

Employment of People with Disabilities in the Hotel Sector in Zimbabwe: Challenges and Opportunities

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to establish the extent to which people with disabilities (PWD) are employed in the hotel sector in Zimbabwe. The study was motivated by the continued emancipation of PWDs globally and industry's increasing acceptance of the contributions PWDs can make. Using a qualitative approach (interviews with hotel managers), this study revealed that PWDs are not employed in Zimbabwe's hotel sector. Stigma, lack of information/knowledge about disabilities, and supposed costs related to accessibility are the main challenges to the employment of PWD in the hotel sector.

Keywords: Disability, Employment, Hotels

People with disabilities (PWD) globally have often been relegated to socio-economic peripheries. However, with the continuous calls for emancipation of minority groups, legislations have been enacted in many countries to help ensure PWD, like other minority groups, enjoy the same rights as their non-disabled counterparts. One such fundamental right is the right to equal employment opportunities (Kalargyrou, 2015). A glance at the tourism and hospitality industry in Zimbabwe, particularly in the hotel sector, shows that people with physical disabilities are almost completely excluded from employment. Obvious questions include why? Does it mean that PWD are not interested in working in the hotel sector or the industry is not availing opportunities to such candidates? What are the prospects of employment for PWD in the hotel sector?

PWD (including physical, sensory, and cognitive) constitute about 15% of the world population (United Nations 2018). This number has been increasing in recent years partly due to aging of baby boomers. Their number is expected to grow exponentially by 2050 (Eurostat 2005; Chikuta 2016). Access to equal employment opportunities is obviously a right for all, including PWD (UNCRPD, 2006). At the 20th session of the UNWTO General Assembly, 2013 Agenda item 14 was Accessible Tourism for All (UNWTO, 2013). Unfortunately, a vision for accessible tourism for all may remain a dream if the industry does not employ PWD; do so can help pave the way to accommodating tourists with disabilities. In many countries, exclusion from tourism remains one way many PWD are socially and excluded (Chikuta & Kabote, 2018; Chikuta, 2017; Choruma, 2007).

The intention of this study is to address a series of questions:

1. What is the percentage of employees with disabilities among hotel employees in Zimbabwe?
2. What positions do employees with disabilities hold in the hotels?
3. How are hotels benefiting from employing PWD?
4. What challenges are the hotels facing in trying to employ PWD?

Literature Review

Disability can be defined as any restriction or lack (resulting from an impairment) of ability that one encounters which hinders them from performing an activity in the manner or within the range considered as normal for a human being (United Nations, 2008). According to the CDC (CDC, 2021), disability is any condition of the body or mind (impairment) that makes it more difficult to do certain activities and interact with the world. Types of disabilities may include mobility, hearing, vision, communication, cognitive (memorizing, mental health, learning, thinking) and social (Disability & Health, 2017). Degree of impairment can obviously impact daily management of life.

The United Nations' (2006) Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (CRPWD) states that PWD have a right to access services from all areas of citizenship. The CRPWD was developed from a social model approach to disability recognizing the ways in which social, political, and economic barriers may participate in creating a "disabling" environment (Hyde et al., 2010; United Nations, 2006; Michopoulou et al., 2015). According to Bizjack et al. (2011) the USA, Europe, and Australia were among the first regions to develop statutory and legal instruments to ensure adherence to the provisions of the CRPWD and its protocols.

PWD in the Workforce

In the working environment, PWD's ability to participate and contribute in the workforce may be doubted by their non-disabled counterparts (Zakaria et al., 2020) resulting in employment discrimination (Zakaria et al., 2020). While opportunities exist, PWD often experience discrimination, segregation, and social exclusion (Darcy, 1998; Burnett and Bender-Baker, 2001).

