

Employment of People with Disabilities in Private and Public Sectors

Ranka Perućica^{1,*}, Biljana Sladoje Bošnjak², Ivana Zecevic²

¹Faculty of Philosophy (Bosnia and Herzegovina – Republic of Srpska), University of East Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

²Faculty of Medicine (Bosnia and Herzegovina – Republic of Srpska), University of East Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Copyright©2018 by authors, all rights reserved. Authors agree that this article remains permanently open access under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0 International License

Abstract Employers often have prejudices and negative stereotypical attitudes regarding the employment of persons with disabilities (PwD). This is a part of the conclusion of D1.1 Report - Identify and analyze the needs of employers within *School-to-Work Transition for Higher education students with disabilities in Serbia, Bosnia & Herzegovina and Montenegro* (Trans2Work) project. We are interested in whether there is a difference in attitude between employers in the public and private sectors when it comes to hiring persons with disabilities. The aim of the research was to examine the attitudes of employers in the private and public sectors regarding the employment of persons with disabilities. We hypothesized that employers in the public sector had more positive attitude towards the employment of persons with disabilities in relation to employers in the private sector. The study sample consisted of companies from the private and public sectors in one of two entities in Bosnia and Herzegovina – Republic of Srpska (60 companies in the private sector and 60 companies in the public sector). In this research, we used the Questionnaire about employment of the people with disabilities, which examines the attitude of the employers about employment of the persons with disabilities. The Questionnaire consisted of 19 questions. Employers were asked questions related to the employment of persons with disabilities. The Questionnaire had good reliability and Cronbach alpha coefficient was 0,89. We used two methods in the study: the survey method and the method of theoretical analysis. We used the survey method to conduct data collecting through research instruments, data processing and analysis of the results, while the methods of theoretical analysis were necessary for collection and selection of relevant information from the former methodological and subject-related researches. Results confirmed the assumption that employers in the public sector had more positive attitude towards the employment of persons with disabilities compared with the employers in the private sector. Complete and thorough analysis would be shown in the paper. We hope that the results will contribute to the existing literature related to the

employment of persons with disabilities and project Trans2Work in general.

Keywords Employment, Persons with Disabilities, Private and Public Sector

1. Introduction

It is very difficult to get any reliable data regarding the employment of persons with disabilities in the world. Available data showed that persons with disabilities had poorer employment results comparing with general population. In developing countries, 80-90% of persons with disabilities are unemployed although being in prime working age [1]. In developed countries the situation is somewhat better and the unemployed rate of persons with disabilities is lower. One of the problems in Bosnia and Herzegovina in recent years has been increasing unemployment of persons with disabilities. The problem has become more serious because in past years we faced with more and more persons with disabilities with higher education looking for a job. In this process they have faced many difficulties regardless of their expertise and abilities required for the job. One of the problems of (un)employment has been a change of employment structure in sectors, that brings decrease in employment in key manufacturing sectors and increase in administration and state sector, professional and technical sectors as well as information and communication activities. Employment and work of the persons with disabilities are very important factors for a society because these people cannot be easily employed [2]. Zunic stated that person with disabilities were discriminated for centuries and that numerous factors influenced that [3]. Some authors mentioned that the main factors in relationship between employer and a person with disabilities were social-economic factors, insufficiently elaborated and unclear legal regulations, etc. [4]. It has been long known that work and employment play a key

role in life of every person being important factors in social inclusion and welfare. If persons with disabilities are deprived of the right to work, they will not be able to fulfill existential security, social interactions, mental health stability, social status, development of personal identity as well as self-esteem [5].

Current practice shows that the employers are one of the most important factors in the process of employment of the persons with disabilities. They consider persons with disabilities as the least desirable workforce. Many employers think that they are not suitable for the persons with disabilities, that the adapting of the workplace is too expensive and that is why they do not want to employ such persons [6,7]. Some of the researches on employers' attitudes about employment and work of persons with disabilities showed existence of positive as well as negative attitudes towards these persons [8].

Prejudice towards persons with disabilities has their roots in the lack of knowledge and the persistence of wrong, often negative stereotypes [8,9]. Discrimination in the field of work is a particular problem that involves disrupting equal opportunities to establish a working relationship and enjoy all rights in the field of work. Forms of discrimination of the people with disabilities encounter in the employment process are usually as follows: deprivation of job interviews, job losses due to disadvantages, rejection of the employer to realize workplace adaptation, assignment of jobs with lower responsibilities as opposed to employees of the general population and lower material benefits compared to colleagues without disability. Research conducted during the past 25 years suggested that when it came to employers' attitudes towards employment of people with disabilities, it was most often a case of prejudice [10,11]. Among reasons why employers avoid employing a disabled person, the most commonly mentioned ones were feelings of discomfort, unfamiliarity with the characteristic of disability, the belief that the nature of the job to be performed was not suitable for those persons so that people with disabilities could not be efficient, often absence from work and so on.

