

Do Persons with Disabilities Act (2008) and Organizational Culture Influence Managerial Intention to Hire Persons with Disabilities?: The Malaysian Perspective

(Adakah Akta Orang Kurang Upaya (2008) dan Budaya Organisasi Mempengaruhi Niat Pengurus untuk Mengupah Orang Kurang Upaya?: Perspektif Malaysia)

Magdalene C.H. Ang
(Labuan School of International Business and Finance, Universiti Malaysia Sabah)

ABSTRACT

People generally tend to perceive persons with disabilities (PWDs) as “risky hires,” thus denying PWDs jobs for which they are qualified and capable of doing. Reasons for discrimination against PWDs are numerous, ranging from a lack of understanding of disability to an absence of effective policies and legislations to protect PWDs’ employment rights. It has been over 6 years since the Malaysian Persons with Disabilities Act (PWDA 2008) was enacted. Whether this Act has the intended impact on hiring decisions for Malaysians with disabilities has yet to be empirically ascertained. In addition, no known research exists concerning the type of organizational culture that is more supportive of disabled job applicants. Hence, the present study explores how these two factors might influence managerial intention to hire PWDs. Using a survey questionnaire, data were obtained from 201 non-disabled employers from various organizations in Sabah and Labuan, Malaysia. As hypothesized, the PWDA (2008) and organizational culture significantly predict the intention to hire PWDs. The findings hold important implications for policy makers and interest groups.

Keywords: Hiring PWDs; legislation; organizational culture; Malaysia.

ABSTRAK

Secara amnya, orang ramai cenderung bertanggapan bahawa orang kurang upaya (OKU) sebagai “pekerja berisiko,” dan kerana itu mereka menafikan OKU pekerjaan walaupun mereka layak dan mampu melakukannya. Wujud banyak alasan untuk mendiskriminasi terhadap PWDs, termasuk kurang pemahaman terhadap ketidakupayaan, dan ketiadaan dasar-dasar dan perundangan yang berkesan untuk melindungi hak pekerjaan OKU. Enam tahun telah berlalu sejak Akta OKU Malaysia diluluskan. Bagaimanapun, masih belum ditentukan secara empirikal sama ada Akta ini memberi impak yang diinginkan terhadap keputusan penggajian OKU. Selain itu, belum ada kajian terhadap jenis budaya organisasi yang lebih menyokong OKU yang memohon kerja. Oleh itu, satu kajian dijalankan untuk meneroka bagaimana dua faktor ini mungkin menyumbang kepada niat pengurus untuk mengupah OKU. Menggunakan borang soal selidik, data diperolehi dari 201 majikan bukan OKU yang mewakili pelbagai pertubuhan di Sabah dan Labuan, Malaysia. Seperti yang dihipotesiskan, Akta OKU dan budaya organisasi nyata sekali meramalkan niat mengupah OKU. Dapatan kajian ini mempunyai implikasi penting kepada pengubah-ubah dasar dan kumpulan-kumpulan berkepentingan.

Kata kunci: Menggaji OKU; perundangan; budaya organisasi; Malaysia.

INTRODUCTION

All over the world, the unemployment rates of persons with disabilities (PWDs) are significantly above the rest of the population. In Malaysia, more than 95% of PWDs are still unemployed (Ministry of Human Resources 2010). Although some Malaysians with disabilities may be incapable of working, a large portion express that they are able and willing to work if given the opportunity (Ministry of Human Resources 2010; Tiun & Khoo 2013). Why is the issue of PWDs’ employment of the utmost importance?

For organizations, PWDs can be considered an untapped, but significant, source of labor (Salleh et al. 2001; Khoo et al. 2013a; Tiun & Khoo 2013). More importantly, the inclusion of PWDs in gainful employment

can help boost the national economy (Evans 2007). In 2000, World Bank estimated a loss of between US\$1.37 trillion and US\$1.94 trillion in the global gross domestic product due to exclusion of PWDs in the mainstream society (Perry 2002). The figures for a medium-income country such as Malaysia would probably range from US\$1.68 to US\$2.38 billion dollars (Perry 2002).

