

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES OF THE HEARING IMPAIRED IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY: GENDER ANALYSIS

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Abstract

The increasing participating rates of disable youth in hospitality higher career education can clearly be seen in many countries including Malaysia. This group has been identified as a key equity group for several years on the basis of their overall participating level, progression rates and the employments outcomes they achieve after completion their special education. This study empirically compares the barriers and constraints of employment among the young male and female

hearing impaired graduates in Malaysia hospitality industry. Using a self reported questionnaire among the hearing impaired graduates from two higher learning institutions for disable, result revealed that there are still some constraints especially faced by females disable graduates compare to males while pursuing their career interests in the hospitality industry. Inferiority complex owing to their physical and communication disabilities creates the feeling of less confident, isolated and insecure working in the hospitality industry. This situation is not only given significant impact and implications to the disable students, graduates, hospitality institutions, industry practitioners but the government as well.

Keywords: *Employability, Hearing Impaired, Hospitality Industry*

JEL Classification: I0

1. INTRODUCTION

To cope with the increasing demand of employment in every sector of diverse industries, many countries are strongly focusing on acquiring people skills especially among the youth through educational training. This can clearly be seen with the increasing rates of students' participation in higher career educations including disabled youth through special education. Realizing contribution of young of disabled groups to the development of the industry, giving career guidance and trainings to this special group is crucially importance. With that the Malaysia Ministry of Higher Education has introduced continuing skill-based programs especially for the young hearing impaired students with the intentions to furnish them with essential skills to safeguard the promising careers in diverse sectors of industries including the hospitality industry. There recently been increased of public polytechnics offering certificates and diplomas program in hospitality. Over the last five years, the numbers of two, three years hospitality programs are rapidly grown and at some polytechnics the student's enrolment has increased two fold and even higher (MOE, 2008). As a result there is an increase of hearing impaired graduates with certificates and diplomas in hospitality programmes. Despites this, substantial numbers of hearing impaired graduates are reported still struggling with only small number of them are found to be working directly in the hospitality industry. This situation raises critical question as to whether the graduates are not interested of taking employment in the hospitality

industry or the industry practitioners are not interested of employing them or are there any gender bias that cause the causation.

To date, there are increasing number of studies addressing the general aspects of employment opportunity and discrimination among the disabled people (Kreismann, 1994:23, Lee, 1996:6, Jen-Gwo Chen, 1997: 88, Uijl, 2002:140, Konur, 2002:22). In the Malaysian context, many available studies were looking at the general aspects of employment of disabled people (Adnan, 2001:16, Haq, 2003:14, Jayasooria, 1997:12) with little focussing on hospitality industry employment (Mohd Zahari, 2010:10). As gender employment bias is one of the critical issues in many industries including hospitality, this study is therefore compare the barriers and constraint employment among the young male and female hearing impaired graduates in Malaysian hospitality industry. It is hope that the insight obtain from this study will give an overall benefit to disabled students, graduates, institutions, industry practitioners and the government.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Based on the literature, the area of concern among the researchers related to employment of disabled adults is associated with discrimination. There are substantial quantitative evidences showing that employers both in the public sectors discriminated openly against disabled peoples looking for work (Harvey, 2001:38). For example, a survey of employment policies of 26 UK health authorities found that one third of employers had discriminated against disabled job seekers (Rothwell, 2008:73). Employers claimed disabled people could not meet the criteria necessary for working in the health service. These criteria included lifting of patients and general heavy work, the need for a professional qualification or a range of physical and intellectual skills (Dyer, 1995).

The issues of discrimination on disabled people were also popular among the researchers in the tourism and hospitality areas. Researchers like (Lucas, 1993:15) and (Argyle, 1995) had averred to the discrimination often faced by people with disabilities. (Peterson, 2005) argued that career development could often be restricted or blocked altogether for those employees with physical disability. It is

also the case that previous workplace limitations experienced by these individuals can result in fewer social and vocational opportunities. Throughout the world, people with disabilities are among the least privileged and most vulnerable. Their right to training, employment and job development is often overlooked (Mohd Salleh, 2001:22). One of the main problems faced by the higher learning institutions is the choice of degree courses offers and its relevance to the employment market (Newton, 2007:26). The institutions may produce a great number of students, but if the industries are reluctant to employ these disable graduates, the issue of poor transfers of graduates, shortage of manpower and job attrition may not be solved. Hence, it is important to assign the disabled graduates with the right job for the right person so that they would not feel incompatible and give up easily.

It has been recognized that disabled employees can be the recipients of discrimination in workplaces, influenced by many factors including physical appearance, particularly in service industries such as hospitality in the areas of dealing with the public directly (Ross, 2004:23). Although people with disabilities bring unique benefits to workplaces, and those benefits outweigh the simple requirement that they have received, equal opportunity to join and advance in it, some organizations were still slightly hesitate of hiring them in the industry. Up to now, only 5.24% of people with disabilities were employed in various industries in Malaysia. This rate of employment for people with disabilities is significantly lower that their non-disabled counterparts (Haq, 2003:14). The current trend in the job market toward mobile, high-tech, adaptable jobs and careers may be further exacerbating obstacles to employment for the disabled (Feldman, 2004:14). In order to pursue career in challenging industries, employers acquired workers with adequate training in the specialized area.

