

The Effect Of  
Employer Perception  
On Employment  
Opportunities For  
People Living With  
Disabilities: Case Of  
Selected Universities  
In Kenya

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**ABSTRACT**

In Kenya besides many organizations lobbying for the increased employment of PLWDs, amplified by the constitution that at least 5% elective positions must be spared for (PLWDs) there is less employment opportunities. For example the entire cabinet and parastatal secretaries of about twenty six people only one is disabled. The empirical review has pointed out that employer perception views people living with disabilities as costly, and disturbing. The objective of the study was to investigate the effect of employer perception on employment opportunities for PLWDs. The population was PLWDs in selected Universities in Kenya and associations of Disabled people in Kenya. Sample size was employees living with Disabilities and members of the association of disabled in Murang'a County. The findings were presented in tabular form. Descriptive as well as inferential statistics were used to analyze the findings. The findings showed that Disabled people are unemployed due to negative employer perception towards employees. The study recommended that negative employer perception must be changed in order the employment of those with disabilities to be enhanced.

**Key Words:** Employer Perception, Employment, Disabled

**1.0 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

It has been established that about 15% of the world's population, experience some form of disability. Also it was found that 1/5 of the world population experience disability World Bank (2014). Many countries have passed laws directed towards discouraging discrimination of the disabled in the labor market; but, unemployment continues to be felt, even in more developed and civilized countries. Employment record for disabled in developed countries is not unreliable due to lack of sufficient data, incompatible disability description and numerical biases; they are also overwhelmed by big differences in employment definitions Sarpong (1974). Employment data for disabled are not easy to come-by in developing countries. In Nevertheless for example evidence show that lack of employment for people with disabilities in developed countries is very high, while unemployment for disable in developing countries is high Wright (1960). It was revealed that only 29.2% of the disabled are employed in the U.S.A.

**1.1 DISABILITY STATISTICS IN KENYA**

According to the current health and demographic survey, done by the MPND, Kenya had a population of over 4 million (10% of total population) People Living with Disability (2013). People living with disability in Kenya like in most developing countries are marginalized populations and face problems due to their disability and most have no access to employment. Many of them experience difficulties due to inherent social, cultural and economic discrimination. Furthermore, women with disabilities are more NCPWD (2013).

## **1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Wilkins (2013) established that majority of disabled are unemployed, improvement in the last decades has been below targets and expectation. Kweka (2010) revealed that employment of those with disabilities have slide improvement. But his study is questionable for generalization since the population used was 197, while his sample size was only 26 people living with disabilities and only involved people from Dar-es salaam. Another study by Mkumbo (2012) established that people living with disabilities do not get employment opportunities easily because of lack of education. Makwena (2012) established that PLWDs according to NCIC report, majority of Universities have not employed enough people with disabilities (NCIC, 2013). Multimedia University, Rongo University Colloge, and Kibabii University Colloge advertised job vacancies and clearly indicated that people with disabilities are encouraged to apply. In Kenya besides the constitution guideline of at least 5% plus progressive employment opportunities, according to National council for people with disabilities less than 2% of the employment positions are occupied by persons with disabilities NCPWD (2013). Scanty research has been done on challenges facing employment for people with disabilities. Therefore the gap exist as there is scanty research on challenges facing employment for people living with disabilities, these triggered the need for investigation into the challenges facing equal employment for people living with disabilities in Kenya to address the gap.

## **1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

To establish the effect of employer perception on employment for people with disabilities

## **1.4 HYPOTHESIS**

H<sub>0</sub> Employer perception does not affect employment for people with disabilities

## **1.5 JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY**

- The ministry of labor will benefit from the findings as the problems inhibiting employment of disabled is known and the corrective measures have been recommended on how to increase employment of the people living with disabilities.
- Researchers and Scholars in the field of disabilities will benefit from the findings it adds knowledge in the academic field.
- The Human Resource Managers will benefit from the study as they can utilize the recommendations of the study to solve employment problems of the people with disabilities at workplace.
- The National Council for People Living with Disabilities will benefit as they will utilize the findings of study to champion for the well being of people with disabilities.

