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Exploring public sector managers' attitudes towards people with disabilities

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Orientation: Managers' and employers' negative attitudes towards people with disabilities are a significant obstacle for employing people with disabilities (PWDs).

Research purpose: The primary purpose of this study was to measure the attitudes of public sector managers towards PWDs.

Motivation for the study: The motivation for this study was to explore factors affecting managers' attitudes towards PWDs.

Research approach/design and method: The study was conducted within the quantitative research paradigm by using a cross-sectional survey design. A convenience sampling method was used. The questionnaire measured public sector managers' attitudes towards PWDs. Descriptive statistics, Cohen's d, chi-square test and Spearman's rank-order correlation statistical techniques were used to provide answers to the research questions.

Main findings: The results revealed that managers had positive attitudes towards PWDs. The main attitudinal problems identified were that different training methods and tools should be used to meet the needs of different disability types. The results showed that PWDs had no unique characteristics, such as dependability, lower absenteeism rates, better cooperation and more loyalty, compared with those without disabilities. Managers also had the perception that PWDs lack communication, technical and social skills.

Practical/Managerial implications: The negative perceptions towards the skills and characteristics of PWDs necessitate remedial interventions and different training methods.

Contribution/value-add: This study has made a significant contribution to the body of knowledge by providing a theoretical-conceptual framework and a reliable measuring instrument to measure public sector managers' attitudes towards PWDs.

Keywords: attitudes; disability; employment equity; employment legislation; employment; public sector managers.

Introduction

This study explores the attitudes of public managers towards people with disabilities (PWDs). There have been several studies investigating the attitudes of managers towards PWDs across different industries (Araten-Bergman, 2016; Ayelet & Roni, 2020; Chao, Huang, Fried, Hsu, & Ososkie, 2018; Kleynhans & Kotzé, 2010; Paez & Arendt, 2014; Sharma, Zsarnoczky, & Dunay, 2018).

The problem is that negative attitudes of managers towards PWDs constitute a significant factor affecting the employment of PWDs in organisations. Based on the problem, this study addressed four research questions. (1) What are the attitudes of public sector managers towards PWDs? (2) Are there differences in the mean scores of the attitudes of public sector managers towards PWDs between gender, age groups and managerial levels? (3) Are public sector managers familiar with and adhering to disability policies, guidelines and legislation governing the employment of PWDs? The target population was public sector managers at the national and provincial government departments.

Conceptual-theoretical framework

The social justice theory forms the theoretical foundation of this study. The social justice theory is viewed by Van den Bos (2003, p. 188) as the reasonable and impartial delivery of power, resources

and obligations in society to all citizens, irrespective of their health condition, race or ethnicity, age, gender, ability status, sexual orientation and religious or spiritual background. The fundamental philosophies underpinning this theory include the objects of inclusivity, collaboration, cooperation, equal access and equal opportunity. Sue (2001, p. 10) opined that these values highlight a society devoid of corruption and archetypal democratic society. Furthermore, it could be observed, according to Hage (2005, p. 242), that a link exists between social justice and the well-being of the citizens. O'Connell, Boat and Warner (2009) validate this statement as it was revealed that the absence of social justice in every society is one of the primary causes of physical and emotional pains that finally lead to illness. Social justice issues and access to resources are also inexorably tied to collective well-being (e.g. relationships and political welfare) of families, communities and society (Hage, 2005; Hage & Kenny, 2009). Prilleltensky and Nelson (2002) maintained that social justice theory is a concept used to express a fair and just relationship existing between citizens and society. This concept is measured by the explicit and implicit terms for the distribution of wealth, opportunities for personal activity and social privileges. Societies, such as South Africa, need to resolve the problem of social injustice by giving equal treatment and opportunities to both people living with disabilities and those without disabilities. Rawl's theory of social justice emphasises the need to ensure equal justice to everybody and morality in a free society. This theory further deliberates on the need to observe the fundamental principle of individuals to have basic liberty of others (Hage et al., 2007). This depicts that society must ensure that individuals have equal rights and freedom applicable to other individuals. This theory explains the need to place an equal opportunity for every citizen and avoid discriminations in all circumstances. The social justice theory was chosen in this study to highlight the need for treating all classes of citizens equally in the sharing of wealth and in giving equal opportunity to citizens to participate in the employment sector. This theory emphasises the need for society (employers and public sector managers – own insertion) to accommodate or engage PWDs in the workplace. This will invariably eliminate the problem of unemployment, also a source of relief to PWDs.