For PWDs, employment provides meaningful life of independence and human dignity (Tiun et al. 2011; Khoo et al. 2013a; Zhang 2007). Work can also help PWDs escape from the perpetual and vicious circle of marginalization, poverty and social exclusion (Ang 2012; Tiun et al. 2011; Zhang 2007). Hence, the Person with Disabilities Act (PWDA), which was enacted in 2008, represents an important milestone in Malaysian history as the disabled population in Malaysia was finally granted

protections over their basic rights in all areas of life including employment. The present study attempts to discover whether this act has been able to enhance PWDS' employment opportunities.

The extant literature suggests that many national policies or legislations, such as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA 1990) and Disability Discrimination Act (DDA 1995), that protect and support the disabled population seemingly do little to address the problem of unemployment among PWDS. Disabled people still face discrimination in the workplace. Similarly, Safilios-Rothschild (1970: 9) posits that "legislation by itself is powerless unless prevailing values and beliefs concerning the disabled are changed." It can be surmised that even with legislation in place, PWDS are still likely to face discrimination in employment. This could be in large part due to organizations' lack of understanding of disability and a culture that does not embrace the idea of having PWDS as part of the workforce. Disabled people are generally viewed as weak, dependent and incompetent when compared to non-disabled people (Bell & Klein 2001; Jayasooria et al. 1997), and as such are likely to be excluded from the workforce.

Against this background, the present study is undertaken to investigate the influence of PWDA (2008) and organizational culture on managerial intention to hire PWDS. Currently, studies concerning disabled people in Malaysia are limited, but it is heartening to note they have garnered increasing attention in recent years. Several studies explore the experiences of Malaysians with disabilities, including workplace challenges consisting of discrimination, exploitation and bullying (e.g., Khoo et al. 2013a; Khoo et al. 2013b; Tiun & Khoo 2013); employment outcomes (e.g., Ang et al. 2007; Ang 2012); the nature and quality of relationships with superiors (i.e., leader-member exchange (LMX)) (Ang et al. 2008, 2009); organizational support (Ang 2012); and workplace adjustments (Khoo et al. 2013b). Other studies focus on disability issues at large, including laws governing accessibility for PWDS (e.g., Ainul 2012); opportunities and challenges for PWDS in the Malaysian employment arena (Jayasooria et al. 1997); and critical factors influencing employment of Malaysian with disabilities (e.g., Khor 2002; Ramakrishnan 2007).

The present study hopes to contribute to this growing body of knowledge, particularly with regard to managerial hiring decisions for Malaysian with disabilities. Specifically, this study examines the influence of two factors (i.e., PWDA (2008) and organizational culture) on managerial intention to hire PWDS. This study also determines which of these two factors make a greater contribution to the inclusion of PWDS in the Malaysian workplace. The findings could have significant implications for policy makers and interest groups in the country on the impact of PWDA (2008) on managerial intention to hire PWDS. Likewise, managers can be better informed of the type of organizational culture that can foster the inclusion of PWDS in the workplace.

Furthermore, the study also identifies theoretical and empirical gaps in existing research; and provide guidance for future research.

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (2008)

The majority of PWDS continue to live in poverty because they fail to gain employment (United Nations 2006). The extant literature (e.g., Bagshaw 2006; Disability Homepage 2007; Neufeldt & Albright 1998; Perry 2002) indicates that the unemployment rate of PWDS is at least twice that of non-disabled people. For instance, the unemployment rate of PWDS in Singapore is reported to be as high as 53.3 percent (Lim & Ng 2001). In some other countries (e.g., Latin America, Caribbean, and Argentina), unemployment among PWDS is as high as 80 percent (United Nations 2006). As noted earlier, more than 90 percent of PWDS in Malaysia remain unemployed (Ministry of Human Resources 2010). A study by Tiun and Khoo (2013) on 478 Malaysian with disabilities in the northern region reports that those who have been successfully employed felt that the assistance rendered by family members, relatives or NGOs who had personal contact with employers had been instrumental in their getting hired at the first attempt. Lamentably, those who did not enjoy the same privilege only managed to secure a job after several attempts (Tiun & Khoo 2013). Moreover, 13.2 percent of the respondents claim to have experienced discrimination when applying for jobs (Tiun & Khoo 2013). The aforementioned phenomenon illuminates real and pressing challenges confronting Malaysians with disabilities in regards to gaining employment.