## **1.6 SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

There are many factors that affect employment for people living with disabilities. The study concentrated on effect Employer perception. The study was conducted among the public Universities in Nairobi, and Mombasa

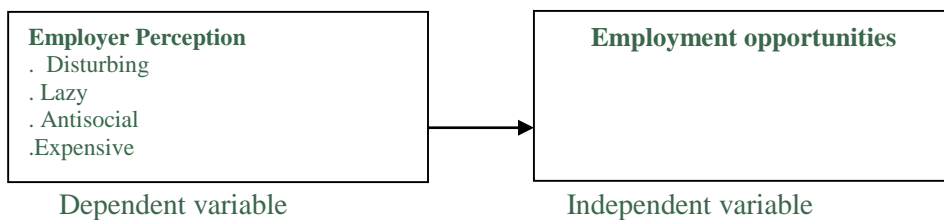
Counties as these Universities have the largest population of employees hence the findings from the institutions can be generalized as true representative of the people living with disabilities and unemployed PLWDs in Murang'a County between February and April 2015.

**2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW**

**2.1 THEORY OF STIGMA**

According to the theory of stigma, it is believed that people with disabilities are discriminated on the basis that they are inferior from the employers' perception. According to Stone & Colella (2011), supervisors and co-workers attitude toward people living with disabilities as shy have a profound impact on the employment opportunities. It was established that even in corporations that are committed to hire people with disabilities, negative attitudes form supervisors and co-workers have affected the socialization of new employees, limit the ability to become fully accepted and well functioning insiders. According to Wordsworth (2013), negative perception on disabled as dependent had limited the chances of acquiring employment as the employers used unfavorable selection criteria to lock them out. According to Greenwood *et al* (2011), physical disabilities are viewed as bitter or unhappy. It was also established that employers are unwilling to hire those with disabilities due to perception that they have difficulties in performing to the required standards. Greenwood & Jockson (2007) establish that employers are unwilling to consider physically disabled.

**2.2 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**



*Source: Author*

**2.3 DISTURBING**

According to Raths, (2010), it was established that decline in employment of PWDs is due to employer's fear of lawsuits that relates to hire and fire of PLWDs. According to Butterworth (2012), top management considered much on skills when hiring persons with disabilities, but once hired, lower-level managers are instructed that employees with disabilities leave the organization soon regardless of job performance. In another study by Acemoglu & Angrist, (2000), established that discrimination at the hiring stage, and wrongful termination were major determinants of low statistics of PLWDs.

**2.4 LAZY**

According to Greenwood (2010), employers fear that coworkers may react negatively to work with PWDs hence lower productivity, increase labor costs, and thus make organization less profitable. Greenwood *et al* (2011) established that evidence concerns PWDs is mixed, there is a continuing concern on coworker relationship, mostly when hearing; sight and physical disabilities are involved. According to Stone *et al* (2010), coworkers' unease working with persons with disabilities is due to: fear a negative effect on work-related outcomes and fear a negative effect on personal outcomes.

## 2.5 ANTISOCIAL

According to McNeil, (2000), employers panic that customers may not wish interacting with employees with disabilities and thus carry out fewer businesses with their organizations. Also employers are hesitant to hire people with disabilities, especially those with physically impaired, hearing impaired, and sight impaired. In the study by McNeil (2000) for work-related outcomes, it was established that clients fear that employees with disabilities do not produce high quality products or delivering quality service as workers without disabilities

## 2.6 EXPENSIVE

Leonard (2010) established that people with disabilities are expensive compared to those without disabilities as they require additional cost in the provision of extra services to them. The extra costs were medical bills, transportation, and accommodation and support equipments. Leonard (2011) reported that the extra benefits to worker with disabilities and the inferior the labor market conditions has led to more people with disabilities leave or dislike employment. Livermore, *et al* (2000) established that Economic incentives make it possible for employers to reduce their tax burdens and reimburse possible or realized costs of hiring individuals with disabilities.