Percentage of PWD varies by country. Mirroring the UN's estimate we previously considered, the World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that approximately over a billion persons globally have some form of impairment, about 15% of the global population (United Nations World Health Organisation International Classification of Functioning Disability and Health (WHO, 2018). The reported average rate of disability varies from 10% to 20% of the population in Western developed countries, while in China around 6% of the population are officially estimated to have disabilities, representing roughly 83 million people, estimated to rise to 85 million to 87 million in 2030 (China Disabled Persons' Federation, 2013), as cited in Chikuta (2017) and Chikuta and Kabote et al. (2017). In the EU, 28 member states, the employment rate of people aged 15 to 64 years with disability was documented at 47.3%, with the highest employment rate reported for PWD in Sweden, and the lowest in Hungary (Eurostat, 2014).

In comparison, in the USA, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, there is an estimated 56.7 million persons with disabilities, 18.7 percent of the total 303.9 million U.S. population (Brault, 2012). The 9.9 million workers with disabilities in the U.S. make up 9.1 percent of the U.S. working-age civilian non-farm workforce, which totals 129 million people aged 21 to 64. The U.S. leisure and hospitality industry employs a similar percentage of workers with disabilities, an estimated 846,000 workers with disabilities, 9.2 percent of the

total 9.22 million people working in the leisure and hospitality industry (Brault, 2012, Houtenville & Kalargyrou, 2014).

A spectrum can be seen in other countries. In Hungary, almost half a million individuals are reported to have disabilities, with that expected to reach 1 million by 2021 (RHS (2018) as cited in Berend (2018)). The employment rate of PWD in Hungary was low at 23.7%. According to 2011 data from the Hungarian Central Statistical Office (KSH), 2,416 persons with disability were employed in the food and accommodation industry. Also, in Malaysia, about 2.4 million people are employed over a decade. However, only 3,523 out of that 2.4 million are disabled employees, and those are mainly in a private sector (Hooi, 2001). Per Ms. Norani Hashim, the Director of Disability Development Department of Malaysia, since 2008 only about 581 people with disabilities have been employed in the public sector. This clearly suggests the majority of PWD are being accepted by the private sector rather than the public sector. Malaysia's only special law on equality and anti-discrimination is the Persons with Disabilities Act 2008 (Wahab & Ayub, 2016). The act protects employees with disabilities from prejudice, dangerous working conditions, wrongful dismissal, and discrimination in the workplace as well as in daily life.

Disability and Employment in Africa: A Tourism Perspective

Despite many African countries being signatories to the UNCRPD (Chikuta & Kabote, 2018), there is a long way to go towards ensuring equity for people with disabilities. South Africa is lagging behind in domesticating legislation as guided by the UNCRPD and Optional Protocol established in 2006 (Dube, 2007, Makuyana & Saayman 2018). The 2011 South African census recorded 7.5% of the population with a form of impairment (Statistics South Africa, 2014). 68% of those are working age but not employed due to inaccessibility of workplaces and disabling education systems (Statistics South Africa, 2014). Clearly, South

Africa has not yet fully incorporated the UNCRPD into the domestic legal framework (Dube, 2007; Makuyana & Saayman 2018).

Similarly, since the government of Botswana is not a signatory to the UNCRPD of 2006, PWD face barriers to exercise their rights, including rights to employment opportunities (Mukhopadhyay and Moswela, 2020). The government of Botswana has made some efforts to create an office to assist PWD within the Office of the President. However, this has been widely criticized because the approach is rooted in social welfare (care). This approach tends to emphasize care of PWD who are perceived to be a “social burden” requiring social welfare support (Mukhopadhyay & Moswela, 2020). In addition, the approach has been criticized for delaying the recognition of the rights of PWD and enacting disability-specific legislation to protect their rights.

Elsewhere, in Zambia, about 2 million people or 15% of the population, have a disability (World Health Organization, 2012). Most live in rural areas where there is limited access to services such as health and care. In 2005, the employment rate of PWD showed limited opportunities for PWD: 45.5% of the population compared to an employment rate of 58% among persons without disabilities. Zambian Central Statistical Office 2000 Census reported that many PWD are self-employed mainly in the agricultural sector (World Health Organization, 2012). Generally, the report indicated that most Zambians with disabilities live in poverty, with a literacy rate low compared to people without disabilities. As a result of poverty, many PWD turn to street begging to survive. Generally, the government of Zambia has made some efforts to adopt some legislations to protect PWD. Some of the rights enshrined in their constitution include the right to equal opportunities to employment and basic services; however, enforcement is lacking (Zambia Central Statistical Office, 2000).

