

Role of Human Resource Management in Recruitment and Providing Decent Work for Persons with Disabilities in Sri Lanka

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Abstract: Although the eighth goal of sustainable development emphasizes to promote employment and decent work for all, and the availability of Sri Lankan and international rules, legislation and policies encourage persons with disabilities (PwDs) to work in organizations having decent work, the literature shows that the majority of economically active PwDs in Sri Lanka still face barriers in employment (regarding equal employment opportunities, receiving disability-related services, rejections in recruitments etc.). This study explores the perceptions of Human Resource professionals and PwDs (employed and unemployed) about recruitment and providing decent work for PwDs in Sri Lanka. The study used the qualitative method and thematic analysis technique to analyze the gathered data through interviews from 21 respondents under three categories: 07 HR professionals, 14 economically active PwDs including 07 employed PwDs and 07 unemployed PwDs. The selected sample of PwDs contained the most prevalent difficulties such as difficulties in seeing, hearing, walking and communication. The results revealed that the negative attitude of employers about employed PwDs directly connects with the negative perception of Human Resource professionals towards recruiting PwDs, which leads to creating deficiencies in providing decent work for them. Further, human resource professionals keep refraining from recruiting PwDs due to the lack of disability-friendly arrangements in workplaces. These deficiencies create a negative perception of employed PwDs towards receiving decent work, and it impacts the decision of unemployed PwDs to apply for such companies. A negative impact on this case could lead PwDs to engage in vulnerable employment. Hence, in addition to increasing the recruitments, it is also vital to change the negative attitude of employers about PwDs and establish disability-friendly arrangements in workplaces to provide them decent work.

Keywords: *Decent Work, Human Resource Professionals, Persons with Disabilities, Recruitment*

Introduction

The United Nations (UN) introduced 17 Sustainable development goals (SDG) to get reached by 2030 to create a better and sustainable future for everyone. The 8th SDG emphasizes

“Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all”. It remarks that all persons, including PwDs who work of equal value, should equally get paid (Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,

2015). Consequently, reducing unemployment and providing decent work for everyone can be identified as two principal elements in achieving sustainable development. To gain long-lasting development prospects a state is supposed to empower PwDs and remove the barriers which prevent them from participating in their communities to have quality education, find decent work, and have their voices heard (World Report on Disability, 2011). In this case, special attention should be given to it when employing PwDs because providing them just employment does not count for sustainable development. It should be decent work as well. Therefore, the role of Human Resource Management (HRM) in employing PwDs is acute in this regard.

Availability of rules, legislation and policies encourage PwDs to be employed and treated fairly during their employment. All member countries of the International Labour Organization (ILO) are bound to implement global standards set by ILO conventions. The ILO states that PwDs should be paid equally as non-disabled persons under the same conditions wherever possible and offered equal employment opportunities (O'Reilly, 2007). Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons) Recommendation (No. 168)¹ states that PwDs should have equal opportunity and treatment regarding access, retention, and advancement in employment wherever possible,

corresponds to their own choice and takes account of their suitability for such employments.

The Protection of the Rights of PwDs Act², prohibit discriminating PwDs in employment or education in Sri Lanka. The Ministry of Social Welfare (2003)³ states that the PwDs should have the right to be employed. According to the law of Sri Lanka, 03% of the vacancies in the public corporation and public services should be filled by the PwDs. However, still the majority of the economically active PwDs in Sri Lanka often get rejected by organizations when recruiting for jobs and are involved in vulnerable employment which comprises the opposite characteristics of decent work. Even some international researchers have some interest in addressing the issue of unemployment of PwDs, very little research had been conducted in the Sri Lankan context related to providing decent work for PwDs. Not paying the necessary attention to identifying these barriers to solve the problem could create consequences such as leading Sri Lanka towards having problems in the national budget, low quality in human life and many other problems related to resource management and coordination through lack of sustainable development.