## 3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted descriptive design. Descriptive research determines and reports the way things are Mugenda and Mugenda (2003). This design was chosen because it helps to gain more information about the dependent variables (Disturbance, Laziness, Antisocialism, and Expensiveness) and independent variable (Employment Opportunities) of the study. The data that generated from this design helped to establish the relationship between challenges and employment opportunities of disabled persons. Sample size was 191 people living with disabilities. Data collection procedure was drop and pick of questionnaire and analysis was by SPSS package.

Regression model  $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \beta_5 X_5 + e$

Where Y= employment opportunities

$\beta_0$  = Constant

$X_1$  = Disturbance

X<sub>2</sub>= Laziness

X<sub>3</sub>= Antisocialism

X<sub>4</sub>= Expensiveness

e= Margin of error

β<sub>i</sub>; i=1,.....,4 are the model parameters

## 4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### 4.1 RESPONSE RATE

Fowler (1994) defines the response rate as the extent to which the final data set includes all sample subjects and it is calculated as the number of people interviews are completed, divided by the total number of people in the entire sample, multiplied by 100. A total number of 191 questionnaires were administered to all the sample size. From table 4.1 it shows that only 120 respondents filled the questionnaires making a percentage of 62.8%. Babbie (2002) observes that in descriptive research, a response rate of above 50% is adequate for analysis. A response of 62.8% in the study was considered very adequate.

Table 4.1 Response rate

	Frequency	Percentage
Number of questionnaires not returned	71	37.2
Number of questionnaires filled and returned	120	62.8
Number of questionnaires sent	191	100

Source: Author

Findings as in table 4.2 show that only 54.6% of reserved positions for people with disabilities are filled. The findings means that reasonable number of respondents confirmed there having reserved positions for PLWDs. This confirms to the research carried out by Hazer and Bedell (2010), who found out that people with disabilities are less likely to be employed than the non-disabled just because of their nature of disabilities. From table below, it shows that minimal number of PLWDs in the organizations occupies meaningful four managerial ranks, as is indicated by 3.3%. These means, most of the organizations do not engage people living with disabilities in their institutions. This outcome conforms to that of Gilbride, *et al* (2012) who noted that employers are concerned with costs involved in accommodations for workers with disabilities.

Table 4.2 Employment Opportunities

Employment Opportunities	Frequency	Percentage
Policy on Employment	28	23.0
Reserved Positions	24	19.7
Position Filled	12	9.8
Ranks	4	3.3

Source: Author

From table 4.3 below, thirty people which is twenty five (25%) percent of the respondents say employees with disabilities are disturbing. The outcome means that the employers believe that PLWDs are disturbing. This is in tandem with the study carried out by Raths (2010) established declining employment for PLWDs is due to employers' fear that lawsuits related to hiring and firing PLWDs. In table below, ten people translating to eight point three (8.3%) percent of the respondents say that employees with disabilities are lazy. The outcome shows that most of the employers and co-workers view people with disabilities as lazy. This finding is in line with that of Greenwood (2010) who concluded that employers fear coworkers reacting negatively working with PLWDs and thereby lower productivity. In the other study by Stone *et al* (2010) found that coworkers fear negative effect on work-related outcomes as a result of increased workload.

From the findings, it can be concluded that people living with disabilities have difficulties in attaining employment opportunities due to the fact that they are lazy. Employers perceive PLWDs as not hard working and fear employing them as their production will be lowered. Co-workers are afraid to work with people living with disabilities as they are seen as lazy so when assigned together, and maybe the outcome is shared, they view the PLWDs as derailing their effort to get better pay.

In table below, twenty one people which is seventeen point five (17.5%) percent of the respondents say that employees living with disabilities are Antisocial. The outcome means that most of the employees are viewed by their co-workers and the employers as antisocial. This finding is centrally to McNeil (2000) in his study in South Africa that employers fear customers may have negative reactions to interact with employees with disabilities and transact less business with the organization. Also the study established that employers were reluctant to hire people living with disabilities because they believe they are less productive.

