PWD), including those with Down syndrome. Factors associated with negative outcomes included the respondent category (employer/HR manager from the community of PDS, $p < .001$; co-workers from the community of PDS, $p = .015$), disability-fit HRM practices ($p = .002$), and perceived challenges ($p = .040$). Conversely, factors associated with positive outcomes included top management commitment ($p = .024$), attitudes towards PWDs ($p = .001$), perceived productivity of PWDs ($p < .001$), perceived subjective norms ($p < .001$), and perceived behavioral control ($p < .001$). A moderation analysis revealed that organizational culture ($p = .301$) and subjective norms ($p = 0.296$) did not significantly affect hiring intentions directly, while perceived behavioural control shows a strong positive influence ($p < .001$). The interaction between organizational culture and subjective norms had a small negative effect on hiring intentions ($p = .049$), but organizational culture did not moderate the relationship between perceived behavioural control and hiring intentions ($p = .262$). These findings highlight the complex interplay among factors that influence inclusive hiring practices for people with Down syndrome. To promote inclusive hiring practises, organizations should focus on fostering a supportive organizational culture, enhancing knowledge about support resources, address perceived challenges, and cultivating positive attitudes towards individuals with Down syndrome, particularly among top management.

Keywords: Down syndrome, intention to hire, Regression analysis, theory of planned behaviour

1. Introduction

Employment of people with disabilities, particularly those with Down syndrome, remains a critical global challenges, despite significant progress in disability rights and inclusion. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically Goal 8, emphasize the importance of promoting sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all (United Nations, 2018). This goal explicitly includes people with disabilities, recognizing their right to equal employment opportunities and decent work. Despite these international commitments, the employment rate for individuals with disabilities remains significantly lower than that of the general population, with only 44% of disabled individuals employed compared to 75% of those without disabilities (McDonnall & Lund, 2019). Malaysia's Persons with Disabilities Act 2008 (Laws of Malaysia, 2014) represents a significant step towards aligning national legislation with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which Malaysia ratified. The Act defines persons with disabilities (PWDs) in a manner consistent with CRPD, encompassing long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments that may hinder full participation in society.



For people with Down syndrome, employment represents more than mere economic sustainability; it is a pathway to social participation, personal growth, and improved quality of life (Beatty et al., 2019). Employment can enhance individuals' sense of purpose, social connections, and well-being (Saunders & Nedelec, 2014; Galvao et al., 2019). However, these individuals often face unique challenges in securing and maintaining employment, such as societal stigma, lack of accessible workplaces, and limited job opportunities (Kaye et al., 2011).

The problem lies in the persistent gap between policy intentions and practical implementation. Despite legal frameworks and international agreements that promote disability inclusion, many employers remain hesitant to hire people with Down syndrome because of misconceptions about their abilities, concerns about workplace accommodations, and a lack of understanding of the potential benefits of a diverse workforce (Hernandez et al., 2008; Morwane et al., 2021). This hesitation contributes to the continued marginalization of people with Down syndrome in the labour market, perpetuating cycles of poverty and social exclusion.

Understanding the factors influencing employers' intentions to hire individuals with Down syndrome remains a relatively unexplored area, particularly in terms of specific barriers and facilitators. While there has been past research into general attitudes toward the presence of disability in the workplace, there is very limited research that directly addresses the unique challenges presented by people who have Down syndrome. This research fills this gap by focusing on specific determinants that shape hiring intentions for this population, hence going even further than the literature about general employment of persons with disabilities. Therefore, the significance of this research translates into how it may inform policymakers, employers, and disability advocates about targeted strategies to address these unique barriers, eventually making turnover in hiring policies and workplace policies more inclusive.

The primary objective of this study is to investigate the factors that influence the intention to hire people with Down syndrome by employing hierarchical multiple linear regression analysis while also examining the moderating effect of the organization's culture on this intention. This comprehensive approach aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the complex interactions among individual, organizational, and societal factors that shape employment opportunities for individuals with Down syndrome.

2. Methods

2.1. Setting and Study Populations

This study used a cross-sectional study design to investigate the factors influencing employers' intentions to hire individuals with Down syndrome in Malaysia. Participants were Malaysian adults aged 18 years and older with basic knowledge of disabilities. The research used standardized surveys to gather data on the attitudes, perceptions, and intentions of employers, employees, and community members. The exclusion criteria were the inability to communicate in the required languages and people with Down syndrome. This approach allowed the examination of the relationships between variables using advanced statistical methods.