¹ Convention No. 159 on Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons) 1983 of ILO

² Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act No. 28 of 1996 (Sri Lanka)

³ National Policy on Disability for Sri Lanka

Statement of the Problem

Even the legislations support PwDs to be employed, the World Report on Disability (2011) states that PwDs still face barriers in employment, such as not having equal access to employment opportunities and not receiving the disability-related services they require. Arunatilake (2016) states that there are 1,617,924 million PwDs in Sri Lanka. 453,091 of them are economically active and experience at least one functional difficulty related to seeing, walking, hearing, cognition, self-care and communication as 54, 39, 21, 18, 11, 10 persons per 1000 population respectively. 10,953 of those economically active persons with functional difficulties are unemployed, while 442,138 are employed. Even the unemployment rate of PwDs is low (2.4 %) compared with the unemployment rate of persons with no disabilities (6.9 %), more than 50% of the employed PwDs tend to be in vulnerable employment (45.7 % of own-account workers and 7.6 % of unpaid family workers). The mentioned data hints that economically active PwDs should have barriers somewhere in entering into and having decent work in organizations. Therefore, this study aims to explore the role of HRM in recruitment and providing decent work for PwDs in Sri Lanka.

Research Questions

- What is the perception of HR Professionals on recruitment and providing decent work for PwDs?
- What is the perception of employed PwDs about receiving decent work in their workplace?

- How does the perception of disabled employees about receiving decent work impact the decision of unemployed PwDs to apply for organizations?
- Which areas of the HR strategies and policies are to be implemented / amended in this regard?

Objectives of the Study

General Objective - To identify the role of HRM in the employment of PwDs

Specific Objectives:

- To identify the perception of HR Professionals on recruitment and providing decent work for PwDs in their organizations.
- To identify the perception of employed PwDs about receiving decent work in their workplace.
- To identify the impact of the perception of employed PwDs about receiving decent work on the decision to apply for organizations by the unemployed PwDs.
- To identify the areas where the HR strategies and policies and must be implemented or amended.

Literature Review

PwDs

Cobley (2011) cited evidence from Thomas (1999) that disability is “a form of social oppression involving the social imposition of restrictions of activity on people with impairments and the socially engendered

undermining of their psycho-emotional wellbeing”. The World Health Organization (WHO) (2002) defines disability with three interconnected dimensions. As per the definition, the dysfunctioning of one or more of these dimensions refers to a disability.

- Impairment - problems in body function or structure such as a significant deviation or loss
- Activity limitation – difficulties face in the execution of a task or action by an individual.
- Participation restrictions – problems face when involving in life situations. - For example, discrimination in transportation, employment, or in any other day-to-day work.

Employment Situation of PwDs

As per the calculations of ILO (2003), 80% of PwDs in developing countries are unemployed. Young PwDs face difficulties in finding employment due to stigma (World Development Report, 2007) [8]. The stigma theory of Goffman considers disability as a type of undesired difference that discredits the expectations of society (Clair, 2018) [9]. Khazem et al., (2021) found that this would form a severe burden for PwDs that would even lead to suicide attempts. It could make PwDs step backwards in searching and applying for job vacancies. However, the theory does not specifically discuss the employment situation of PwDs. Bonaccio et al., (2019) [11] stated evidence from WHO (2011) that even the employment rates of PwDs vary across countries, the overall employment rate of disabled persons is

less compared with non-disabled persons employment rate in all countries. Hence, economically active PwDs can be identified as a form of untapped human resource. Since the economically active population of PwDs is low compared with economically active persons without difficulties, Arunatilake (2016) states that often the labour market works less favourable for PwDs, and when it gets hard to find work, PwDs give up on finding opportunities to be employed.

Hall and Wilton (2011) stated evidence from Berthoud (2006) that the factors obstructing PwDs to enter labour market include their low education level, low skills and qualifications and welfare benefit regulations favouring inactivity. However, Ang et al., (2015) state that employers’ misconception and prejudices about the ability of PwDs to perform in the labour market is the cause for their unemployment. Therefore, he argues that employers are not likely to hire PwDs even they have the required qualifications.

Laws and Regulation

Anti-discrimination laws emphasize on providing reasonable accommodation for PwDs. Formal sector accommodation requirements in Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the United States aims at making employments easier for PwDs, via making recruitment and selection procedures accessible to all, adapting the working environment, adjusting work arrangements and times, and providing assistive technologies like screen-readers (World Report on

Disability, 2011). The UN⁴ has imposed 22 rules covering PwDs. The 7th rule states that organizations should ensure equitable recruitment policies and employment conditions. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) (2006) mentions that PwDs have the right to work just like anyone else. It describes that they have the right to choose the job they like and to work together with persons without disabilities. In addition, it says that the workplaces should be accessible and provide 'just and favourable conditions of work' for PwDs. The ILO Code of Practice (2001), which is an international agreement established to guide and manage disability in the workplace, covers a widespread area of employment issues including recruitment, workplace adjustments, training and career development of PwDs (Colbey, 2011).