The Government of the Republic of Namibia (2015) suggests that the actual

percentages of PWD are slightly higher than the global estimations of 15.0% of the population. This is so because there are no reliable statistics of PWD in Namibia. In Namibia, PWD are not happy with disability policy shortfalls negatively affecting their life experiences (Haidula 2016; Chichaya et al., 2018). Other stakeholders in disability services also indicate they are not happy about what the government is doing to protect the rights of PWD. Moreover, there is the need for the government to review the disability policy which has not been reviewed since its inception in 1997 (Government of the Republic of Namibia, 2017a).

In Zambia, similar issues may be seen. Zimbabwe is blessed with many tourist attractions, e.g., the majestic Victoria Falls, Eastern Highlands, Kariba dam and national parks such as the Hwange national park, Gonarezhou, among others. Zimbabwe has done well in terms of visitor numbers since independence in 1980. In 2018, the country received over 2.5 million tourists: 80% from the region, 9% from Europe and 5% from the United States of America. Tourism employment also contributed about 5.2%, with 7.2% contribution to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Zimbabwe Tourism Authority, 2019). While there has been a general growth in number of visitors into the country, the issues of universal accessibility have not been on the tourism sector's agenda (Chikuta, 2015; Chikuta & Kabote, 2018; Chikuta et al., 2021). As a result, PWD have not been prioritized or given opportunities to play a role in the development of tourism in Zimbabwe. This includes equal opportunity to employment. Authorities in Zimbabwe have done very little to alleviate this (Khupe, 2010.) The government has only enacted the Disability Persons Act in 1992, amended in 1996. There is also a lack of government budgetary allocations towards disability affirmative action. There are no reliable disability related statistics in Zimbabwe, but there are an estimated 1.5 million PWD, about 10% of the total population (Choruma, 2007). Data on the employment of PWD in Zimbabwe is also very scarce.

Perceived challenges of PWD

Despite aspirations to be employed, many PWD often experience challenges and barriers, including discrimination. This is frequently because of the assumed difficulties of hiring PWD (Lysaght et al., 2012; Kalargyrou, 2014). In contrast to this, in the United States, the rights of PWD to non-discriminatory employment practices are protected under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and the ADA Amendments Act (ADAAA) of 2008, primary U.S. laws regarding disability (Houtenville & Kalargyron, 2014). Some perceived barriers to employing PWD include perceptions of the shortage of resources and related costs, lack of skills, and supervisors' concerns about managing PWD (Houtenville & Kalargyrou, 2011; Lengnick-Hall et al., 2008; Kalargyrou, 2014).

Negative perceptions towards disabilities by both the employers and the patrons or visitors is also another challenge negatively affecting the employment of PWD in the hotel sector. According to Patterson (2021) and Stanley and Stanley (2015), elements such as decoration, furniture, and the appearance of restaurant service personnel provide important cues for customers to make purchase decisions and evaluate service performance. It is against such perceptions that the physical appearance of hotel employees comes under scrutiny by employers during the recruitment process, often placing many physically disabled PWD at a disadvantage when employers select potential employees. Studies in the retail and hospitality industries in the United Kingdom examining perceptions of personal appearances in employment (Warhurst et al., 2000). Nickson et al., (2005) concluded that appearances and self-presentation skills of customer-facing employees were more important to employers in the hospitality industry than technical skills. In this regard, because of discrimination, PWD may be placed at a disadvantage in hospitality employment.