Over the years, the Malaysian government has implemented various policies to address the problem of unemployment among PWDS. Its commitment towards the disabled population is reflected by the full and effective participation of PWDS in society, the act thus delineates the following aims for PWDS: (1) accessibility to the physical, social, economic, and cultural environment; (2) accessibility to health, education, employment, information and communication; and (3) equal opportunities, protection and assistance in all circumstances and subject only to such limitations, restrictions and the protection of rights as provided by the Federal Constitution of Malaysia (1957) (Ainul 2012). Ainul (2012) highlights the prevailing regulations and compliance standards found in Malaysian legal policies, such as the PWDA (2008) (Part III of Act 685), which are aimed at facilitating the creation of accessibility to public facilities, amenities, services and equipment for PWDS. Ainul (2012) reiterates that accessibility is the key for PWDS to fully and effectively participate and contribute to the well-being and diversity of the community and society.

With the PWDA (2008) in place, the rights of Malaysians with disabilities to access to employment on equal basis with their non-disabled counterparts has also been reinforced: "The employer shall protect the rights

of persons with disabilities, on equal basis with persons without disabilities, to just and favorable conditions of work, including equal opportunities and remuneration for work of equal value..." (PWDA 2008). Under this act, it clearly becomes unlawful for any employers to discriminate PWDS by refusing and failing to accept their admission as employees on the basis of their disabilities.

The enactment of PWDA (2008) was generally well received by the Malaysian public. Yet, some sectors have expressed concerns that the act may have many weaknesses which cannot provide protection efficiency. The act has been metaphorized as "a toothless tiger that is nothing more than a charity act" (The Malaysian Bar 2010). The fact that no provisions exist to penalize organizations and individuals who discriminate against a disabled person demonstrates that the legislative enactment is piecemeal at best and a cosmetic exercise to appease non-governmental organizations (NGOs) representing PWDS (The Malaysian Bar 2010). Since the PWDA (2008) has such a brief history, such claims remain unsupported and the impact of this act on the employment landscape, particularly on managerial intention to hire PWDS, warrants an empirical examination. It is worth noting that even after a lapse of ten or more years since anti-discrimination laws were passed in some developed countries to protect disabled people, most employers still have no disabled staff (Bagshaw 2006). Past studies (e.g., Bell & Heitmueller 2008; Jones 2009; Kidd et al. 2000) that investigate the impact of Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) (1990) or Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) (1995) provide empirical evidence of the small impact, in some cases negative effect, of such legislation on the employment rates of PWDS.

Safilios-Rothschild (1970: 9) cautiously notes that "legislation by itself is powerless unless prevailing values and beliefs concerning the disabled are changed." In a similar vein, the International Labour Organization (ILO) (2003) and the British Employers' Forum on Disability (2002, 2010) state that while legislation is imperative, it alone cannot break down the barriers and discrimination faced by disabled people seeking employment. Stone and Colella (1996) opine that preferential treatment of disabled employees may actually increase co-workers' feelings of inequity and resentment toward disabled employees. To some extent, legislation can even perpetuate stereotypes and negative expectancies due to inferences that a disabled person is hired not on his own merit, but because of legal requirements (Stone & Colella 1996). Consequently, PWDS may be treated as tokens or, worse, be plagued with recurring treatment-related problems in organizations (Stone & Colella 1996).