Leonardi, Bickenbach, Ustun, Kostanjsek and Chatterji (2006, p. 1220) defined disability as difficulty in functioning at the body, person or societal levels, in one or more life domains, as experienced by an individual with a health condition in interaction with contextual factors. Managers are involved in the recruitment and selection of employees and have significant decision-making power regarding the appointment of PWDs (Gottlieb, Myhill, & Blanck, 2010). Maja, Mann, Sing, Steyn and Naidoo (2011) stated that managers' attitudes towards PWDs are critical and are one of the challenges that PWDs encounter. Managers' concerns and prejudices towards PWDs are based on stereotypes and discrimination (Martz, 2007).

Managers' attitudes towards PWDs are influenced by several factors, namely teamwork and costs, training of PWDs,

characteristics of PWDs, perception about skills of PWDs, productivity perceptions of PWDs, managers' helpfulness towards PWDs and managers' interaction with PWDs (discomfort) (Chao et al., 2018; Chi & Qu, 2003; Iacono, Tracy, Keating, & Brown, 2009; Paez & Arendt, 2014; Telwatte, Anglim, Wynton, & Moulding, 2017).

Some misconceptions of managers and employers regarding the employment of PWDs are that they often require extra time to learn new work tasks; often require some sort of job accommodations (e.g. specialised equipment and facility; modifications, adjustments to work schedules or job duties) to do their job; have trouble getting their work performed on time and often needs others to help them finish the job; co-workers are not very comfortable working with them; tend to call in sick more often than other workers because of health or personal problems; and have trouble getting along with others on the job (Amir, Strauser, & Chan, 2009). Some researchers have found significant differences in attitude mean scores between demographic variables. Females had higher mean scores compared with males, revealing that females had more positive attitudes towards PWDs than males (Goreczny, Bender, Caruso, & Feinstein, 2011, p. 1598). However, the study of Paez and Arendt (2014, p. 185) found no statistical differences in the mean scores of factors such as teamwork and costs, training, characteristics and skills based on gender or position (management level). Chi and Qu (2003, pp. 74–75) found that managers had a more favourable opinion than owners towards PWDs regarding their work ethic, but for gender, they found no significant statistical differences in the attitude dimensions.

Iriarte, McConkey and Gilligan (eds. 2015) confirmed that the lack of understanding and lack of awareness have mainly contributed to the stigma that PWDs contribute to being a liability to their employers, rather than contributing to teamwork. The study of Kaye, Jans and Jones (2011) indicated that employees are typically impressed with working with PWDs, despite the additional cost of providing facilities in the work environment. In some cases, Maja et al. (2011) affirmed that managers are much concerned about the extra cost of maintaining PWDs and issues surrounding their medical condition, as it will tend to disrupt work. However, Slawson (2016) postulated that it does not cost much to train PWDs; it only costs time and patience to train them. According to Banks and Polack (2014), Graham, Moodley, Ismail, Munsaka, Ross and Marguerite (2014) and Groce, Kembhavi, Wirz, Lang, Trani and Kett (2011), PWDs lack job skills and technical skills to handle their job duties. This view is supported by Kulkarni and Lengnick-Hall (2014), who postulated that one of the reasons managers present for their inability to employ PWDs includes not having the desired knowledge, skills, ability and other job-related knowledge (KSAOs).

Most employers think that PWDs lack needed skills and cannot perform their job tasks, whilst some managers are of the view that PWDs are as prompt, hard-working and

knowledgeable in their job specifications compared with non-disabled people. A study by Maja et al. (2011) confirmed that a lack of skills and qualifications amongst PWDs was a barrier to engage them in the work process. Wordsworth's (2003) study indicated that employers think that PWDs do not have the capacity, as well as the experience or skills, to handle specific job tasks. The employment of knowledgeable, expert and qualified candidates with disabilities by the managers would bring expertise, diversify the total workforce and upgrade the standing for the PWDs (Konrad, Moore, Doherty, Ng, & Breward, 2012).