According to the law of Sri Lanka⁵, 3% of public sector vacancies should be filled by qualified PwDs through an approved scheme of recruitment/service minutes if their disabilities should not act as a hindrance to perform the duties. Arunatilake (2016), cited evidence from the Ministry of Social Welfare (2003) and declared the employment of PwDs should ensure, "1) Non-discrimination in employment and employment support services; 2) providing tax incentives to employers to create enabling environments to employ people with disabilities; 3) Non-discrimination of PwDs in remunerating them for their work; 4)

Encouraging employers to make simple adjustments to their workspaces to facilitate the employment of persons with disabilities; 5) Encouraging employers to provide work experience (even when employment is not possible) and considering adjusting work requirements to enable PwDs to work; 6) Encouraging employers to educate workers and counsellors in the workplace to be supportive of persons with disabilities; and, 7) Encouraging applications by qualified persons with disabilities".

Formal Sector Employment and Disability

According to ILO classifications, formal sector jobs are covered by labour legislation, affiliated to social security schemes, and entitled to certain employee benefits such as paid vacation, sick leave etc. United Nations (2021) states that the PwDs usually get worse jobs than persons without disabilities (low payments, temporary jobs, less likely to get a promotion than persons without disabilities). O'Reilly (2007) found that the majority of employed PwDs are engaged in low paid jobs with less job security. Correspondingly, many academic researchers have found that the majority of PwDs are engaged in informal and vulnerable employment with difficult conditions of work that undermine fundamental rights of workers or own account employment with inadequate payments and low productivity. Entrance to government sector employment for PwDs in Sri

⁴ United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for PwDs - 1994

⁵ Public Administration Circular No 27/88 of Sri Lanka

Lanka seems less for PwDs (Arunatileke, 2016).

Moreover, a training project conducted for PwDs in Kenya by Cobley (2011) indicated that 40% of PwDs targeted formal sector employment while the other 60% focused on self-employments. He stated that most of these barriers occur due to physical difficulties of PwDs such as in transport, housing, and workplace arrangements (Colbey, 2011). Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) representative of Delhi said that the fear of women with disabilities commuting to work lead them to stop seeking job opportunities in the formal sector. However, his study revealed that the respondents were also interested in finding formal sector jobs due to the expectation of having a stable income. Therefore, even the PwDs like to be employed in the formal sector; many obstacles prevent them from entering and retain there. Article 27 of UNCRPD (2006) states that it is the right of a PwD to have equal job opportunities can only be achieved if the formal sector becomes completely reachable for qualified PwDs.

PwDs and their Capabilities

Article 27 of UNCRPD (2006) indicates that the capabilities of PwDs can be expanded through government actions. Assistive technology devices (crutches, wheel-chairs, tricycles, hearing aids and cochlear implants, screen readers etc.) help improve the functional capabilities of PwDs. A study conducted in Uganda based on PwDs found that persons with walking disabilities found more employment opportunities after they started using

assistive technology devices. (The World Report on Disability, 2011. Laer et al., (2020) cited evidence from Foster (2007) and stated that providing workplace accommodations can convert the job losses of PwDs into successful employment. Accommodation maximizes capability, productivity, and job satisfaction of employed PwDs (Vornholt et al., 2017). Therefore, to get the maximum possible output from employed PwDs, organizations should make sure that their mainstream Information and Communications Technology (ICT) devices (internet, telephone) are connected and act supportive for assistive technology devices specially hearing aids and screen readers. Job training and counselling that change attitudes also can increase the capabilities of PwDs (World Report on Disability, 2011).

Hence, the Employers' Forum on Disability (EFD) encourages employers to view the capabilities and provide equal employment opportunities for PwDs (The World Report on Disability, 2011). Although it reduces isolation and poverty of PwDs when employing them, Bonaccio et al., (2019) cited evidence from Schur (2002) that, it does not work when the job requirements do not match with employee capabilities. Disability employment policy and legislation state that PwDs should be given the most suitable occupation concerning their physical and mental capabilities (Lunt & Thornton, 1997). It indicates that PwDs can perform tasks to a certain extent depending on their skills and capabilities, and it is up to the employers to hire them to the appropriate position.