With sufficient trainings, employees are able to grow into good workers (Verhaar, 1999:23). This is evident when employers in both private and public sectors listed lack of related experience and lack of required skills and training as the biggest barriers to employment for disabled people (Mohd Salleh, 2001:22, Haq, 200:14, Feldman, 2004:14, Lemaire, 2008:22). Youth unemployment can be due to a number of factors but it is often associated with lack of relevant skills, qualifications and experience. In today's society, not just technical and on the job skills are important, but also social and personal developments that assist an

individual in getting a job (Clarke, 2008:30). Individuals with disabilities may have lower expectancies of making a successful school-to-work transition and facing challenges of adapting in the workplace (Feldman, 2004).

3. METHODOLOGY

Based on the characteristics of the targeted groups, quantitative approach through self-reported questionnaires was found to be the most appropriate method for information gathering. Polytechnic Johor Bahru and Selayang Community College selected for the fact that these two higher institutions offer specialized hospitality programme for the disables with hearing impairment. With the permission obtained from both polytechnics, researchers had visited the heads of department and met with the officers in charge of keeping the graduates details. A total number of 150 graduates were identified and selected as the sample for this study.

The survey questionnaires were divided into two main sections. Section A dealt with the respondents' demographic profiles like gender, employment status, working sector and working place. Section B is created with the intention to compare the barriers and constraint of employment among the young male and female hearing impaired graduates.

Prior to data collection, the graduates were contacted through letters and short messages (SMS) to participate in the study. Questionnaires were mailed to the respective graduates from the listed names, addresses and cell phone numbers initially obtained from the Polytechnics. The details about the researcher, the aim, purpose of the study, confidentiality and anonymity were stated on the cover page of questionnaires. Four weeks were given for the respondents to return the completed questionnaires. After two weeks, follow up letters were sent to the respondents as a reminder. Within 4 to 5 weeks, out of 150 questionnaires posted 136 were returned.

4. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Respondent Profile

Before proceeding into descriptive and inferential statistics, frequencies related to gender, employable status, working sector and working places of respondents are analyzed. The results are reported in Table 1.0.

Table 1.0: The number and percentage (%) of overall respondents reported working status, working sector, and working places.

Variables	Gender (n)			
	M	%	F	%
Employment Status				
Yes	55	82.1	43	62.3
No	12	17.9	26	37.7
Working Sector				
Hospitality	23	34.3	26	37.7
Non hospitality	44	65.7	43	62.3
Working Place				
Hotel	11	16.4	20	29.0
Restaurant	12	17.9	6	8.7
Others	32	47.8	17	24.6

Results revealed that there are no distinguishable differences between the males and females of the hearing impaired graduates with the ratio of 51:49 percent (69 males against 67 females). A total of 82.1 percent of male respondents are working while 17.9 percent are unemployed compared to 62.3 percent are working and 37.7 percent not working for female respondents. In terms of working sector, only small proportion of disabled gender graduates are working directly in the hospitality industry (34.3 percent for male and 37.7 percent for

females) as opposed those working in non hospitality industry (65.7 percent for males and 62.3 percent for females). It interesting to note that only small proportion of disable graduates were working directly in the like hotel (16.4 percent of males and 29.0 percent of females) and restaurant sectors (19.9 percent of males and 8.7 percent of females) as opposed to substantial number working in other sectors of industry (47.8 percent of males and 24.6 percent of females) than those who worked in other sectors (35.0 percent, n=43 and unemployed (29.3 percent, n = 36). Those who worked in hospitality industry were attached at the back of the house as cooks, kitchen helpers, butchers, chambermaids and stewards while those who worked in other industries had taken jobs as gas station attendants, hair washers in saloons, storekeepers, florists and toll-booth operators and others.

4.2. Gender Analysis on the Barriers and Constraint of Employment in Hospitality Industry

Analysis comparing on the barriers and constraint of taking employment in hospitality industry between male and female hearing impaired graduates was undertaken. The independent sample t-test was used. Result in Table 2.0 revealed that all of 10 items used to have statistically significant differences which indicate that females hearing impaired graduates perceived the barriers and constraint of employment in the hospitality industry slightly difference than the males graduates.

Table 2.0: Showing mean scores for items of data collection analyzed by comparing respondents' gender with t-test result and level of significance.