Another key challenge of employing PWD is the provision of specialized

accommodation. According to Sharma et al., (2019), employees with disabilities often require specialized equipment, facility modifications, adjustments to work schedules for them to perform their professional tasks efficiently. Telwatte et al., (2017) suggests that many employers believe in providing additional support to employees with disabilities, if required, to enhance their professional effectiveness in the place of work. The general challenge is the perceived high costs involved in providing reasonable accommodation for employees with disabilities (Chikuta et al., 2021; Groschl, 2012; Sharma et al., 2019; Telwatte et al., 2017). This is despite the fact that employers can practically convert costs incurred in training individuals with disabilities into long-term investments as it is believed that such employees are loyal and committed to their employers for a longer duration (Groschl, 2012).

Perceptions of hotel managers in Zimbabwe towards PWD: a review of empirical literature

Employing PWD may assist in attracting more tourists. As such, it may be considered an effective marketing strategy by hotels in Zimbabwe as they stand to benefit for the tourist market of tourists with disabilities. Tourism enterprises that take steps to employ PWD create new business opportunities for growth (Mubaiwa, 2021) and play a positive role in advancing an inclusive tourism society. Despite this, in Zimbabwe, PWD face multiple attitudinal, environmental and institutional barriers that prevent them from having equal access to employment opportunities (Choruma, 2007). The lack of a national disability policy in Zimbabwe limits employment opportunities for disabled persons within the economic sectors (Khupe et al., 2022) including in tourism. This lack of a national disability policy cascades to individual organizations including hotels and manifests in lack of human resources policies that cater for disabled persons as potential employees. The silence in HR policies of hotels about PWD limits opportunities, relegating PWD to the periphery. This is especially true as

many hotel managers in Zimbabwe often appear to perceive PWD as incapable of handling many labor-intensive tasks within the hotel industry.

Discrimination against PWD (Khupe et al., 2022) leading to their marginalization is compounded by long-held cultural beliefs associating PWD with bad omens, curses or punishment from God or ancestors for family crimes (Khupe et al., 2022; Marongwe & Mate, 2007). This may further lead to stigma and discrimination in employment. Moreover, Lang and Charova (2007:7) stated that “It is a common perception within Zimbabwe that disabled people are passive and economically unproductive, and therefore constitute a burden upon society.” Thus, there is a predominant negative attitude towards PWD leading to exclusion from employment in tourism. The perception of hotel managers in Zimbabwe generally reflects larger societal perceptions. Consequently, there are very limited numbers of PWD employed in the hotels in Zimbabwe and, there appear to be no disabled persons holding managerial or senior positions in organizations (Khupe et al., 2022).

Benefits of employing persons with disabilities

Despite the relatively small number of PWD in full-time employment in the hotel sector, there appear to be a range of benefits of recruiting PWD. Houtenville and Kalargyrou (2011) found that reduced turnover and increased retention and productivity ranked high among the reasons persuading companies to recruit PWD. Subsequent research has also shown that PWD remain in an occupational position the same amount of time or longer than their non-disabled counterparts (Kalargyrou, 2014). In a study by Hernandez and McDonald (2010), employees with disabilities stayed at the job 4.26 months longer than employees without disabilities. Laabs (1994) as cited in Kalargyrou (2014), reported that the Chicago Marriott also experienced lower overall turnover after it began hiring PWD. Its turnover rate was 32% per year vs. the typical turnover rate within the hotel industry of 50%.

This research about the benefits of employing PWD has also been supported elsewhere (Kalargyrou, 2014; Kaletta et al., 2012; Jasper and Waldhart, 2013; Houtenville and Kalargyrou, 2011). Research supports the benefit of employing PWD since they exhibited lower turnover and absenteeism rates than those without disabilities. These findings for the hospitality industry are consistent with those for all industries (Kalargyrou, 2014). Low turnover has a benefit of reducing brain drain, costs associated with recruitment, selection, and training of newly hired employees.

As such, employers need to acknowledge that developing well-designed accommodations will not only benefit employees with disabilities but have many other benefits for employers as well. This includes the fact that structural and technologically upgraded facilities may also attract customers with disabilities (Sharma et al., 2019). In addition to attracting customers with disabilities, hiring PWD may also help create a positive brand image. A study in the USA found that 92% of consumers felt more positively towards companies employing PWD (González & Fernández, 2016; Siperstein et al., 2006). Additionally, customers with disabilities also prefer to patronize hotels they see as the reducing the unemployment rate for PWD (Gonzalez & Fernandez, 2016).