Even though employers are supposed to identify the capabilities of PwDs, they often tend to prejudge them as incapable of working (Berthoud, 2011). A study conducted by the Indian Institute of Public Health (2014) on barriers of employing PwDs in India found that misperceptions and prejudices of employers about PwDs that they are unable to work have often limited the inclusion of PwDs into workplaces. This misconception creates a negative career effect on employed PwDs (Laer et al., 2020). Personal tragedy theory describes disability as a terrible personal situation that ruins human life. In contrast, the Social Model argues that it is the society that makes physically impaired people disable by excluding them from fully participating in society and making them an oppressed group (Oliver, 1990). Critical Theory of Disability (CTD) contains a set of theoretical approaches that criticize these traditional beliefs on disability. Yet, it does not discuss how to provide them decent work. Hosking (2008) stated that CTD was developed based on 07 assumptions; Social Model of Disability, the multidimensionality of disability, diversity as a value, an approach based on the rights (explains that the liberal theory of human rights of PwDs fails when the needs of PwDs are not addressed adequately), giving voice to PwDs, the influence of language on understanding disability, and transformative policies (Sztobryn-Giercuskiewicz, 2017). Yet, these theories do not discuss providing decent work for PwDs.

However, in contrast, some companies have found that PwDs are more capable than that they assumed. For instance,

Bonaccio et al., (2019) cited evidence from the findings of a study conducted by Sinden and Martin Ginis (2012) that many employees with spinal cord injuries had performed beyond the expected level of their performance. Shenoy (2011) cited evidence from Debra (2007) that the employers who have hired PwDs report that those employed PwDs have performed better compared with non-disabled peers on attendance, productivity, and safety measures.

HRM Practices for Formal sector Employment of PwDs

The capacity of human resources can be upgraded over effective recruitment, training, and education (World Report on Disability, 2011). Moreover, Disability Management can be identified as a proactive process that is integrated into HR development practices that encourage entry, promotion, and safe return to work of PwDs in organizations. This practice facilitates recruitment, retention, and advancement of the career of employed PwDs (O'Reilly, 2007).

Recruitment

Cobley (2011) states that PwDs often face barriers and direct discrimination within the recruitment process. He further cited evidence from Arthur and Zarb (1995) that even PwDs find a job, they might face disadvantages in their career development. Employers seem reluctant to recruit PwDs for the organization due to the fear of having to create expensive workplace arrangements (O'Reilly, 2007). Very few employers are willing to pay for accommodations to recruit PwDs

(Dench et al., 1996). The employers who consider recruiting PwDs have two concerns; the cost involves providing special facilities for them by making physical adjustments to the workplace and the fear of affecting their disabilities on productivity. Hence, the employers treat them with the 'last hired and first fired intention' (ILO, 2003). A study conducted by Bonaccio et al., (2019) on managers' concerns related to the appropriateness of PwDs for the employment weighting recruitment, selection, performance management and social integration revealed that even if managers find qualified PwDs they may try to change their recruitment approach due to concerns about accommodation, safety behaviours and misconceptions about their performance. Bonaccio et al., (2019) also cited evidence from Bruyère (2005) and has declared that PwDs often get discouraged to apply for vacancies because managers often underestimate the PwDs in their pool of applications. Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) of Ajzen explains managers hiring intentions about applicants. Based on TPB, Ang et al., (2015) introduced a modified TPB model to explain that the hiring intentions of employer's change depend on subjective norms and perceived behavioural control while attitudes mediate them.

However, due to the pressure of multinationals and the rise of corporate social responsibility, recruitment practices have become more ethical now. For instance, Mark and Spencer employ females with disabilities in the garment sector in Sri Lanka (Cobley, 2011). According to WHO (2010), under the recruitment procedure, all