Item No.	Items	Gender	Mean (M)	S.D	t-value	Sig 2-tail
1.	I have interest to work in the hospitality industry but due to my disabilities I have not been employed.	F	6.34	1.420	2.253	.026
		M	5.05	1.622		
2.	My physical disabilities restrict me from getting job opportunities.	F	6.96	.589	4.905	.000
		M	5.16	1.208		
3.	My physical disallowed me to get any	F	5.87	1.466	3.329	.001

	jobs in the industry.	M	5.03	1.465		
4.	My physical made me feel not confident to work in the hospitality industry	F	6.09	1.200	5.893	.000
		M	5.56	1.420		
5	Most job opportunities in hospitality industries require me to have good communication skills.	F	6.21	1.213	3.218	.002
		M	5.46	1.471		
6	I feel insecure in working in any organisations due to my communication disability.	F	6.39	1.267	3.782	.000
		M	5.54	1.357		
7	I feel isolated when working in the hospitality industry due to my disabilities.	F	6.00	1.206	4.961	.000
		M	4.97	1.212		
8	I felt discriminated by my colleagues.	F	6.66	.708	6.038	.000
		M	5.30	1.692		
9	I am not given the same treatment as other workers.	F	6.66	.708	6.038	.000
		M	5.71	1.086		
10	Hospitality industry do not makes me feel special	F	6.33	1.173	3.872	.000
		M	5.46	1.501		

a. **Scale: 1= Strongly disagree, 2= Disagree , 3= Slightly disagree, 4= Neither 5= Slightly agree, 6= Agree, 7 = Strongly agree**

b. **Male = 69 , Female = 67**

Females clearly reported themselves as somewhat agreeing that although having interest to work in the hospitality industry but due to disabilities they have not been employed (M= 6.34) in contrast to slightly given by males respondents (M= 5.05, p=.026). Females also agreeing that physical disabilities restrict them from getting job opportunities (M= 6.96) as opposed to males which slightly agree (M= 5.16, p=.000) with this item. With this feeling, female respondents believed that physical disallowed them to get any jobs in the industry (M= 5.87) compared to male respondents (M= 5.02, p=.001) and agreeing physical disabilities made them feel not confident to work in the hospitality industry (M= 6.09) in contrast to slightly agree given by male respondents (M= 5.56, p=.000).

Differences perceptions between genders were also appeared on communication skills items. As such, females respondents agree that most job opportunities in

hospitality industries require them to have good communication skills (M= 6.21), different to slightly agree feeling given by the male counterpart (M=5.46, p=.002). Similar difference occurred on the item that feeling insecure working in any organisations due to communication disability whereby female respondents agreeing on this item (M= 6.39) compare to slightly agree rated by male respondents (M=5.54, p=.000).

Not to exaggerate inferiority complex is one of the feelings facing by the disable peoples. To see whether this notion holds true, comparison of gender differences were undertaken on four items used in the questionnaire. Result explicitly revealed the inferiority feeling strongly occur among the female respondents compare to the males counterpart. This is evident when female respondents agreeing of feeling isolated when working in the hospitality industry due to their disabilities (M= 6.00) compare to slightly agree expressed by male respondents (M=4.97, p= .000) therefore feeling discriminating by their colleagues (M =6.66) as opposed to slightly agree given by the male respondents (M= 5.30, p=.000). With that feeling, it is not surprising that females place greater level of agreement that they are not given the same treatment as with other workers (M= 6.66), different than slightly agree place by the male respondents (M=5.71, p=.000). This differences is further strengthened when females felt that hospitality industry do not makes me feel special (M=6.33) in contrast with males counterpart (M=5.46, p =.000).

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

From the analysis, it is apparent the hearing impaired graduates are content with special career education with some of them directly working in the hospitality industry and fully utilizing whatever skills obtained in the program. This is good indications that some the disable graduates are really taking advantage of the opportunities given to them. Ever those not working in the hospitality industry still indicate that the programmes are not really fails to provide them the career. Despite this, it was appearing there are still some constraints especially faced by females disable graduates compare to males while pursuing their career interests in the hospitality industry. Inferiority complex owing to their physical and

communication disabilities creates the feeling less confident, isolated and insecure working in the hospitality industry.

With this scenario, the higher learning institutions for disable should find the mechanism through program curriculum in boosting up the confident especially among females hearing impaired students to least ready to take challenges in hospitality industry work. Hospitality industry practitioners as the end users should support the institutions of higher learning by giving more opportunities to female graduates even though on gender stereotype jobs. By employing this group some long issues related to Malaysian hospitality industry, such as shortage of manpower, attrition, job hopping and poor transfer of graduates into the industry can slightly be reduced as disabled groups were found to be more loyal than the normal ones. For the government, particularly the Ministry Human Resource, they should improve what they have done now by imposing more strict monitoring processes against all industry practitioners not violate the Malaysian Disability Act 1996. On top of that the collaboration efforts between hospitality institutions, industry practitioners and the Ministry of Human Resource should continuously be held. This effort, in the long run, will ensure the government's allocation and intention of giving equal opportunity of education; employment and easing the gender discrimination especially among the disable peoples could be achieved.

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