2.2. Sample Size and Sample Procedure

Based on the pre-test results and the variable "Do you have experience with Down syndrome?", we calculated the sample size using a prevalence rate of 9.9% for individuals who have experience dealing with or working with Down syndrome. The sample size was calculated using the following formula:

$$n = \frac{z^2 p(1-p)}{d^2} * DE + NR$$

where

n = sample size

z = Z-score corresponding to the desired confidence level.

p = hypothesized frequency of the outcome factor in the population (10%)

d = absolute precision.

DE = design effect;

NR = Non-response rate.

For our study, the following parameters were used, such as the frequency of the outcome factor 10% (0.10), the Z-score for a 95% confidence level of 1.96, absolute precision (d): 3% (0.03), design effect (DE): 1.5 and the non-response rate of 15% (0.15). After applying these parameters to the formula and adjusting for the design effect and non-response rate, the required sample size for this study was 679 participants. This sample size ensures that our study will have sufficient statistical power to detect the outcome of interest with a specified level of precision while accounting for the complex survey design and possible non-response.

To obtain reliable data, we contacted government and non-government organizations working with individuals with disabilities and communities. We identified community leaders as key informants who provided information about individuals

with Down syndrome. After obtaining lists of potential participants, we compiled a database of respondents, including their email addresses and phone numbers. We sent bulk emails or WhatsApp messages to invite them to participate. This purposive and snowball sampling technique is often necessary when studying rare or difficult-to-reach groups, such as people with Down syndrome (Shaghghi et al., 2011; Johnson, 2014; Kirchherr & Charles, 2018; Campbell et al., 2020). However, convenience sampling has limitations that could impact the generalizability and validity of the study's results. One significant limitation is selection bias, as individuals included in the sample are more likely to be connected to formal networks or organizations, which may not fully represent the broader population of people with Down syndrome (Shaghghi et al., 2011; Raifman et al., 2022). Additionally, the reliance on key informants and snowball sampling could lead to a homogeneity in responses, as participants referred by community leaders may share similar characteristics or experiences. This lack of diversity could limit the variability of the data, reducing the study's ability to capture a comprehensive range of experiences among individuals with Down syndrome. Despite these constraints, our approach has provided a pragmatic way to identify our population of interest. In future research, we may consider more rigorous sampling techniques such as respondent-driven sampling or time-location sampling (Shaghghi et al., 2011; Kirchherr & Charles, 2018).

2.3. Data Collection Instruments

To collect comprehensive data, we employed a multicomponent instrument. The first component collected sociodemographic information, such as age, gender, ethnicity, religion, marital status, education level, and occupation. The second and third components assessed knowledge and attitudes using a 5-point Likert scale (Meager et al., 2002). The fourth component measured perceived productivity and challenges associated with hiring people with Down syndrome using a 7-point Likert scale (Macdonald & Deacon, 2019). The final component evaluated perceived subjective norms, perceived behavioural control, and intention to hire individuals with Down syndrome using a 7-point Likert scale, adapted from Macdonald and Deacon (2019). These variables were conceptualized from the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 2002). The data collection instruments were rigorously validated to ensure the reliability and accuracy of the Likert scale items used to measure knowledge, attitudes, and behavioural factors. Experts in the field performed content validation to ensure the relevance and clarity of the items. Additionally, we conducted a pilot study with a sample of 100 participants who exhibited characteristics similar to those of the study population. We carried out a reliability analysis to establish convergent validity, which demonstrated strong internal consistency. Cronbach's alpha values ranged from 0.694 to 0.949, indicating acceptable to excellent reliability, while the corrected item-total correlations ranged from 0.331 to 0.936, further supporting the reliability of individual items. The average variance extracted was greater than 0.50. We also assessed discriminant validity using three key criteria: the Fornell-Larcker criterion, cross-loading, and the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT). These analyses confirmed that the constructs were distinct from each other, establishing discriminant validity (Henseler et al., 2015). The results from these validation processes underscore the robustness and credibility of the instrument design. The combination of expert validation, a pilot study, and thorough statistical analyses ensures that the Likert scale items used in this study are both reliable and valid, contributing to the overall strength of the data collection process.