Kulkarni and Lengnick-Hall (2014) stated that PWDs demonstrate accountability for time on task. This signifies that PWDs exhibit conscious competencies, such as being where they are supposed to be when they are needed. Their study indicated that PWDs are more committed and satisfied with their job specification than non-disabled people. Gida and Ortlepp (2007) maintained that people living with disabilities are quite reliable and can perform better if opportunities for advancement are given to them. Ofuani (2011) and Li and Goldschmidt (2009) stated that PWDs are helpful, interactive, actionoriented and productive. Kaye et al. (2012), Schur et al. (2014) and Telwatte et al. (2017) collectively stated that the employers might lack low vision aids and other specialised equipment to assist PWDs that the PWDs can achieve more than expected in their job specifications if they are provided with the needed working aids. Telwatte et al. (2017) postulated that the employees sometimes do not adequately provide and assist the employees who are PWDs that invariably retard their performance. According to Kaye et al. (2012), employees who are PWDs are always ready to prove their competence, but lack employees' helpfulness in most cases to achieve their desired work plans in organisations. The Human Rights Commission (2017) indicated that PWDs are more dependable and have equal or lower levels of absenteeism than people without disabilities, thereby staying with their job specification more than those without disabilities. According to Brynard (2010), managers do neglect to offer employment to PWDs because of the assumption that PWDs are not productive. Co-workers fear a negative effect on interpersonal outcomes such as a feeling of awkwardness, discomfort, ambivalence and guilt about how they can interact with PWDs. However, Scior, Connolly and Williams (2013) stated that managers do not adequately relate with the employees with disabilities in the work environment, as it is believed that employees with disability have little or nothing to offer. Quarmby (2011) postulated that managers should interact with PWDs, direct them on what to do and incorporate them into the production process to attain optimal performance. Wilson and Scior (2015) postulated that co-workers' relationships with PWDs had been mixed, especially when it involves mental or emotional disability. Kulkarni and Valk (2010) asserted that 72% of the companies surveyed in their study reported the performance and interaction levels of their employees with disabilities as excellent or good.

Kulkarni and Lengnick-Hall (2014) said that employers sometimes have the fear that co-workers will react negatively to cooperating effectively with workers with a disability, thereby reducing the productivity and profitability of the firm. Co-workers have a fear of increased workloads and a negative effect on work outcomes, and also the loss of work rewards if their job performance is dependent upon an individual with a disability's job performance. Quarmby (2011) stressed that managers' negligence of the PWDs' career has resulted in immense underperformance and blames to the disabled. According to Banks and Polack (2014), PWDs are productive despite their predisposition.

According to Statistics South Africa (2014), the total population of South Africa is 47.9 million, and the 2011 census indicates that almost 5% of the total population are disabled, which amounts to 2 395 000 PWDs. According to the Department of Labour, Annual Report of Commission for Employment Equity (2017–2018), only 1.3% of PWDs are employed in top management positions in both the public service and private sector, followed by 1.3% in senior management positions, professionally qualified 1.3%, skilled level 1.2%, semi-skilled 0.9% and unskilled 1%. According to the Commission for Employment Equity, 43 716 PWDs were employed in South Africa in 2011 compared with 12 049 employees employed in 2003. Only 1.8% of PWDs are employed in all government departments in South Africa.

Despite the *Employment Equity Act*, the Code of Good Practice, *Technical Assistance Guidelines and Skills Development Act* in South Africa that govern employment for PWDs, they still experience exclusion from the labour market, prejudice and negative attitudes from society and employers. Unfortunately, these different types of legislation have made little or no impact on the discrimination against PWDs in South Africa (Dunn, 2018). Kok (2017) explained that adherence to anti-discrimination legislation in South Africa is low and argues that the lack of commitment to adherence has defeated the principal aim and objective of promulgating this legislation.

Research paradigm

This study adopted a post-positivist paradigm. According to Rubin and Rubin (2011), post-positivist philosophers believe that reality is more than fixed, and also measurable and knowable. Creswell and Creswell (2017) proclaimed that the post-positivist philosophers mostly believe in the existence of one truth and external reality.

Research design

This study followed a quantitative paradigm by using close-ended self-administered questionnaires to gather data from public sector managers about their attitudes towards PWDs. Therefore, this study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design. According to Salkind (ed. 2010, p. 3), a

cross-sectional survey design involves the process of collecting data from respondents at a single point in time.

Population of the study

In this study, the total population includes public sector managers at national and provincial government departments. A total of 1071 public sector managers at national and provincial government departments comprised the population of this study.

Sampling method

The convenience sampling method was used. Convenience sampling refers to a type of sampling based on the accessibility of the respondents (Maree, 2010, p. 177). A representative sample of the population for the research was calculated by using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970, pp. 607–610) work on the determination of the size of a sample. The total population was 1071, and the sample size was calculated as 283. One hundred and fifty-five questionnaires were returned. Therefore, the response rate was 55%. Ten questionnaires were incomplete and were excluded from the data analysis. Therefore, only 145 questionnaires were usable and analysed.

Measuring instrument

The questionnaire consists of two sections: Section A includes the biographic characteristics of the respondents such as gender, age group, managerial levels, number of years of service, level of government and qualification level.

Section B contains a questionnaire measuring public sector managers' attitudes towards PWDs. The managers' attitude towards PWDs scale (ADC) developed by Paez and Arendt (2014) was used.

The questionnaire consists of four factors or sub-dimensions and 22 items.

These sub-dimensions include the following:

- Teamwork and costs – 11 items ('I feel it is not too costly to give additional training to people with disabilities').
- Training – 4 items ('I do not use/would not use different training methods for people with disabilities').
- Characteristics of PWDs – 4 items ('I feel people with disabilities are more dependable than people without disabilities').
- Skills of PWDs – 3 items ('Providing training in communication skills for people with disabilities is important').