In a study (Jackson et al. 2000) investigating employers' willingness to comply with the DDA (1995), the findings regarding the attitudes of employers toward PWDS and the knowledge of employers concerning the DDA (1995) reveals some interesting findings. The study finds that the more positive the attitude of employers towards PWDS, the higher the tendency to comply with

the disability act. Employers' compliance also increases when they are more knowledgeable about the act. Based on these findings and other literature (e.g., Stone & Colella 1996), legislation can be an important determinant of the inclusion of PWDS in organizations. Such legislation prohibits unfair discrimination against PWDS and requires employers to consider disabled job applicants. Given the above discussion, hypothesis 1 is formulated:

H₁ PWDA (2008) significantly influences managerial intention to hire PWDS.

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

Organizational culture comprises underlying values, assumptions and unwritten expectations. It dictates the way people are viewed and treated in organizations (Schur et al. 2009). Different conceptualizations of organizational culture exist in the literature. The Competing Value Framework (CVF) (Quinn & Rohrbaugh 1983) is one commonly used model. The original model of the CVF has four quadrants (i.e., clan quadrant; market quadrant; hierarchy quadrant; and adhocracy quadrant). The present study, however, employs a shortened version of the CVF framework proposed by Hoover (2010), who labels the four quadrants as group culture; rational culture; hierarchy culture; and development culture.

Group culture emphasizes cohesion, morale and the development of human resources. Organizations with a group culture are like an extended family: people share a lot of themselves (Cameron & Quinn 2006; Hoover 2010). Such organizations are held together by a humane work environment which empowers employees; emphasizes benefits of individual development; and promotes participation and team work (Cameron & Quinn 2006). Rational culture is concerned with goal achievement and competition (Cameron & Quinn 2006). Organizations that embrace rational culture emphasize defeating competitors and gaining market share. Hierarchy culture focuses on the stability, predictability and efficiency of an organization. This culture reinforces rules or procedures to dominate their employees' behavior. Finally, development culture upholds growth, innovation and development. Organizations with a development culture typically strive to produce new and unique products and/or services and grab new opportunities (Cameron & Quinn 2006; Hoover 2010).

It is evident from the aforementioned CVF quadrants that different organizational cultures could forge different behaviors among diverse members of an organization (Hoover 2010). Hence, organizational culture is particularly important to the experience of PWDS in the workplace (Stone & Colella 1996). Studies indicate that it is not only impairment but also "restrictive environments and disabling barriers embedded in a culture or society" that can deter PWDS from attaining equality in employment (Barnes 1992: 55). One important aspect of work-related behaviors is the kind of relationships PWDS foster with

their co-workers. A Malaysian study (Tiun & Khoo 2013) reveals that the lack of understanding about PWDs' needs and feelings, miscommunication, discrimination, and work exploitation can negatively affect work relationships and are among the key reasons for PWDs to leave their jobs. In another study, Ang et al. (2007) report that disabled employees generally experience a lower quality LMX (i.e., work relationships between a subordinate and superior), and LMX does not appear to contribute significantly to work outcomes, such as promotability; career satisfaction; and salary increment. However, consistent with past mainstream studies (e.g., Graen et al. 1982; Scandura & Schriesheim 1994), LMX is found to be a significant predictor of these outcomes for their non-disabled counterparts (Ang et al. 2007).

An organizational culture that values flexibility, social justice, and personalization; and that embraces diversity (e.g., group culture) is one in which PWDs are treated more favorably than another organizational culture that is more rigid and bureaucratic (e.g., rational and hierarchy cultures) (Schur et al. 2009; Stone & Colella 1996). Schur et al. (2009) reiterate the importance of supportive organizational culture for disabled employees by comparison across worksites. They find that where employees generally report a high level of company fairness and responsiveness, no significant differences exist between employees with and without disabilities on measures of job satisfaction, company loyalty, willingness to work hard and turnover intention.

On the contrary, in organizations where employees generally perceive lower levels of company fairness and responsiveness, the outcome was totally opposite (Schur et al. 2009). Hence, developing a culture of tolerance, acceptance, and understanding (Gewurtz & Kirsh 2009) is paramount to the inclusion of disabled employees. Such culture focuses on changing employees' attitudes and eliminating behaviors that reflect more subtle forms of discrimination and exclusion (Kochan et al. 2003). Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H₂ Organizational culture significantly influences managerial intention to hire PWDs.