vacancies should be noticed respecting workforce diversity and the candidates with disabilities are requested to notify their accommodation requirements to compete for the position. So, the organization should decide to fulfil the requirement request. A study conducted by Cobley (2011) on economic empowerment and boundaries faced by PwDs in Kenya and India, suggests that it should be included in national policies to provide employers with an incentive scheme to recruit PwDs because many PwDs can be found in many countries today. Signalling theory of Spence explains the behaviour of two parties during the hiring process when they have asymmetric information and the implications of diverse selections. It says that hiring a person is like buying a lottery because no one can directly observe the marginal product of an employee before hiring but can observe personal data based on their characteristics and attributes before hiring. A study conducted by Wright (2010) based on recruitment, in connection with the signaling theory of Spence, discusses how employers can create recruitment opportunities for PwDs by advertising vacancies in a diversity-friendly way. There, the employers are supposed to list specific disabilities within the company recruitment materials and diversity policy statements. Accordingly, The Company of Skills for Care states that the organizations can encourage PwDs to apply for vacancies and ask them to mention if they expect any specific requirements at the interview in their advertisements. It links equality and diversity.

Decent Work

ILO (2018) defines decent work as “opportunities for women and men to obtain decent and productive work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity”. The conceptual dimensions of decent work include six dimensions relevant to every person who lives from low income to high-income countries and from traditional to modern sectors (Anker et al., 2002). Those six dimensions are:

1) Opportunities for work

All persons who want to work should be able to find work with no gender bias. The term 'work' covers self-employment, wage employment in the formal sector and informal sector and economic unpaid family work (Anker et al., 2002). Employment opportunities depend on employment creation, employment status and new businesses (ILO, 2018).

2) Work in conditions of freedom

This refers to the freedom of choosing work. Work should be freely chosen with no force. Therefore, unacceptable forms of employment such as slave labour, bonded labour and child labour should be eliminated, and workers should be given the freedom to join workers' organizations.

3) Productive work

Productive work generates adequate earnings for workers. It provides acceptable livelihoods for them and their families and assure competitiveness and sustainable development. (Anker et al., 2002). Hence, productive employment generates an adequate income for the

employee where the employee can maintain his/her consumption level above the poverty line. The report of Full and Productive Employment and Decent Work (2006) states that the youth count 25 per cent of the working population in the world and half of them are unemployed and even when employed they fail to find productive and decent work.

4) Equity in work

Equity in work encompasses having fair and equitable treatment in work. It includes non-discrimination in finding opportunities to work, non-discrimination at work and the ability to balance work with family life.

5) Security at work

Security at work stresses the need to safeguard health, pensions and livelihoods, provide adequate protection in case of loss of work and livelihood (Anker et al., 2002). In addition, the WHO (2020) recently stressed that PwDs are at high risk at the workplace as they are unable to access hand sanitizing and washing facilities at the workplace. Therefore, employers and HR professionals should ensure that PwDs in their organizations have access to washing and sanitizing facilities during the COVID-19 outbreak.

6) Dignity at work

Workers should be treated with respect at work. They should have the freedom to voice their concerns and participate in decision making which affects their working conditions. (Anker et al., 2002).

The Statistical Development and Analysis Unit of the ILO Policy Integration Department have introduced 47 statistical indicators to measure these six dimensions of decent work (Lepper, 2007). These indicators were grouped under 11 categories to consider when measuring the decent work concept. They are employment opportunities, unacceptable work, adequate earnings and productive work, decent hours, stability and security of work, combining work and family life, fair treatment in employment, safe work environment, social protection, social dialogue and workplace relations, economic and social context of decent work (Anker et al., 2002). Out of the 47 statistical indicators, the ILO stresses six indicators as vital when measuring decent work with statistical indicators; Labour forces participation rate, the employment-population ratio, the unemployment rate, time-related underemployment rate, the low pay rate, average earnings (Lepper, 2007).

Decent work opportunities lead to the reduction of poverty of PwDs. Yet, finding decent work opportunities is harder for PwDs even they complete all required training. This is due to the wrong prejudices and assumptions of employers regarding their capacity to work. Therefore, to achieve the SDGs we must empower PwDs and help to find decent work (O'Reilly, 2007). COVID-19 pandemic increased the unemployment rate of PwDs and it led them to engage in 'gig work'⁶ (Hughes, 2021). It shows that the pandemic has created a situation where receiving

decent work more challenging now for PwDs.