2.4. Measures

2.4.1. Independent Variables

Organizational culture in the context of employing people with Down syndrome encompasses the collective values, beliefs, attitudes, and practises within a company that influence the perception, treatment, and integration of these employees (Kulkarni & Gopakumar, 2014; Nelissen et al., 2016). It is characterized by four key domains: top management commitment, which emphasizes leadership support for inclusive practises; inclusive culture, which fosters acceptance and equal opportunities; supportive workplace, which provides necessary resources and assistance; and disability-fit HRM, which focuses on tailored HR practises for managing employees with disabilities. A positive organizational culture, measured on a 27-item scale, significantly impacts the successful integration of Down syndrome employees into the workforce.

Knowledge of people with Down syndrome was measured by the awareness, understanding, or familiarity gained through experience or education. It encompasses facts, information, and skills acquired through a theoretical or practical understanding of a subject. Each statement was assessed using a Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". A higher Likert scale score indicates a higher knowledge level.

Attitude towards people with Down syndrome refers to the general positive or negative evaluation, feelings, and predispositions a person has about the inclusion and treatment of people with Down syndrome in their workplaces. This construct encompasses beliefs about rights, capabilities, and fair treatment in employment settings.

Perceived productivity refers to hiring people with Down syndrome in the workplace, and it refers to the efficiency and effectiveness with which individuals or teams complete tasks and achieve goals within a given time frame (Assis et al., 2014). It comprehensively assesses productivity across various parameters, including suitability for the job, quality of work, workload, customer service, and supervisory ability. Each parameter provides insight into different aspects of employee performance and organizational efficiency.

Perceived challenges of hiring people with Down syndrome in the workplace include overcoming stereotypes and biases, providing necessary accommodations, and ensuring adequate support and training for employees with Down syndrome and their colleagues (Assis et al., 2014). The measuring parameters to assess these challenges were cost concerns, awareness challenges, co-worker assistance, employment justification, customer comfort, and termination apprehension.

Perceived subjective norms for hiring people with Down syndrome refer to the social pressures and expectations of employers and employees regarding the employment of individuals with Down syndrome. Perceived subjective norms influence the intention to hire by shaping the social environment and expectations within the organization, thereby impacting decision-making and behaviour related to inclusive hiring practises (Ajzen, 1991; Taylor & Todd, 1995; Ajzen, 2002). These components are typically measured using a series of statements rated on a Likert scale, with higher scores indicating stronger perceived social pressure and support for hiring individuals with Down syndrome.

Perceived behavioural control refers to an individual's perception of their ability to work with a person with Down syndrome. This construct measured the sense of perceived control over work with people with Down syndrome. A higher level of perceived behavioural control suggests that the individual feels more capable and empowered to engage in relationships with people with Down syndrome. It also used a series of statements rated on a Likert scale, with higher scores indicating greater sense of perceived control (Ajzen, 2002).

2.5. *Dependent Variable*

Intention to hire people with Down syndrome refers to the degree of willingness, commitment, and preparedness of employers and employees to integrate and work alongside people with Down syndrome in their organization. This construct is typically measured using a series of statements rated on a Likert scale, with higher scores indicating a stronger intention to hire people with Down syndrome.

2.6. *Data collection procedure*

The data collection procedure utilized a Google Forms survey distributed via email and WhatsApp. Participants received a detailed briefing note and were required to provide digital approval before accessing the main survey questionnaire (Roberts & Allen, 2015). However, those without formal education were interviewed face-to-face and assisted by researchers. But their number was minimal. After approval, the respondents were presented with the survey questions and asked to complete the questionnaire. To maintain ethical integrity, participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage of the survey process (Buchanan & Hvizdak, 2009). This approach ensured voluntary participation and adherence to ethical guidelines for online research (Regmi et al., 2016).

2.7. *Data Analysis*

Data analysis was conducted using a systematic approach. Initially, data were entered directly into Microsoft Excel and subsequently transferred to the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for further analysis (Pallant, 2020). Exploratory data analysis was performed to identify and address missing data. Missing values were imputed using an advanced SPSS module, ensure that fully completed data were analyzed (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2018). The descriptive data analysis included frequency distribution and percentage calculations for categorical data, whereas mean, standard deviation, and range were calculated for continuous data (Field, 2018). Inferential analysis began with correlation analysis, followed by hierarchical multiple linear regression to examine the intention to hire as a dependent variable. To explore the moderating effects of organizational culture on perceived subjective norms and perceived behavioural control, a moderation analysis was performed using SmartPLS version 4 (Ringle et al., 2024). All statistical analyses were performed using SPSS Version 29, and a p-value of less than .05 was considered statistically significant (IBM Corp, 2021).