Moreover, attracting customers with disabilities can be extremely profitable. The total market for travel for PWD is expected to increase exponentially by 65% from 2005 with market value of 53.5 billion pounds to 88.6 billion pounds in 2025. In addition, there is high demand for accessibility in Europe, and the demand is expected to reach an approximated 160 million people by the end of 2025 (Botwell, 2015). This is quite a lucrative market for Zimbabwe's hotel sector to consider tapping into to benefit economically. Currently, Zimbabwe receives most of its international visitors from Europe (8%), the US (4%), and Asia (4%) (Zimbabwe Tourism Authority, 2019). These statistics suggest a lucrative market

for Zimbabwe's hotel sector.

Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative approach with interviews being the data collecting technique. Study participants were conveniently selected managers of star rated hotels in Zimbabwe. Due to Covid-19 pandemic induced travel restrictions and the need to avoid unnecessary face to face interactions, the interviews were conducted online. The interviews were conducted in January and February 2021 using telephone, WhatsApp Video Calling, Google Meet, Zoom and Skype, depending on what was convenient to the respondent. With the consent of the respondents, all interviews were recorded. The interview questions were derived from literature, guided by the research questions. Twenty hotel managers or their representatives were interviewed. The sample size was guided by the saturation concept as proposed by Konstantina et al., (2018) and Creswell (2009).

Creswell's (2009) six steps of qualitative data analysis were adopted by the researchers. First the researchers were mainly dealing with transcribing the data from recordings into text data as well as organizing and preparing data. Secondly, for researchers to develop deeper understanding about the data from hotel managers before analyzing it, they had to read the data several times. The data was then coded into different categories such as images and text. Themes for analysis were then generated from the coded data. The next step involved outlining how themes were to be presented qualitatively, and finally data interpretation was done. Thus, data was analyzed thematically and presented as per research objectives. Table 1 below shows the profile of the respondents.

Table 1: Profile of respondents

Respondent	Designation	Organizational type	Gender	Age	Experience	Location
R1	Hotel Manager	3 Star Hotel	Male	45	15 years	Masvingo
R2	Hotel Manager	4 Star Hotel	Male	42	14 years	Harare
R3	Human Resources Manager	3 Star Hotel	Female	48	16 years	Harare
R4	Hotel Manager	2 Star Hotel	Male	38	10 years	Masvingo
R5	Hotel Manager	2 Star Hotel	Male	35	9 years	Mutare
R6	Hotel Manager	3 Star Hotel	Female	37	11 years	Kariba
R7	Hotel Manager	4 Star Hotel	Female	44	18 years	Victoria Falls
R8	Hotel Manager	4 Star Hotel	Male	44	12 years	Victoria Falls
R9	Hotel Manager	3 Star Hotel	Male	41	13 years	Masvingo
R10	Hotel Manager	3 Star Hotel	Male	42	15 years	Bulawayo
R11	Hotel Manager	2 Star Hotel	Male	40	12 years	Beitbridge
R12	Hotel Manager	1 Star Hotel	Female	38	10 years	Kwekwe
R13	Human Resources Manager	2 Star Hotel	Male	34	9 years	Gweru
R14	Hotel	2 Star Hotel	Male	39	14 years	Nyanga

	Manager					
R15	Hotel Manager	3 Star Hotel	Female	40	15 years	Harare
R16	Hotel Manager	2 Star Hotel	Male	39	14 years	Harare
R17	Hotel Manager	3 Star Hotel	Male	43	16 years	Bulawayo
R18	Hotel Manager	2 Star Hotel	Female	41	15 years	Victoria Falls
R19	Hotel Manager	3 Star Hotel	Male	35	11 years	Harare
R20	Hotel Manager	1 Star Hotel	Male	40	14 years	Masvingo

Findings and discussions

This section presents the results of the in-depth interviews that were carried out with the twenty hotel managers. The results are presented following the dominant themes that emerged from the thematic analysis as well as the research questions. Where possible, interview excerpts from the study participants are shown for emphasis.