METHODOLOGY

SAMPLE

The target sample consists of non-disabled employers and human resource managers of private organizations located in Sabah and Labuan. The purposive sampling technique is used to develop the sampling frame. Every third company is selected from the listing of companies published in the Malaysia's Employer Directory 2010 (Ministry of Human Resources 2010). Initial contacts are then established with the target companies to ascertain their willingness to participate in the research. The result is a final sampling frame consisting of 278 companies in various industries. Data are obtained from the employers

representing these companies by means of self-report questionnaires. The target respondents may or may not have employed disabled workers in their companies at the time of the research, but they must be responsible for the hiring of employees.

A small pilot test is carried out on 20 employers in Labuan to obtain feedback concerning the comprehensibility of the questionnaire items. The pilot test results suggest that the instrument, in its current form, could be used for actual fieldwork. On a prearranged day and time, the researcher personally visited the companies to distribute the surveys to the participating companies using the drop-and-collect survey method (Walker 1976). Each survey form contains a cover letter and questionnaire. After 2 weeks, the researcher returned to the companies to collect the completed questionnaires. Due to ambiguous and incomplete information, only 201 questionnaires are usable, rendering a response rate of 72 percent.

As shown in Table 1, of the 201 respondents, 54 percent are females and 46 percent are males. Ethnic Chinese employers (115 or 57%) are the majority in the sample, followed by Bumiputera (indigenous group) Sabahans (40 or 20%); ethnic Malays (29 or 14%); other ethnicities (10 or 5%); ethnic Indians (4 or 2%); and Bumiputera Sarawakians (3 or 2%). The respondents are manage real estate/renting/service businesses (43 or 21%); wholesale/retail/repair businesses (40 or 20%); manufacturing companies (31 or 15%); hotels and restaurants (23 or 11%); financial institutions (19 or 10%); educational institutions (9 or 5%); health and social work organizations (5 or 3%); and other business types (31 or 15%).

TABLE 1. Description of the sample

	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Gender:		
Female	108	53.7
Male	93	46.3
Ethnicity:		
Malay	29	14.4
Chinese	115	57.2
Indian	4	2.0
Bumiputera Sabah	40	19.9
Bumiputera Sarawak	3	1.5
Other	10	5
Business Type:		
Real estate/renting/business service	43	21.4
Wholesale/retail/repair	40	19.9
Finance	19	9.5
Hotels and restaurants	23	11.4
Manufacturing	31	15.4
Health and social work	5	2.5
Education	9	4.5
Other	31	15.4
Organization Size:		
10 and below	105	52.2
11-100	74	36.8
101 and above	22	11

Note: N = 201

The majority of the companies (105 or 52%) are small-sized enterprises that have 10 or less employees, while 74 (37%) are medium-sized enterprises that have between 11 to 100 employees; and 22 (11%) are large enterprises that have 101 and above employees. Less than one third of the respondents (52 or 26%) report they are the owners of their businesses.

When asked whether they recruit any disabled employees, a significant majority of the respondents (188 or 94%) state that their organizations do not. Of the 13 organizations that employ disabled employees, five employ one disabled employee; five employ two disabled employees; two employ five disabled employees; and only one employs more than 10 disabled employees. Only 66 (33%) respondents express possessing knowledge of the PWDA (2008). The rest of the respondents (135 or 67%) state that they are unaware of the disability act (2008).

MEASURES

The survey questionnaire is divided into four sections: Section A gauges respondents' awareness and knowledge of PWDA (2008), as well as their attitude toward the act. Section B consists of questions relating to organizational culture. Section C measures managers' intention to hire PWDS. Finally, demographic information is obtained from respondents' answers in Section D.