In this work we tried to find out the employers' attitudes towards persons with different disabilities in private and public sectors.

2. Methodology

In our country, there are a small number of studies dealing with the employment of persons with disabilities. Since the employer's role in the employment process of these persons is very significant, in this work we have tried to test the employers' attitudes in private and public sectors towards employment of the persons with disabilities. We started from the assumption that the employers in the public sector had more positive attitudes for employment of these persons than the employers in the private sector.

During the research process two methods were used: the method of theoretical analysis and survey method. The method of theoretical analysis was used for theoretical treatment of research problems wherein different sources were analyzed. We used the survey method for a typical field survey on the elective sample using the instruments selected for this research.

The methods used for data processing were: procedures for determining the psychometric characteristics of the instrument and χ^2 as an indicator of the difference between respondents in relation to the examined variables. We used survey instrument to examine the attitudes of employers regarding the employment of the people with disabilities, designed for this research. The instrument consisted of 19 questions. The first part referred to general information about the employer such as (company name, business activity, number of employees, gender, age, level of education), the other part of the questionnaire referred to employers' attitudes towards employment of persons with disabilities, and the third part referred to individual characteristics of persons with disabilities who were important determinants in employment e.g. "What qualities do you consider most important in a person with disabilities in order to hire him/her?"

1) punctuality and responsibility, 2) diligence, 3) communicativeness, 4) not a conflicting person, 5) the rest."

Discrimination of certain individual items was checked by calculating the item - total correlation. After removing some items that had the lowest correlations with the overall results, the selection of the other items was done taking into account the reliability of the scores from the scale. The Cronbach - alpha coefficient was 0.89. We defined the concept of disability in the instruction for filling in the questionnaire as a term that denotes "any restriction or defect (resulting from damage) in the ability to perform some activity in a manner or measure that is considered normal for the human being" [12]. The sample survey consisted of the companies from the area of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republic of Srpska. There were 60 companies from the private sector as well as 60 companies from the public sector. The selection of companies was not accidental, but adapted to the possibilities, and therefore the sample had characteristics of convenience sample. The questionnaire was filled in by persons who run a certain company, either private or public. For the selection of companies, the agency was in charge. When choosing a size of the company we started from the classification to micro - micro (1-4), micro (5-9), small (10-49), medium (50-249) and large (over 250) company. Surveys were conducted through a questionnaire submitted to employers, and they could be filled in on-line, or through a direct visit to the employer.

3. Results

Table 1. The employers' attitude towards the employment of person with disabilities

			Yes	No	χ^2	p
Would you hire a person with disabilities in your company / institution	Employer	Private sector	30 50.0%	30 50.0%	16.752	0.000
		Public sector	51 85.0%	9 15.0%		
	Total	81 67.5%	39 32.5%			
Do you have employees with disabilities in your company / institution	Employer	Private sector	6 10.0%	54 90.0%	13.141	0.000
		Public sector	23 38.3%	37 61.7%		
	Total	29 24.2%	91 75.8%			
Do persons with disabilities have the right to apply to all jobs	Employer	Private sector	30 50.0%	30 50.0%	8.000	0.005
		Public sector	45 75.0%	15 25.0%		
	Total	75 62.5%	45 37.5%			
Should persons with disabilities have the advantage in employment	Employer	Private sector	46 76.7%	14 23.3%	0.682	0.409
		Public sector	42 70.0%	18 30.0%		
	Total	88 73.3%	32 26.7%			
Would you be reluctant to entrust a person with a disability a job that requires maximum responsibility	Employer	Private sector	35 58.3%	25 41.75%	0.034	0.853
		Public sector	36 60.0%	24 40.0%		
	Total	71 59.2%	49 40.8%			
Would you agree to the adjustment of the workplace, if it was necessary to hire people with disabilities	Employer	Private sector	44 73.3%	16 26.7%	5.566	0.018
		Public sector	54 90.0%	6 10.0%		
	Total	98 81.7%	22 18.3%			
Can persons with disabilities have the same work performances as persons without disabilities	Employer	Private sector	31 51.7%	29 48.3%	0.134	0.714
		Public sector	33 55.0%	27 45%		
	Total	64 53.3%	56 46.7%			
Should persons with disabilities, compared to persons without disabilities, be payed less	Employer	Private sector	8 13.3%	52 86.7%	5.886	0.015
		Public sector	1 1.7%	59 98.3%		
	Total	9 7.5%	111 92.5%			
Are persons with disabilities a burden to other employees	Employer	Private sector	5 8.3%	55 91.7%	1.365	0.243
		Public sector	2 3.3%	58 96.7%		
	Total	7 5.8%	113 94.2%			