3. Results

3.1. *Sociodemographic characteristics*

Table 1 summarises the characteristics of the 660 respondents, comprising 26.5% employers/HR managers, 48.9% co-workers, and 24.5% community members of PDS. The mean age was 36.9 years (SD = 12.54), ranging from 18 to 73 years. The gender distribution included 39.7% males and 60.3% females. Ethnically, 14.5% of the respondents were Malay, 67.0% were Chinese, and 18.5% were Bumiputra (indigenous people in Sarawak and Sabah). Educational levels varied, with 2.9% having no formal education, 4.8% primary, 25.0% secondary, 12.6% pre-university, 43.0% undergraduate, and 11.7% postgraduate. Marital status is nearly evenly split, with 50.2% single and 49.8% married. Religiously, 16.7% are Muslim, 57.0% are Christian, and 26.4% followed other religions, including Hinduism, free thinkers, and atheists.

3.2. *Factors affecting the intention to hire people with Down syndrome: Hierarchical Multiple Linear Regression Analysis*

The primary objective of this study was to investigate the factors that influence the intention to hire people with Down syndrome by using hierarchical multiple linear regression analysis. The dependent variable was the intention to hire people

with Down syndrome. The independent variables included demographic factors (age, category of respondents, gender), organizational factors (Top management commitment, inclusive culture, supportive workplace, disability HRM-fit), knowledge and attitudinal factors and perceived behavioural control factors (Perceived Productivity, Perceived challenges, Perceived subjective norms, Perceived Behavioural control).

Table 1 Respondent characteristics.

Characteristics	N	%
Respondents		
Employer/ HR manager	175	26.5
Co-worker	323	48.9
Community of PDS	162	24.5
Mean age (std) years	Mean (std) = 36.9 (12.54) years, Min = 18, Max = 73	
Gender		
Male	262	39.7
Female	398	60.3
Ethnicity		
Malay	96	14.5
Chinese	442	67.0
fBumiputra	122	18.5
Level of education		
No formal education	19	2.9
Primary education	32	4.8
Secondary education	165	25.0
Pre-university	83	12.6
Undergraduate	284	43.0
Postgraduate	77	11.7
Marital status		
Single	331	50.2
Married	329	49.8
Religion		
Islam	110	16.7
Christian	376	57.0
φOthers	174	26.4

f Indigenous people in Sarawak and Sabah; φ others are Hinduism, free thinkers, atheists, etc.

A hierarchical multiple regression analysis was performed in three steps to predict the intention to hire individuals with Down syndrome, with each successive model showing significant improvement. Model 1 included demographic variables, Model 2 added organizational commitment and culture variables, and Model 3 included knowledge, attitudes, and perceived behavioural control variables. The final model (Model 3) explained 62.5% of the variance in the dependent variable. Assumption checks confirmed the validity of the regression analysis, indicating normality in residuals, no significant heteroscedasticity, autocorrelation, and multicollinearity among predictors.

Regression analysis revealed that the category of respondents (employer/HR manager – community of PDS) ($\beta = -.641$, $p < .001$; co-workers – community of PDS) ($\beta = -.162$, $p < .015$), disability-fit HRM practises ($\beta = -.170$, $p = .002$), and perceived challenges ($\beta = -.052$, $p = .040$) were significant negative predictors of the intention to hire PWD. Conversely, top management commitment ($\beta = 0.117$, $p = .024$), attitude towards PWDs ($\beta = .104$, $p = .001$), perceived productivity of PWDs ($\beta = .235$, $p < .001$), perceived subjective norms ($\beta = .290$, $p < .001$), and perceived behavioural control ($\beta = .223$, $p < .001$) were significant positive predictors. Age, gender, inclusive culture, supportive workplace, and knowledge of disability issues were not significant predictors (Table 2).