One single item gauging managerial attitude towards PWDA (2008) on a 5-point Likert-scale from 1 (strongly against the Act) to 5 (strongly in favor of the Act) is self-developed. Specifically, the item states:

Malaysia's Person with Disabilities Act (2008) introduced new rights for employees with disabilities. It enforces employers to protect the rights of persons with disabilities and to perform their social obligation endeavor to promote stable employment for persons with disabilities by properly evaluating their abilities, providing suitable places of employment and conducting proper employment management. What is your attitude towards this Act? Are you...?

Items measuring organizational culture and intention to hire PWDS are taken from different sources and are accordingly adapted to suit the purposes of this study. For organizational culture, a total of 12 items are adopted from Hoover (2010). A sample item in this scale reads: *The organization emphasizes human resources. Morale is important.* Organizational culture is assessed on a 5-point Likert-type scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Intention to hire PWDS is gauged on a 5-point Likert-type scale similar to that organizational culture item, using 3 items adapted from Ajzen and Fishbein (1980). A sample item is: *I would actively seek out disabled people to work in my company.* Demographic information obtained from the respondents included business type; gender; ethnicity; and job title.

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Principal Component Analysis (PCA) is performed on the two multi-item scales (i.e., organizational culture and intention to hire PWDS). The first PCA is run for the organizational culture scale and it extracts 2 distinct factors (see Table 2). Factor 1, consisting of five items, is named "humanistic culture" (Helfrich et al. 2007) (Cronbach's alpha = 0.76) to suggest a culture that is more people-oriented. Moreover, these items reflect values, such as human virtues, which ultimately are derived from individuals; and suggest impulsion rather than compulsion (Helfrich et al. 2007). On the contrary, Factor 2 with three items is labeled "prescriptive culture" (Helfrich et al. 2007) (Cronbach's alpha = 0.79) given the fact that this factor denotes a culture that is more task-oriented; and characterized by innovation and development. These findings support Helfrich et al.'s (2007) observation that a two-factor model fits the data marginally better than the classic four-factor CFV framework.

TABLE 2. Factor analysis on organizational culture

Items	F1	F2
<i>Factor 1: Humanistic Culture</i>		
1 This organization is a very personal place. It is like an extended family. People seem to share a lot of themselves.	.86	
2 The glue that holds this place together is loyalty and tradition. Commitment runs high.	.84	
3 The organization emphasizes human resources. Morale is important.	.75	
<i>Factor 2: Prescriptive Culture</i>		
1 The glue that holds this place together is an emphasis on tasks and goal accomplishment. A production orientation is commonly shared.		.89
2 This organization emphasizes growth through developing new ideas. Generating new products or services is important.		.81
3 The glue that holds this place together is commitment to innovation and development. There is an emphasis on being first with new products and services.		.69
Eigenvalue	2.87	1.28
Percentage of Variance	47.84	21.27
Total Variance Explained		69.11%
Measure of Sampling Adequacy		.73
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity		380.95
Significance		.00

Another PCA is conducted on the three items in the intention to hire PWDs scale. The results indicate that all 3 items loaded cleanly on one single factor (see Table 3). The internal consistency reliability of this scale is found to be good (Cronbach's alpha = 0.81).

TABLE 3. Factor analysis of intention to hire PWDs

Items	Factor Loading
<i>Intention to hire PWDs</i>	
1 I intend to hire PWDs.	.88
2 I would hire PWDs if there is an opportunity to do so.	.82
3 I would actively seek out PWDs to work in my company.	.85
Eigenvalue	2.18
Total Variance Explained	72.54%
Measure of Sampling Adequacy	.70
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	204.54
Significance	.00

Descriptive statistics and intercorrelations for the study variables are provided in Table 4. As is evident, the study variables are discriminatory, since standard

deviations are near to or greater than 1.0. It is also worth noting that humanistic culture and prescriptive culture are moderately correlated ($r = .40, p < .01$), justifying them as two distinct subscales of organizational culture. Additionally, the intention to hire PWDs is found to be significantly related to PWDA (2008) ($r = .28, p < .01$) and humanistic culture ($r = .26, p < .01$). However, the correlation between the dependent variable and prescriptive culture is not significant.