From table below, fifty nine people translating to forty nine point two (49.2%) percent of the respondents say that employees living with disabilities are expensive. This means that employers fear engaging people living with disabilities as they perceive them as being expensive while the employers' reason of doing business is to gain profit, but if they engage people living with disabilities will reduce the profit making. The results above are in tandem with Livermore *et al* (2000) who found that people with disabilities were expensive than those without disabilities.

From the outcome it can be concluded that employers fear employing people with disabilities due to perception of being expensive. The cost of accommodating PLWDs in terms of restructuring the organizational facilities, meeting medical costs for disabled, coping with slow working pace due to nature disabled people, all these means that employers will not favor people living with disabilities when offering job opportunities.

Table 4.3 Employer Perception

Perception	Frequency	Percentage
Disturbing	30	25.0
Lazy	10	8.3
Antisocial	21	17.5
Expensive	59	49.2
Total	120	100.0

Source: Author

#### 4.2 CORRELATIONS OF THE STUDY VARIABLES

Correlation among the independent variables is illustrated by the correlations matrix in table Correlation is often used to explore the relationship among a group of variables (Pallant, 2010), in turn helping in testing for multicollinearity. That the correlation values are not close to 1 or -1 is an indication that the factors are sufficiently different measures of separate variables (Farndale, Hope-Hailey & Kelliher, 2010). It is also an indication that the variables are not multicollinear. Absence of multicollinearity allows the study to utilize all the independent variables.

From table below, the combined correlation of five independent variables namely skills, stereotype, organizational culture, organizational facilities and employer perception and the dependent variable were computed to determine the strength and direction of the associations between variables. The findings in table below showed that all independent variables had positive relationship with the dependent variable. Disturbance  $r = 0.900$ . The performed test of significance of independent variable yielded p-value of 0.000 at the level of significance 0.05 two tailed. Therefore there is positive correlation between the dependent variable and the independent variables. Therefore the study concluded, that from the independent variables investigated in the study, disturbance has the highest correlation to employment opportunities, followed by laziness, antisocialism is the third expensiveness being the last in that order. From the table below the study concluded that all the four independent variable are equally significant as all had significance level of 0.000, meaning they are all very significant and each influence employment opportunities for people living with disabilities.



Table 4.4: Correlation between challenges facing employment opportunities for people living with disabilities

		Employment Opportunities	Disturbance	Lazy	Antisocial	Expensive
Employment Opportunities	Pearson Correlation	1	0.370**	.752**	.659**	.900**
Disturbance	Pearson Correlation	0.370**	1	0.920**	0.877**	0.737**
Lazy	Pearson Correlation	.752**		1	.799**	.834**
Antisocial	Pearson Correlation	.659**		.799**	1	.682**
Expensive	Pearson Correlation	.900**		.834**	.682**	1

Source: Author

### 4.3 FIT MODEL FOR CHALLENGES FACING EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR PLWDS

The test of fit model is used to test the suitability of the elements described in the study and test how they relate to each other. The chi-square test of fit model was used to test the fitness of the variables. The outcome showed that all the variables are well represented as all were below the recommended 0.05 level of significance. This results lead to conclusion that the model was fit do test what it was indented to test and that the results of the study can be reliable because the objective of the model was attained at the ration of 4/4 according to the fit model table below.

Table 4.5 Chi-Square Test of Fit for the Model

		Employer Perception	
Chi-Square		44.067 <sup>b</sup>	
df		3	
Asymp. Sig.		.000	
Monte Carlo Sig.	Sig.		.000 <sup>e</sup>
	99% Confidence Interval	Lower Bound	.000
		Upper Bound	.000

Source: Author

### 4.4 REGRESSION ANALYSIS ON INDEPENDENT VARIABLES AGAINST THE DEPENDENT VARIABLE

The general purpose of multiple linear regressions (the term was first used by Person, 1908) is to learn more about the relationship between several independent or predictor of variables and a dependent or criterion variable ( Borg *et al*, 2008). Multiple regressions allow the researcher to ask the general question ‘what is the best predictor of...’ (Done & Seward, 2008)β. A multiple regression model below was fitted as discussed in chapter three. The multiple regression was done to test the model;  $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + e$