Percentage of employees with disabilities in the hotel sector in Zimbabwe

Participants were a bit skeptical about revealing the profile of their employees in their organizations. However, the results of the study suggest there is a limited or even zero number of employees with disabilities in the hotel industry of Zimbabwe. Some of the below statements by participants suggest discrimination against PWD by some employers in the hotel sector.

R1: "Truly speaking our job here requires physical fitness, so all our employees must pass

the fitness test before being employed."

R10: "Our facilities do not cater for PWD including staff."

R15: "Well, we have never received job applications from PWD since we opened this hotel."

R8: "Here we do not have any of our staff with physical disability."

Thus, the results suggest that hotels in Zimbabwe do not have employees with visible disabilities. The findings are supported by Khupe (2010) who blamed the authorities of Zimbabwe for doing virtually nothing to alleviate the challenges being faced by disabled people. The unemployment for PWD is a significant challenge in the hotel sector in Zimbabwe, including because of employment discrimination (Kalargyrou, 2014).

Positions held by PWD in the hotels

Division of work and specialization is central to achievement of organizational objectives. All respondents to the study revealed that they do not have employees with disabilities within their hotels. However, this result is somehow contestable because respondents might not be aware of certain hidden impairments within their staff especially the cognitive and hearing impairments as illustrated below:

R1: "Well, since we do not have staff with physical disabilities, it means none of the positions is occupied with PWD."

R6: "Honestly speaking all our positions here require physically fit and abled people."

R14: "I do not think disabled people can cope with the demands of hotel work."

Results of the study suggest that hotels in Zimbabwe are yet to employ PWD and this requires serious consideration to achieve inclusive growth and development of the hotel

industry. This finding squarely validates the contention advanced by Zakaria et al., (2020) that PWD are considered as unable to participate in working environments, and as a result they experience discrimination in terms of employment opportunities. Some of the recurring statements by the respondents are clearly discriminatory.

Perceptions of advantages of employing PWD

Asked about advantages or benefits of employing persons with disabilities, hotel managers had this to say:

R7: "If we can employ PWD it can give us an opportunity to make our facilities accessible and friendly to PWDs customers."

R11: "Employing PWD may help to address inequalities that presently exist within our society and the employment profile as well as landscape."

Despite the absence of employees with disabilities in Zimbabwe hotels, respondents revealed that there are indeed benefits in employing PWD. One prominent benefit raised by participants was that employing people with disability can also attract visitors with disabilities hence more business to the hotel. For example, *R4: "Yes, I feel if as a hotel we can employ PWD, I think we can also attract customers with disabilities as like attracts like."* As previously stated, this aligns with Sharma et al., (2019) and Kalargyrou et al., (2018) who posit that developing well-designed accommodations will not only benefit employees with disabilities, but such structural and technologically upgraded facilities will also attract customers with disabilities. Gonzalez and Fernandez (2016) also added that one of the reasons why hotels which employs PWD also attracts visitors with disabilities is that they know that employing PWD reduces the unemployment rate for persons with disabilities. This is despite the fact that this study's results suggest there are no PWD employed in the hotel

sector in Zimbabwe.

Additionally, literature has identified other benefits of employing PWD in the hotel sector. These include reduced workplace risks (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2000, Kalargyrou, 2014), reduced time lost due to disabling injuries, reduced turnover and increased retention (Houtenville & Kalargyrou, 2011; Kalargyrou, 2014), reduced absenteeism due to employee loyalty. These factors in return increase productivity Kalargyrou (2014); Kalargyrou (2015). Overall, the literature suggests clear benefits for the Zimbabwe hotel sector.