Another interesting observation is that humanistic culture is weakly related to PWDA (2008) ($r = .14, p < .05$), which is not the case for prescriptive culture.

To test the hypotheses, multiple regression analysis is accordingly employed. The results shown in Table 5 indicate that the overall resultant model for intention to hire PWDs is significant ($F = 14.19, p < .01$) and the R square value is .18. This R square value means that the model explains 18% of the variance in intention to hire PWDs. PWDA (2008) ($\beta = .24, p = .00$) and both dimensions of organizational culture (i.e., humanistic culture ($\beta = .33, p = .00$); and prescriptive culture ($\beta = -.24, p = .00$)) are found to significantly influence the intention to hire PWDs. PWDA (2008) and humanistic culture similarly make a positive contribution, whereas prescriptive culture negatively impacts the intention to hire PWDs. As such, H_1 and H_2 are supported.

TABLE 4. Descriptive statistics and correlation matrix

	M	SD	1	2	3	4
Dependent Variable						
1 Intent	3.10	.85	1			
Independent Variables						
2 PWDA	3.78	.90	0.28**	1		
3 HC	3.55	.74	.26**	.14*	1	
4 PC	3.77	.67	-.11	.02	.40**	1

Note: $N = 201$; * indicates $p < .05$; ** indicates $p < .01$; Intent = Intention to hire PWDs; PWDA = PWDA (2008); HC = Humanistic culture; PC = Prescriptive culture

TABLE 5. Multiple regression results

Dependent Variable	Intention to hire PWDs (N = 201)		
	Std. Beta	t-value	Sig.
Independent Variables PWDA	.24	3.64	.00**
Organizational Culture			
- Humanistic culture	.33	4.58	.00**
- Prescriptive culture	-.24	-3.42	.00**
R^2		.18	
F		14.19	

Note: ** indicates $p < .01$; PWDA = Persons with Disabilities Act (2008)

DISCUSSION

The findings of the current study hold some important implications for policy makers, interest groups, and employers. The study finds that favorable attitudes

toward the PWDA (2008) and heightened awareness of the act significantly increase managers' intention to hire the disabled population. This is consistent with extant literature concluding that disability legislation is imperative for enhancing PWDs' employment (e.g.,

Jackson et al. 2000; Stone & Collela 1996). Lamentably, the present study also reveals that a significant majority of the managers sampled are unaware of the PWDA (2008). The government clearly has a special responsibility and commitment to ensure that the PWDA (2008) is known, understood and embraced by all parties concerned. For the act to have its intended far-reaching impact on protecting the rights of PWDS in the employment arena, it should never be regarded as mere rhetoric. According to Khoo et al. (2013a: 51), the existing policies advocating the rights of Malaysian with disabilities have tended to “remain as mere policy statements that do not translate to reality.” It is thus felt that more campaigns must be organized to raise the level of awareness of this act, particularly among hiring managers. The role of the National Advisory and Consultative Council for PWDS in making recommendations and in overseeing a more effective interpretation and implementation of the act will also need to be intensified so that the act will live up to its aims and full potential.

Social inclusiveness and equal employment opportunities for minorities such as PWDS should neither be driven by sympathy nor an obligation to fulfill government quotas (Tiun & Khoo 2013). Perhaps hiring decisions for disabled applicants similarly should not be governed by personal contact, sympathy or even the need to meet legislative requirements. Instead, applicants with disabilities should be considered based on their abilities and qualifications. This is to prevent PWDS from been treated as tokens due to inferences that they are hired not because of their own merits, but because of legal requirements (Stone & Colella 1996) or because they have the right connections. If used solely to drive the employment of PWDS, such legislation may backfire by perpetuating stereotypes and negative expectancies of PWDS, while plaguing PWDS with recurring treatment-related problems in organizations (Stone & Colella 1996). Consequently, PWDS may not stay long in their jobs even though they were successful in getting hired. In this light, a disability act can be seen as a double-edged sword that can potentially work for or against PWDS in the employment arena.