Table 1 shows results from the main examined questions between private and public sectors towards employment of persons with disabilities. At the first question: "Would you hire a person with disabilities in your company / institution?" based on the hi-square and its significance

($\chi^2=16.752$, $p=0.000$) we concluded that there was statistically important difference between private and public sectors towards employment of persons with disabilities. Employers from the public sectors answered "Yes" in the percentage of 85% while employers from the

private sector answered "Yes" in the percentage of 50%. Regarding the question "Do you have employees with disabilities in your company / institution?" coefficient of the hi-square ($\chi^2=13.141$, $p=0.000$) showed that there was important difference between public and private sectors towards the percentage of the persons with disabilities employed in their companies. Employers in public sector declared that they had 38,3% of persons with disabilities employed in their companies while employers in private sector hired only 10% of persons with disabilities. Regarding the question: "Do persons with disabilities have the right to apply to all jobs?" hi-square ($\chi^2=8.000$, $p=0.005$) showed that there was difference between public and private sectors. Employers from the public sector said "Yes" in the percentage of 75% to that question, while the employers from the private sector said "Yes" in the percentage of 50%. Coefficient of hi-square ($\chi^2=0.682$, $p=0.409$) regarding the question "Should persons with disabilities have the advantage in employment?" also showed important difference between public and private sectors. Employers from the public sector said "Yes" in the percentage of 76,7% while employers from the private sector said "Yes" in the percentage of 70.0%. Although there was no important statistical difference between public and private sectors at this question, the employers in private sector believed that those persons should have had advantages in the process of employment. Regarding the question "Would you be reluctant to entrust a person with disability a job that requires maximum responsibility?" coefficient of hi-square ($\chi^2 =0.034$, $p=0.853$) did not show important difference between public and private sectors. Employers of public sector said "Yes" in the percentage of 60.0%, while employers from the private sector said "Yes" in the percentage of 58.3%. Regarding the question: "Would you agree to the adjustment of the workplace, if it was necessary to hire people with disabilities?" hi-square coefficient ($\chi^2=5.566$, $p=0.018$) showed that there was statistically important difference between public and private sectors. Employers in the public sector said "Yes" in the percentage of 90.0%, while employers of private sector said "Yes" in the percentage of 73.3%. Regarding the question: "Can persons with disabilities have the same performance as persons without disabilities?" hi-square coefficient did not show a significant difference between public and private sectors ($\chi^2=0.134$, $p=0.714$). However, the answer of the employers from the public sector was positive in 55%, while the answer of the employers from the private sector was positive in 51.7%. Employers from the both sectors believed that persons with disabilities could produce and demonstrate their skills just as the same as the persons without disabilities. Hi-square coefficient showed that there was important difference ($\chi^2 =5.886$, $p=0.015$) between public and private sectors when we came to the question "Should persons with disabilities, compared to persons without disabilities, be paid less?" Employers in the public sector said "No" in the percentage of 98.3%, while employers in the private sector said "No" in the percentage of 86.7%. Concerning the last question "Are

persons with disabilities a burden to other employees?" hi-square coefficient ($\chi^2 = 1.365$, $p=0.243$) showed that there was no important statistical difference between these two sectors. Employers from the public sector said "No" in the percentage of 96.7% and employers from the private sector said "No" in the percentage of 91.7%.