Decisions of Unemployed PwDs to Apply for Organizations

A survey conducted on recruitment and retention of PwDs by employers in the United Kingdom (UK) by Dench et al., (1996), found that the reason for not recruiting PwDs by more than 60% of employers for their organizations is that they do not receive applications from PwDs. 32.5% of employers had responded that they stopped hiring PwDs because they leave companies very soon. Some employers mentioned their adverse beliefs about the characteristics and abilities of PwDs as reasons for not to recruit them. Simultaneously, PwDs become shy and step backwards to apply for jobs due to these negative responses and fear. Due to the discrimination, 42% of PwDs had felt that they need to hide their conditions when applying for jobs (World Report on Disability, 2011).

Cobley (2011) stated evidence from Barnes and Mercer (2003) and Oliver (1996) and declared that due to the Personal Tragedy Theory concept PwDs believe that they cannot make any useful contribution to the society, therefore, they step backwards in applying job vacancies. When respondents were asked what should be done to recruit and retain PwDs, they came up with suggestions such as changing work practices that have not cost like changing work hours, starting time, the structure of breaks and changing the work environment like

⁶ Gig work include temporary, online jobs that are done via online platforms

providing accommodation, moving furniture, interviewing and to pay the cost of necessary adaptations and equipment.

The examined literature and theories have either focused on the recruitment of PwDs or else the social barriers they face. However, they seemed to overlook the area of providing decent work for PwDs and exploring the perceptions of both employer and employee side regarding the matter. In addition, hence working conditions of an organization is a factor that often changes over time with the development of technology and the new normal after the COVID-19 pandemic created considerable changes in organizations such as reduction in employment in general, changes and adjustments in job vacancies and HR practices, it is high time to re-study and look at the scenarios in different ways regarding the matter.

Materials and Methods

The study attempts to explore the perceptions of HR professionals and PwDs and how those perceptions impact the decisions of unemployed PwDs to apply for organizations. This complex and exploratory nature of the study arose the need to use qualitative methodology. To gain a detailed understanding of the issue from a holistic perspective and generate meanings from the gathered data and identify patterns and relationships to build new theories, the study adopted an interpretive philosophy. Since it involves gathering non-numerical data

(because the perceptions include different attitudes, beliefs, ideas, and opinions and different experiences regarding the matter) the study used an inductive approach.

Based on the principle of saturation, a sample of 21 respondents (07 HR professionals, 07 employed PwDs and 07 unemployed PwDs) were selected for the study. HR professionals were selected from random sampling technique while the snowball sampling technique was used to find PwDs.

To gain a detailed view of the problem, both primary and secondary data were collected for this study. Secondary data (contained both quantitative and qualitative data) were collected from legislations, reports and research articles. Primary data were gathered through semi-structured individual interviews via electronic devices. Since the study aims to explore the perceptions of three categories of people; HR professionals, economically active PwDs (employed and unemployed), three separate interview guides were used to explore their perceptions regarding recruiting and providing decent work for PwDs.

Thematic analysis technique was used to analyze the gathered data. Therefore, the gathered primary data were transcribed, coded and case studies were developed to identify the sub-themes and themes. The study introduces a model based on the studied relationships and patterns among the identified themes.

Results and Discussion

The study found 11 themes related to the status of the perceptions of HR professionals and PwDs regarding recruitment and providing decent work for PwDs in formal sector organizations. They are; *Negative Attitudes of Employers about employed PwDs, Negative Perception of HR Professionals towards Recruiting PwDs, Neglect Providing Employment Opportunities and Work Dignity for PwDs, Deficiencies in Providing Decent Work for PwDs, Characteristics of PwDs, Characteristics of Employed PwDs, Negative Perception of Employed PwDs towards Receiving Decent Work, Characteristics of Unemployed PwDs, The Decision of Unemployed PwDs to Apply for the Companies, and Employed PwDs suggests changing the attitude of the management/change the company rules to provide decent work for PwDs, The HR professionals think that conducting physical events for PwDs, making aware the non-disabled employees that PwDs can work and recruiting PwDs for online jobs is enough to provide decent work for PwDs.*

To get the maximum possible outcome from PwDs, the organizations are supposed to create a disability-friendly environment and connect the mainstream ICT devices of the company to the assistive technology devices used by the PwDs. The researcher found that because employers are goal-oriented and performance-driven, they often compare the performance of PwDs with persons without disabilities in their workplace. In most cases, the employers measure the performance of

PwDs without providing the mentioned necessities for them. However, it creates a negative attitude about PwDs in employers' minds once they find low performance from PwDs. Consequently, employers lose their interest to hire PwDs for the organization, and it leads towards creating a negative perception in HR professionals' minds of recruiting PwDs.