The finding concerning the influence of organizational culture is consistent with expectations and provides support for past studies (e.g., Gerwurtz & Kirsk 2009; Schur et al. 2009; Stone & Colella 1996). Organizations with humanistic cultures appear to be more accepting of disabled job applicants. By contrast, those with prescriptive cultures are less likely to hire disabled employees. The findings are reasonable given that a humanistic culture emphasizes developing a humane, caring and supportive environment that may, in turn, nurture the acceptance of PWDS in the workplace. Conversely, a prescriptive culture that is concerned with development, innovation and energetic environment may be less tolerant of employees who are viewed as incapable, weak and dependent.

It is equally worth noting that, by comparison of the beta values, humanistic culture ($\beta = .33$) makes a stronger

unique contribution to explaining managerial intention to hire PWDS than PWDA (2008) ($\beta = .24$). This finding suggests that initiatives to enhance the employment of PWDS should be stepped up at the organizational level, rather than just being driven by disability legislation and policies alone. The finding also accentuates a very crucial point: it is time for employers to lay to rest long-held erroneous ideas and beliefs, prejudices and unfounded concerns about the inability of disabled job applicants to contribute to companies and to society at large. Hence, what better way to drive this much-needed attitudinal change than to adopt a humanistic organizational culture that is found to be more supportive of disabled employees. Such a culture helps to alter employers' misconceptions about hiring PWDS; removes stigma; and further breaks down attitudinal barriers and discrimination faced by disabled people in the workplace (British Employers' Forum on Disability 2002, 2010; ILO 2003; Kochan et al. 2003). The role of the government and interest groups in contributing such change is equally critical in terms of checking attitudinal bias and unfair discrimination, which could mar hiring decisions for PWDS.

Pertaining to the theoretical contributions of the current study, two points are noteworthy. First, the items used to measure intention to hire PWDS are adapted from Ajzen and Fishbein's (1980) scale, which is commonly used in marketing research. The factor analysis results confirmed the robustness and applicability of this scale within the context of human resources discipline with specific reference to managerial intention to hire PWDS. Second, the study empirically demonstrates that a two-factor model of organizational culture fits the data marginally better than the classic four-factor CFV framework (Helfrich et al. 2007) in the context of Malaysia.

CONCLUSION

The employment of PWDS will continue to be a topic of interest among disability researchers. Future research on this topic should incorporate other determinants that can potentially influence the intention to hire PWDS. Such factors could include previous contact with disabled people and attributes of PWDS (e.g., gender and educational level). In addition, replicating the present study using a larger sample would help to establish a greater degree of accuracy and generalizability of the findings. Future studies could also compare and contrast between industries (e.g., manufacturing or service) to confirm within which industry type can PWDS best thrive. Knowledge in this area will be most useful for training and development initiatives for PWDS.

Like other past disability studies in Malaysia (e.g., Ang 2012; Khoo et al. 2013a, 2013b; Tiun & Khoo 2013), the current study provides convincing empirical evidence to support the notion that more needs to be done for Malaysians with disabilities. Hiring decisions that employers make regarding PWDS are significant in two

ways. First, they can ensure the potential of Malaysians with disabilities be fully utilized when they are provided equal opportunity to be self-reliant and competitive in the open market. Second, the inclusion of PWDs in the Malaysian workforce should be regarded as a way forward not only for the socio-economic development of PWDs, but also that of the community and society at large. On a final note, the continuing commitment of the government and the public is of utmost importance to the promotion of full participation and equality of Malaysians with disabilities; and to the eventual improvement of their lives that can only come from gaining and sustaining employment.

NOTE

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Magdalene C. H. Ang
 Labuan School of International Business and Finance
 Universiti Malaysia Sabah
 Jalan Sg. Pagar, 87000 Labuan, MALAYSIA
 E-Mail: mach@ums.edu.my / ang.magdalene@gmail.com