4. Discussion and Conclusions

In this paper we started from the assumption that employers in public sector had more positive attitudes towards employment of persons with disabilities compared with employers in private sector. Based on the results of the research we could say that this hypothesis was mostly confirmed. Obtained results showed that employers in public sector had more positive attitudes towards employment of persons with disabilities unlike employers in private sector. Although certain questions did not show important difference in attitudes of private and public sectors towards employment of persons with disabilities, based on the percentages of this research, we could conclude that employers of public sector had more positive attitudes. Even though the percentage of employment of these persons is quite high we believe that it should be higher. We can compare this thesis with the results of an earlier research which involved the number of employed persons with disabilities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia. Disproportion between private (50%) and public (32.5%) sector was the lowest in Montenegro. The highest percentage of employment of these persons was in Serbia (77.64), while the lowest was in Bosnia and Herzegovina (46.67) [13]. These results proved that employers from Serbia hired more persons with disabilities than the other two countries. This difference has statistical importance ($\chi^2_{(2)}=21.764$, $p<.001$). Staniland's opinion about a research conducted in Ghana stated that the employees in public sector manifested not only more positive attitudes but also better interaction unlike those who were employed in private sector [14]. That implied that employers in public sector estimated people by their abilities and not by their disabilities. Siperstein, Romano, Mohler, Parker conducted a survey on the attitudes of employers employing people with disabilities [15]. Most employers had positive attitudes. Positive attitudes were connected with strong conviction about the value of workers with disabilities, and the benefits for companies employing people with disabilities. Most employers expressed the desire to continue employing people with disabilities. The results of the survey conducted to examine the attitudes of employers towards the employment of persons with disabilities with regard to the size and activity of the company showed that employers had positive attitudes towards the employment of persons with disabilities [16]. However, not all results proved to be equal when the attitudes of employers towards employment of persons with disabilities were involved. Some previous researches also implied that employers had negative attitude towards employment of this group of

population [17,18]. Even nowadays many employers think that the workers with disabilities are unreliable, unproductive, that they are absent from work, that the adaptation of workplace requires more costs [6]. Bearing in mind the fact that more public sector employers have engaged 38.3% of people with disabilities, we can conclude that the employment of people with disabilities improves the positive attitudes of employers. The experience of employers employing persons with disabilities is a key factor in the elimination of prejudices about the working abilities and effects of the work of persons with disabilities. The results of other surveys pointed to the fact that one of the important factors influencing the changing attitude of employers towards the employment of people with disabilities was the direct contact between persons with disabilities and persons of the general population. They indicated that the quality of contact, knowledge of disabilities and positive experiences were related constructs positively affecting attitudes towards people with disabilities [19, 20]. In another study [21], it was found that in the case when the employer had more contact with employees with disabilities at their workplace, his/her attitude was more positive. The role of employers in the employment of persons with disabilities is significant. Persons with disabilities have the right to participate in the entire human experience (success and failure) and in this way society and employers should have the same expectations of all employees. Encouraging the employment of people with disabilities includes equalizing of opportunities for people with disabilities in the labor market, providing professional rehabilitation services, measures of active employment policy, i.e. employment and self-employment of persons with disabilities.

In order to create more positive attitudes of employers, the society must try to increase consciousness about abilities of the persons with disabilities, to respect persons who have some different characteristics, to encourage them to improve their knowledge and abilities through acquisition of additional skills. Positive attitudes of employers towards employment of these persons do not have to be a consequence of the current employment of persons with disabilities, they are directly connected with the previous experience that employer had with such group of people.

In some future research, more attention should be paid to real factors affecting attitudes of employers towards employment of people with disabilities.

These results can help in informing employers about their own attitudes in the process of hiring persons with disabilities. Actually, the results can help employers to create more objective picture about themselves and their attitudes towards persons with disabilities. In order to improve general status of persons with disabilities there is a necessity to coordinate existing legal frameworks with the European Union frameworks. There is also a necessity for the Government to acquire certain incentives for those employers hiring persons with disabilities [22]. In order to resolve this problem there is also a necessity to encourage

the labour market.

One of the objectives of Trans2Work – School – to – Work Transition for Higher education students with disabilities in Serbia, Montenegro and Bosnia & Herzegovina project (project no.561847 – 2015) is to identify and to analyze the needs of employers and of the students with disabilities. We were interested in whether there is a difference in attitude between employers in the public and employers in the private sector when it comes to hiring persons with disabilities. The aim of the research is to examine the attitudes of employers in the private and public sector in regard to the employment of persons with disabilities.