3.3. The moderating effect of organizational culture on the intention to hire individuals with Down syndrome

Moderation analysis is a statistical technique used to examine how the relationship between two variables is affected by a third variable, known as the moderator (Hayes, 2017). A moderation analysis with a primary objective was performed to examine the direct effects of organizational culture, perceived behavioural control, and perceived subjective norms on the intention to hire people with Down syndrome (PDS) and to investigate the moderating effects of organizational culture on the relationships between perceived behavioural control and intention to hire PDS, as well as between perceived subjective norms and intention to hire PDS (Table 3).

The analysis reveals that the organizational culture ($\beta = 0.007$, $p = 0.301$) and subjective norms ($\beta = -0.013$, $p = 0.296$) do not significantly affect the intention to hire, because their confidence intervals include zero. On the contrary, perceived behavioural control shows a strong, positive, and highly significant relationship with the intention of hiring intention ($\beta = 0.974$,

$p < 0.001$), with a narrow confidence interval that does not include zero, indicating that individuals who perceive greater control over their hiring decisions are much more likely to have a stronger intention for hiring people with Down syndrome.

Table 2 Factors affecting the intention to hire individuals with Down syndrome: Hierarchical Multiple Linear Regression Analysis.

Predictors	Beta	SE	β	95% CI	
				LL	UL
Intercept ^a	0.069	0.436			
Age in years	0	0.004	-.002	-0.054	0.05
Category of respondents					
Employer/ HR Manager - Community members of PDS	-1.199	0.136	-.641***	-0.784	-0.498
Co-workers – Community members of PDS	-0.304	0.124	-.162*	-0.293	-0.032
Gender					
Male – Female	-0.015	0.092	-.008	-0.105	0.089
Organizational culture					
Top management commitment	0.01	0.004	.117*	0.015	0.22
Inclusive culture	0.006	0.006	.060	-0.068	0.188
Supportive workplace	0.004	0.006	.044	-0.07	0.158
Disability-Fit HRM	-0.015	0.005	-.170**	-0.275	-0.064
Knowledge and attitude					
Knowledge	-0.002	0.003	-.015	-0.08	0.05
Attitude	0.014	0.004	.104***	0.04	0.168
Behavioural factors					
Perceived productivity	0.026	0.003	.235***	0.176	0.293
Perceived challenges	-0.008	0.004	-.052*	-0.102	-0.002
Perceived subjective norms	0.296	0.038	.290***	0.217	0.364
Perceived behavioural control	0.253	0.038	.223***	0.158	0.289

Dependent variable: Intention to hire. LL= Lower limit of 95% confidence interval; UL= Upper limit of 95% confidence interval. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Table 3 Impact of organizational culture on intention to hiring people with Down syndrome.

Parameters	β	T -value	Bias-corrected 95% CI	
			5%	95%
Organizational culture -> Intention to hire	0.007	0.522	-0.015	0.032
Perceived behavioural control -> Intention to hire	0.974***	53.786	0.943	1.004
Subjective norm -> Intention to hire	-0.013	0.537	-0.052	0.028
Organizational culture x Subjective norm -> Intention to hire	-0.037*	1.651	-0.076	-0.001
Organizational culture x Perceived behavioural control -> Intention to hire	0.013	0.638	-0.02	0.047

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

The interaction analysis reveals that the organizational culture and subjective norms have a small but statistically significant negative effect on the intention to hire ($\beta = -0.037$, $p = 0.049$), suggesting that a strong organizational culture may weaken the influence of subjective norms on hiring intentions. In contrast, the interaction between organizational culture and perceived behavioural control does not significantly affect the intention to hire ($\beta = 0.013$, $p = 0.262$), indicating that organizational culture does not moderate the relationship between perceived behavioural control and hiring intentions (Figure 1).

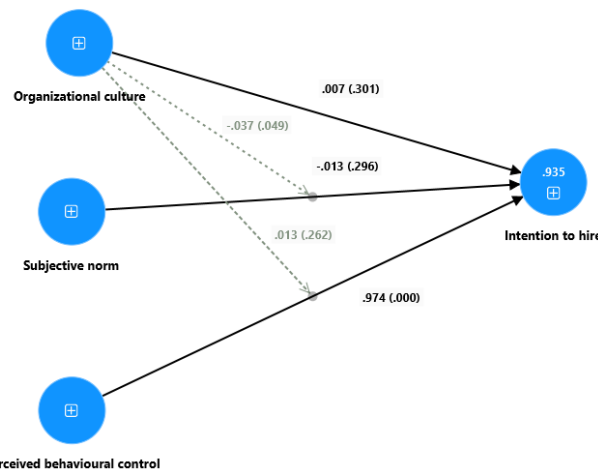


Figure 1 Moderation analysis of organizational culture on the intention to hire PDS.