Accordingly, HR professionals start to neglect PwDs when providing employment opportunities and work dignity for them. In addition, HR professionals keep refraining from recruiting PwDs due to the lack of disability-friendly arrangements in workplaces. As a result of the mentioned factors, it creates deficiencies in providing decent work for PwDs. Once the employed PwDs notice this behaviour of HR professionals' regarding how they are ignored and treated in the workplace, it creates a negative perception about receiving decent work in the workplace. Even though it is a right of PwDs to work, the study found that not having disability-friendly arrangements in workplaces act as a barrier for PwDs to accept job offers, and it affects providing decent work for PwDs. Thus, even there is encouragement from several sides for PwDs to work in organizations having decent work, the negative perception of employed PwDs towards receiving decent work, and the absence of disability-friendly arrangements in workplaces (that leads towards creating deficiencies in providing decent work for PwDs) impact some economically active unemployed PwDs to not to apply for vacancies in organizations.

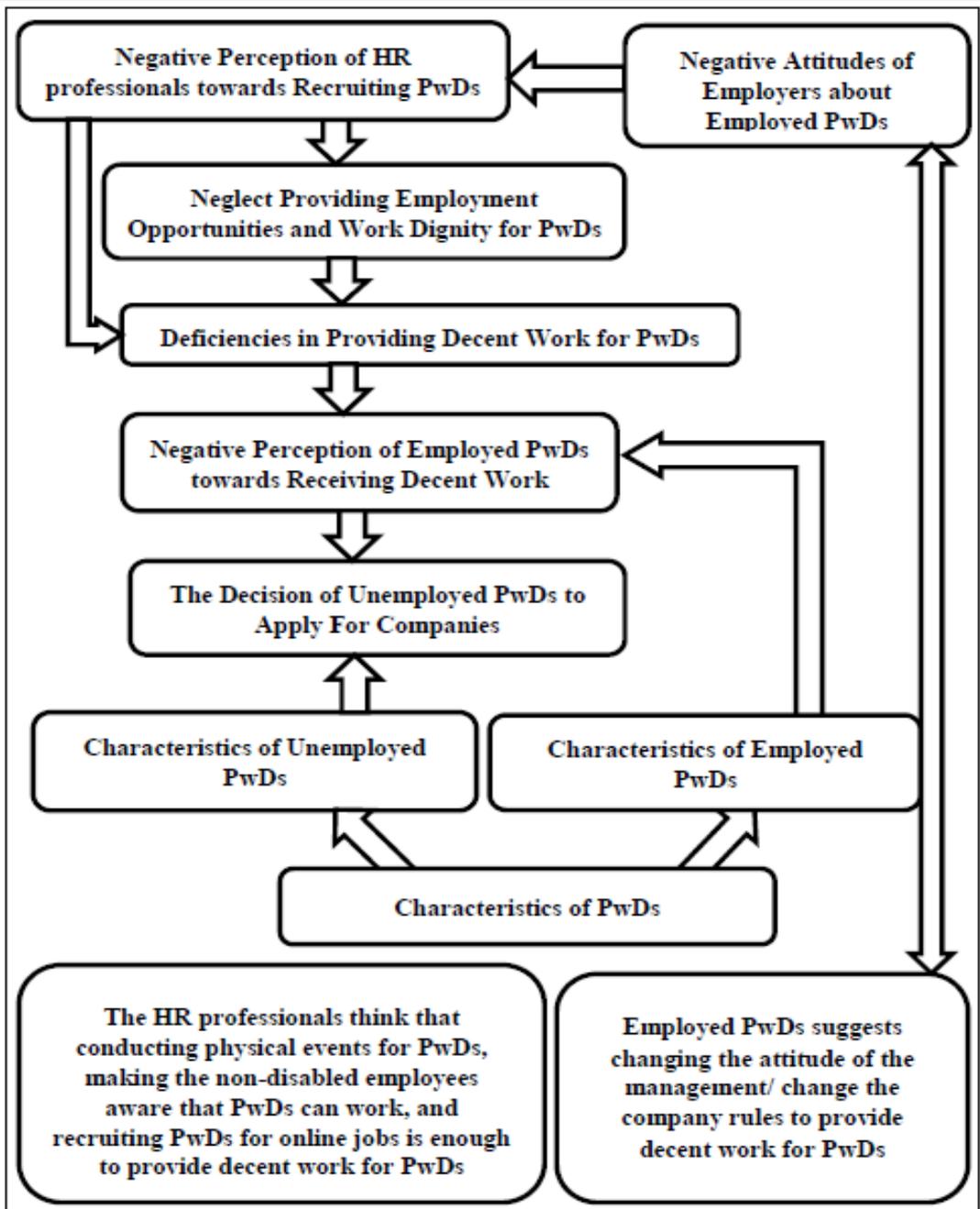


Figure 01: Proposed Framework
 Source: Survey Data (2021)

Since it could contribute to creating an employment gap between economically active PwDs and economically active non-disabled persons, the researcher stressed that HR professionals should focus on establishing disability-friendly arrangements in workplaces (by reducing accessibility issues, providing transport facilities, providing assistive technology devices, connecting the mainstream ICT devices with assistive technology devices) when developing HR strategies. Meanwhile, the employed PwDs have connections with both the company side (HR professionals) and the side of unemployed PwDs, they have understood the root cause for the current situation of providing decent work for PwDs as the negative attitude of employers about PwDs. Therefore, they suggest either to change the negative attitude or to change or impose new rules regarding providing decent work for them in workplaces. However, the HR professionals have not identified that their negative attitudes affect the current situation of the problem but have identified some secondary steps that can be taken to provide decent work for PwDs (such as making other employees aware of their capabilities and providing online jobs).

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore the role of HRM in recruitment and providing decent work for PwDs in Sri Lanka. Hence the researcher examined the perceptions of HR professionals and economically active PwDs (employed and unemployed) regarding recruitment and decent work in their workplaces. Based on the