Challenges of employing PWD for hotels

Respondents revealed a host of challenges faced by PWD in Zimbabwe in the tourism industry, including discrimination. For example, reflecting negative perceptions of PWD, participant R10 made the statement *"I think it's not fair to employ PWD. These people must be assisted financially whilst they are at home."* This perception is consistent with the dominant charity model of disability which states that disability is a charity case which require societal sympathy and alms (Oliver, 1996). Hountenville and Kalargyron (2015) and Lysaght et al. (2012) also cited discrimination of PWD as one of the dominant challenges PWD face.

Another dominating concern raised by the respondents was negative attitudes by potential employers towards PWD. Participants had negative attitudes about employing PWD in the hotel sector in Zimbabwe. One respondent, R25, said *"It's difficult to employ PWD because they also need to be assisted when doing their job."* These findings are consistent with Lysaght et al., (2012) and Kalargyrou (2014) who cited that PWD often experience challenges and barriers such as negative attitudes by employers that impede their ability to secure employment.

Among these, this study revealed that most employers believe it is expensive to employ PWD. For instance, R07: *"To be honest with you my brother, it is expensive to hire a person with disability in the sense that you may need to provide facilities such as toilets and accommodation for the person to use so it becomes expensive."* The perceptions are consistent with Sharma et al., (2019) and Chikuta et al., (2021). This study also suggests employers in the hotel sector in Zimbabwe are not prepared to employ PWD. The findings suggest that most employers have a strong negative attitude towards employing PWD. Below is one of the dominant responses by managers:

R 21: *"PWD require special treatment, my brother. That's why our government can employ the second person who is able bodied to assist their employees with disabilities and pay two people in the process."*

Prospects of employing PWD in the hotel industry of Zimbabwe

There are abundant opportunities for employing PWD in the Zimbabwe hotel sector. There are clearly multiple benefits. This is reflected in a respondent statement: R16: *"Employing PWD means there is an opportunity to build a great brand and reputation. Some hotels in the United States are already doing that."* The findings corroborate studies by Kalargyrou (2014) suggesting there is competitive advantage in employing PWD due to employee loyalty and employees exceeding expectations with lower turnover and better attendance.

As established, there are clear benefits from employing PWD in the tourism industry. R9: *"looking at the profile of the tourism market, I honestly think that the disabilities market is a lucrative niche market that deserves serious consideration."* These results are consistent with Buhalis et al., (2005), and Chikuta (2017) who have suggested PWD have become a

significant consumer market for tourism players including hotels.

Conclusion

Clearly, the hotel sector in Zimbabwe can employ more PWD. The hotel sector seems to be uninformed about the potential of the labor market of PWD. Hotel managers seem to be unprepared to accommodate employees with disabilities in their hotels, and this seems to be as a result of both lack of knowledge as well as discrimination. Some hotel managers however seem to be aware of the benefits of employing PWD which include a good public image and attracting the accessible tourism market. However, managers feel there is a need for awareness within the industry of the need for employing PWD. Moreover, they have the often-erroneous view that hiring PWD is expensive and involves refurbishing facilities and purchasing additional assistive equipment. Given enough education, the managers are likely to employ PWD in the future. The growing disability market and increased disability advocacy present opportunities for employment for PWD.

Recommendations

While Zimbabwe ratified the UNCRPD in 2013, there has not been enough effort to ensure that the provisions of the convention are enforced in all sectors of the society and economy. There is therefore the need for the government of Zimbabwe, through the Ministry responsible for the tourism and hospitality industry, to spell out accessibility requirements for any hospitality business. This will benefit both employees and customers with disabilities. It is also recommended that the Zimbabwe Tourism Authority take issues of accessibility more seriously as it grades and accredits hotels and other designated tourist facilities. More affirmative action is required to better empower PWD, and this should begin with equipping them with the skills required to qualify to work in the hotel industry. There is also need for a

deliberate move by the tourism industry to include PWDs in employment. As suggested previously in the literature review, employing PWD not only empowers the employed individuals but also puts the organization at a competitive advantage as it is viewed as a good corporate citizen. Hotel managers should realize these benefits along with others, including that employing PWD will reduce labour turnover and will help the organization attract tourists with disabilities.

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