4. Discussion

Individuals with Down syndrome (PDS) face significant barriers to employment despite their potential to contribute meaningfully to the workforce (Hendrix et al., 2021). We examine the factors that influence the intention to hire PDS in Malaysia, focusing on the roles of organizational factors, knowledge and attitudes and perceived behavioural control. Additionally, we investigate the moderating effect of organizational culture on the relationship between perceived control, social norms and hiring intentions. Our findings reveal a complex interplay of factors, highlighting the challenges and opportunities to promote greater inclusivity for PDS in the workplace.

Our analysis found a low intention to hire PDS among employers/HR managers and co-workers compared with the general community, highlighting a significant challenge in workplace inclusion. This disparity may be due to persistent stereotypes and misconceptions about the capabilities of PDS in professional settings (Dunn, 2022). Research suggests that these attitudes could be influenced by a lack of personal interaction with PDS and a limited understanding of their potential contributions to the workplace (Down Syndrome International, 2024).

The relationship between organizational factors and the intention to hire PWD is complex and sometimes counterintuitive (Nagtegaal et al., 2023; Omar et al., 2023). Although top management commitment has positively influenced hiring intentions for PWDs, other factors such as disability-fit human resource management (HRM) practises and supportive workplace culture have shown more nuanced effects.

Research has consistently demonstrated that top management commitment is a crucial factor in promoting the inclusion of PWDs in the workplace. When organizational leaders demonstrate a strong commitment to diversity and inclusion, this often results in more positive hiring intentions for PWDs (Beatty et al., 2019). This commitment can manifest itself through policy development, resource allocation and visible support for disability inclusion initiatives.

However, the relationship between disability-fit HRM practises and hiring intentions is complex. Surprisingly, some studies have found that the presence of disability-specific HRM practises does not directly predict increased hiring intentions for PWDs and, in some cases, may even negatively correlate with such intentions (Conesa et al., 2017; Calderón-Milán et al., 2020). This counterintuitive finding suggests that the mere existence of disability-focused HR practises may not be sufficient to drive hiring intentions.

Several factors may contribute to this unexpected relationship. First, the implementation of disability-fit HRM practises may highlight the perceived complexities and challenges associated with hiring PWDs, potentially deterring some managers from pursuing such hiring (Brzykcy et al., 2019). Furthermore, organizations with well-developed disability-fit HRM practises may already have a significant proportion of PWDs in their workforce, potentially reducing the perceived need for additional hires. The role of a supportive workplace culture in PWD hiring intentions is also complex. Although a supportive culture is generally considered crucial for the successful inclusion of PWDs, its direct impact on hiring intentions may be less pronounced than expected. This could be due to the fact that a supportive culture can influence PWD retention and career development more than initial hiring decisions (Colella & Bruyère, 2011). Another explanation might be that the disability-fit HRM practices, when not well intertwined with the inclusive organization culture, emphasize perceived challenges or costs related to hiring PWDs, such as additional training, accommodation, and possible productivity issues. Such practices might have created a belief among employers that hiring PWDs requires more effort and resources, which may noticeably explain the overall reluctance or hesitation in recruiting them (Kaye et al., 2011). Unfortunately, such accommodations for PWDs within HR practices could perpetuate stereotypes about their capabilities or difficulties that would lower employers' intentions of hiring them (Cavanagh et al., 2016).

A positive attitude towards PWDs is a strong predictor of hiring intentions. Employers with favourable views towards PWDs are more likely to consider them for employment. This positive attitude can stem from various factors, including previous positive experiences with PWDs and general pro-social motivation to support diversity and inclusion in the workplace (Beatty et al., 2019; Brzykcy et al., 2019).

The perceived productivity of PWDs is another significant factor that influences hiring decisions. If employers perceive PWDs as equally or more productive than their non-disabled counterparts, they are more inclined to hire them (Stone & Colella, 1996; Lengnick-Hall et al., 2008). However, negative stereotypes and misconceptions about the productivity of PWDs can also create barriers, which can deter them from hiring (Bonaccio et al., 2020; Malhotra et al., 2022; Omar et al., 2023).