Where Y= employment opportunities

$\beta_0$ =constant

$x_3$ =employer perception

$\beta_1, ; i=1,$  are the model parameters

#### 4.5 EMPLOYER PERCEPTION AGAINST EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR PLWDS

Rath (2010), in her study established that people living with disabilities are disturbing. It was argued that employers were not willing to hire this group of people because they perceived them as disturbing. Another study by Greenwood (2010) revealed that people living with disabilities are lazy. The study further said that employers fear coworker's negative reaction and thereby lower productivity, while increasing costs. Another study by McNeil (2000) established that customers may have negative reactions to interactions with employees living with disabilities and that this could impact negatively to employment opportunities for PLWDS.

In this study it was established that  $R^2=0.407$ , which implies that 40.7% change in employment opportunities for people living with disabilities are explained by unit change in employer perception, this is in line with the earlier researchers who established that employment opportunities for people living with disabilities were determined by employer perception. The regression equation is as indicated below:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_3 X_3 + e$$

$$Y = \beta_0 + 0.407 + 0.704$$

Table 4.6 Model Summary of Employer Perception against Employment Opportunities for PLWDS

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.638 <sup>a</sup>	.407	.398	.704
Predictors: (Constant), Employer Perception				

Source: Author

The table below shows that the relationship between employer perception and employment opportunities is statistically significant as indicated by sig 0.000, this means that the effect is not by change but by the presence of the stereotype. This also means that for any meaningful improvement for employment opportunities by people living with disabilities, employer perception have to be changed.

Table 4.7 Significance Level for Employer Perception against Employment Opportunities for PLWDS

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
1	Regression	22.386	1	22.386	45.220	.000 <sup>a</sup>
	Residual	32.673	66	.495		
	Total	55.059	67			
a. Predictors: (Constant), Employer Perception						
b. Dependent Variable: Employment Opportunity						

Source: Author

#### **4.6 HYPOTHESES TESTING**

H<sub>0</sub> Employer perception does not affect employment opportunity for people living with disabilities at significance level of 0.05, the outcome from the table 4.7 shows that significance level of 0.000 which is less than 0.05 meaning we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that Employer perception has an effect on determining employment opportunities for people living with disabilities.

### **5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 CONCLUSION**

The study further determined that employers perceived people with disabilities as disturbing, expensive, lazy, and antisocial. This means that employer will not desire PLWDs as they will reduce profitability due to expenses involved during medication by meeting medical bills and accommodation. They are also not hard working due to the nature of disability this make coworkers view that they may let them down when the remuneration is based on group performance. Also the issue of antisocial makes team work impossible as working together need good personal relationship.

#### **5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

The negative employer perception towards people with disabilities has to be reversed by ensuring that employers charge and measure employees' performance and not individual appearance. The employers should be encouraged to have forums with those organizations already implementing 5% plus progressive constitutional requirement by the Kenyan laws concerning employment of PLWDs. Also the government should improve the incentives to lure employers to hire more disabled people.

#### **5.3 AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

Due to constraints highlighted in the study, it was not exhaustive of all the challenges facing employment opportunities for people living with disabilities. Research should be conducted to establish other challenges that influence employment opportunities for people with disabilities since only 40.7% of the employment were covered by the independent variables, meaning that the 59.3% of the unexplained influence have to be accounted for by the next research. The other disabilities like Hyper, HIV/AIDS, and Slow learners should be conducted.

#### **5.4 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY TO THE BODY OF KNOWLEDGE**

The study contributed to the body of knowledge in the following ways

- The findings will assist the employers to embrace employment of more people living with disabilities as the study discovered the potential in the people living with disabilities is not yet tapped into.

- The government will utilize the findings to implement strategies that will ensure improved accessibility of people living with disabilities to education and to any organizational facilities for people with disabilities to contribute equally to the development of the nation.
- By the people with disabilities being employed, they will contribute to the national GDP hence helping to improve the livelihood of the Kenyan citizen as the poverty line will be elevated leading to improved standard of living.

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