general objective, the researcher conducted a qualitative study to find answers for the research problems; *What is the perception of HR Professionals on recruitment and providing decent work for PwDs?, What is the perception of employed PwDs about receiving decent work in their workplace? How does the perception of disabled employees about receiving decent work impact the decision of unemployed PwDs to apply for organizations? and Which areas of the HR strategies/policies to be implemented/amended in this regard?* The study found that employers have a negative attitude about PwDs and it directly connects in creating negative perception of HR professionals towards recruiting PwDs. As a result, HR professionals start to neglect PwDs in the workplace and recruitments. Consequently, it leads to creating deficiencies in providing decent work for PwDs. It creates a negative perception in employed PwDs minds towards receiving decent work once they notice these deficiencies in their workplace. Ultimately it impacts the decision of unemployed PwDs not to apply for such companies. This decision could lead to PwDs engaging in vulnerable employment. Hence, in addition to increasing the recruitments, it is also vital to work towards changing the negative attitude of employers about PwDs and establish disability-friendly arrangements in workplaces to provide them decent work.

Recommendations

To change the negative attitude of employers about PwDs the state is recommended to provide special training for PwDs to develop and

improve their skills as per the requirements of job vacancies. It could make employers understand that PwDs can work than the employers believe. It is also suggested the government conduct special seminars for employers to keep them updated about how the skills of PwDs get developed and improved through those training. Since it is the right of PwDs to choose what job, they want to do, the company heads should make sure their workplaces are accessible for PwDs. Therefore, it is recommended to establish disability-friendly arrangements in workplaces. In addition, the HR practices of organizations should focus on protecting PwDs from discriminations, providing reasonable accommodation, providing fair working conditions for PwDs (PwDs have the right to be treated in the same way as their colleagues - to receive the same pay and same benefits as persons without

disabilities if they do the same work, to have a safe and healthy working place, and to be treated with respect) and having a sign language interpreters when deaf persons are hired. The government can also the companies that recruit PwDs in establishing disability-friendly arrangements in workplaces (providing funds to buy assistive technology devices, to build disability-friendly toilets and accessibility constructions such as ramps for wheelchairs, lifts etc., to conduct regular work training for PwDs) and providing economic relief to pay low taxes. Finally, it is recommended to keep track of and stay updated about how PwDs work in organizations/government institutions through regular check-ups as it helps in understanding how the laws related to PwDs are practised in the companies/government institutions. Therefore, the relevant authorities can take necessary actions in this regard.

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