Interestingly, knowledge about disability issues does not significantly affect hiring intentions. While one might assume that greater awareness and understanding of disability-related matters would lead to higher hiring rates, research indicates otherwise. Lack of knowledge about disabilities can be a barrier, but having knowledge does not necessarily translate into a higher likelihood of hiring PWDs (Conesa et al., 2017). This suggests that other factors, such as attitudes and perceived productivity, play more critical roles in hiring decisions than mere awareness or knowledge about disabilities (Hernandez et al., 2008; Kaye et al., 2011).

Perceived behavioural control plays a significant role in influencing the intention to hire PWDs. Individuals who believe that they can hire PWDs, characterized by high perceived behavioural control, are much more likely to follow through with such hiring decisions. This concept is grounded in the theory of planned behaviour, which posits that perceived behavioural

control, attitudes, and subjective norms significantly predict behavioural intentions (Ajzen, 1991). Studies have shown that when employers feel confident in their ability to manage and support PWDs in the workplace, they are more inclined to hire them (McDonnall & Lund, 2019; Mahasneh et al., 2023).

However, the influence of organizational culture on hiring intentions introduces additional complexity. Organizational culture can weaken the influence of subjective norms on hiring intentions. Subjective norms refer to perceived social pressure to perform or not perform a particular behaviour, such as hiring PWDs. An organization's highly supportive or unsupportive culture of hiring PWDs can either amplify or diminish the impact of these social pressures. For example, in a supportive organizational culture, positive social norms about hiring PWDs may be less influential because the culture already aligns with these norms (Mahasneh et al., 2023).

Interestingly, organizational culture does not significantly moderate the relationship between perceived behavioural control and the intention to hire PWDs. This suggests that regardless of the organizational culture, if an individual believes they have the capability and resources to hire PWDs, their intention remains strong. The direct influence of perceived behavioural control on hiring intentions appears robust and less susceptible to the moderating effects of organizational culture (Ajzen, 1991, 2002; McDonnall & Lund, 2019).

4.1. Strengths and limitations of the study

This study has demonstrated several strengths, including its nationwide scope and the collaboration with NGOs and government offices for data collection, which enhance the sample's representativeness (Bolarinwa, 2015). Advanced statistical techniques, particularly moderation analysis, can provide a nuanced understanding of the complex relationships between variables that influence hiring intentions for PDS (Hayes, 2017). However, the study has limitations that should be acknowledged. The sample size was substantial, but it fell short of expectations, potentially limiting the generalizability of the findings (Faber & Fonseca, 2014). The cross-sectional nature of the data precludes the establishment of causal relationships, restricting interpretations to associations (Levin, 2006). Additionally, reliance on self-reported measures introduces the possibility of response bias due to the topic's sensitive nature. This approach raises concerns about social desirability bias, where respondents may provide answers, they believe are more socially acceptable (Fisher, 1993; Althubaiti, 2016). The focus of the study on perceived beliefs and knowledge, rather than objective measures, may not fully capture the reality of the participants' understanding and attitudes.

5. Conclusions

These findings underscore the importance of a holistic approach to the inclusion of people with disabilities in the workplace. Although top management commitment is vital, it must be complemented by thoughtfully designed and implemented HRM practises and a truly inclusive organizational culture. Future research should focus on understanding the interaction between these factors and how they can be optimized to promote the hiring and inclusion of PWDs on the job. Although positive attitudes and perceived productivity strongly influence the intention to hire a PWDs, knowledge of disability issues alone does not significantly impact hiring decisions. This highlights the need for comprehensive strategies that not only educate employers about disabilities but also work to change attitudes and perceptions regarding the productivity and capabilities of PWDs. Perceived behavioural control is a critical determinant of hiring intentions for PWDs, and organizational culture primarily moderates the influence of subjective norms rather than perceived behavioural control. This highlights the importance of fostering a sense of capability and confidence among hiring managers to promote the inclusion of PWDs in the workforce.

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Ethical considerations

Informed consent was obtained from all participants before participation (American Psychological Association, 2017). Data confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the research process (Saunders et al., 2015). Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence (World Medical Association, 2013). No financial benefits were offered to participants. Ethical approval was obtained from the institutional ethics committee before the implementation of the study (Ref # FME/21/12) (Resnik, 2018).

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest. The funding agency had no role in the study design, collection, analysis or interpretation, manuscript writing, or the decision to publish the results.

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