REFERENCES

- [1] Zarocostas J. Disabled still face hurdles in job market, The Washington Times: A16. 2005.
- [2] Sribar, P. Law on professional rehabilitation and employment of persons with disabilities, Collection of works1. International expert symposium – news and perspectives of employing persons with disabilities, Zagreb, 2002.
- [3] Zunić, Ž. Vocational rehabilitation in the 21st century. State Institute for the Protection of the Family, and Youth Ministry. Zagreb, 2001.
- [4] Bilic, M., Bratkovic, D., Dujmovic, R. *Employment with the support of people with intellectual disabilities*. U D. Bratkovic (ur.), Supported employment: manual. Zagreb: Association for Promoting Inclusion. 19-22, 2005
- [5] Radić – Šestić, M., Milanović – Dobrota, B., Radovanović, V. Odnos društva prema osobama sa ometenošću. Sociološki pregled, Vol. XLVI, No.4,561–582, 2012.
- [6] Dixon, K.A., Kruse, D., & Van Horn, C.E. Restricted access: A survey of employers about peoplewith disabilities and lowering barriers to work. John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development: Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, Vol.3, No.6, 2003.
- [7] Hernández JA, Jiménez A, Mullineaux PM, Sevilla F. Tolerance of pea (*Pisumsativum* L.) to long-term salt stress is associated with induction of antioxidant defenses. *Plant Cell Environ.*.853–862, 2000.
- [8] Neilsen Unger, D. Employers' Attitudes towards Persons with Disabilities in the Workforce: Mithor Realities? Focus on Autism & Other Developmental Disabilities, Vol.17, No.1, 2-9, 2002.
- [9] Wells, S.J. Is the ADA Working? HR Magazine, Vol.45, No.4, 38-46, 2001.
- [10] Shier, Michael, John R. Graham, and Marion E. Jones. Barriers to Employment as Experienced by Disabled People: A Qualitative Analysis in Calgary and Regina, Canada. *Disability & Society* 24, No. 1, 63-75, 2009.
- [11] Wilson-Kovacs, Dana, Michelle K. Ryan, Alexander Haslam, and Anna Rabinovich. Just Because You Can Get a

- Wheelchair in the Building Doesn't Necessarily Mean that You Can Still Participate: Barriers to the Career Advancement of Disabled Professionals. *Disability & Society* 23, No.7, 705-717, 2008.
- [12] Коркут, С., Дорчић, Т. Изједначавање могућности студената са инвалидитетом у високом образовању: искуство уреда за студенте са инвалидитетом свеучилишног савјетовалишног центра. *JAXP*, No.5, 43-58, 2014.
- [13] Klemenovic, J., Janicic, B., Milenkovic, P., Kovac, N., Skuric, M., Dlabac, T., Diamantopolou, G., Platsidou, M., Hodzic, L., Bjelan – Guska, S., Kafedzic, L., Susnjar, S., Sladoje – Bosnjak, B., Vujovic, V. Transition planning for higher education (HE) students with disabilities: the opinions of employers in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro. The Seventh International Conference on eLearning. 29-30.september, Belgrade, Serbia. 1-5, 2016.
- [14] Staniland, L. Public Perceptions of Disabled People: Evidence from the British Social Attitudes Survey. United Kingdom. 2010.
- [15] Siperstein, G.N., Romano, N., Mohler, A., Parker, R. A national survey of consumer attitudes towards companies that hire people with disabilities. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation* 24, 3-9, 2006.
- [16] Kregel, J, Tomiyasu, Y. Employers' attitudes toward workers with disabilities, *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, 4, 3, 165-173, 1994.
- [17] Russell, M. What Disability Civil Rights Cannot Do: Employment and Political Economy, *Disability & Society*, Vol.17, No.2, 117-135, 2002.
- [18] Dutton, G. The ADA at 10. *Workforce*, Vol.79, No.12, 40-45, 2000.
- [19] Panek, P. E., & Jungers, M. K. Effects of Age, Gender, and Causality on Perceptions of Persons with Mental Retardation. *Research in Developmental Disabilities: A Multidisciplinary Journal* 125-132, 2008.
- [20] McManus, J. L., Feyes, K. J., & Saucier, D. A. Knowledge and contact as predictors of attitudes toward individuals with intellectual disabilities. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* 28, 579-590, 2011.
- [21] McFarlin, D.B., Song, J., Sonntag, M. Integrating the disabled into the work force: A survey of Fortune 500 company attitudes and practices, *Employee Responsibilities and Rights Journal*, Vol.4, No.2, 107-123, 1991.
- [22] Sladoje – Bosnjak, B., Pavlovic, Z., Vujovic, V., Kovac, N., Skuric, M., Dlabac, T., Milenkovic, P., Klemenovic, J., Janicic, B., Platsidou, M., Diamantopolou, G., Kartasidou, L., Papakonstantinou, P., Zukic, M., Hodzic, L., Bjelan – Guska, S., Katedzic, L., Susnjar, S. Transition planning for Higher Education Students with Disabilities: A Comparative Analysis of the Opinions of Employers in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro, The Seventh International Conference on eLearning. 29-30. September, Belgrade, Serbia. 2016.