A five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) was used.

Statistical analysis

Four research questions have been explored and addressed in this study (see Introduction). The first question was answered by using descriptive statistics to calculate the mean scores, standard deviation and response categories of the factors and items of the attitude towards PWDs scale. To answer research question 2, Cohen's d was computed to measure the practical significance of the differences in mean attitude scores between gender groups, age groups and managerial levels. The following guideline values for the interpretation of Cohen's d (1988) were used, namely 0.2 small, no practically significant difference; 0.5 medium, practically visible difference; and 0.8 large, practically significant difference. Descriptive data analysis was carried out to provide an answer to research question three. Chi-square tests were performed to investigate whether there is an association between gender and managerial levels and familiarity and compliance with disability policies, guidelines and legislation that govern disability. The guidelines of Cohen (1988) for effect sizes, 0.1 small, 0.3 medium and 0.5 large, were used to interpret the results. Spearman's rank-order correlation was computed to provide an answer to the fourth research question. Cohen's (1988, pp. 79–81) guidelines for the interpretation of the Spearman rank-order correlation coefficient, namely small ($r = 0.10$–0.29), medium ($r = 0.30$–0.49) and large ($r = 0.50$–1.0), were used to interpret the results.

Ethical consideration

Approval of ethics application: NWU-HS-2018-0057. The following application has been reviewed by the Human Resource Research Ethics Committee (HRREC) on 18 April 2020.

Results and discussion

A reliability analysis was carried out on the four factors of the attitude scale. The study by Paez and Arendt (2014) revealed Cronbach's alphas of teamwork and cost (0.92), training (0.73), characteristics (0.74) and skills (0.72). Cronbach's alphas for the four factors of the attitudes towards PWDs and total scale are illustrated in Table 1.

Cronbach's alpha coefficient with values of above 0.7 is usually acceptable, and values above 0.6 are acceptable in the instance of exploratory research (Field, 2009, 2013, p. 912; Yong & Pearce, 2013, p. 90). Field (2014, p.912) further indicates that in the early stages of research, values of 0.5 will suffice, but interpretation should be made with caution. Thus, the interpretation of this study was based on values above 0.6.

Descriptive statistics were performed on the demographic characteristics of participants to describe the typical respondent. The data analysis computed in this section

TABLE 1: Cronbach's alphas.

Sub-scales and scales	Cronbach's alpha
Teamwork and costs	0.77
Training	0.73
Characteristics of PWDs	0.66
Skills of PWDs	0.87
Total attitude scale	0.75

PWDs, people with disabilities.

includes the descriptive statistics of the demographic characteristics of the participants, such as gender composition, age groups, post-levels, years of service and qualification levels (see Table 2). The gender distribution was 44.1% males and 55.9% females. The majority of participants were in the age group 40–49 (42.8%), followed by age groups 50–59 (36.6%), 30–39 (15.9%), 20–29 (2.8%) and 60 and older (2.1%). The senior management group was the largest (46.2%), followed by middle management (39.3%) and junior management (14.5%). The majority of respondents had between 10 and 11 (37.9%) years of experience in the public service, followed by 21–30 years (32.4%), 0–10 years (18.6%), 31–40 years (9.7%) and 41 years and more (1.4%). Regarding highest qualification, most respondents had a degree or diploma (33.1%), followed by an honours degree or postgraduate diploma (31%), master's degree (28.3%), national certificate (6.2%) and PhD (1.4%).

The first research question was to explore public sector managers' attitudes towards PWDs. Descriptive statistics were performed to calculate the mean scores of the items and factors of attitudes towards PWDs scale (see Table 3). The interpretation of the mean scores was made according to the guidelines of Paez and Arendt (2014), who stated that the mean scores were interpreted closer to the scale values. According to Kleynhans and Kotzè (2010, p. 414), a neutral score can be interpreted as the absence of a positive attitude, apathy towards PWDs or denial of the potential of PWDs. In general, managers had slightly positive perceptions towards PWDs with an overall mean rating of 3.30 (1= *strongly agree*, 2 = *disagree*, 3 = *neither agree nor disagree*, 4 = *agree* and 5 = *strongly agree*).

The teamwork and cost factor had a mean value of 3.47, indicating a favourable attitude towards PWDs. Managers

TABLE 2: Demographic characteristics of public sector managers.

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	64	44.1
Female	81	55.9
Age group		
20–29	4	2.8
30–39	23	15.9
40–49	62	42.8
50–59	53	36.6
60 and older	3	2.1
Managerial level		
Junior management	21	14.5
Middle management	57	39.3
Senior management	67	46.2
Years of service within the public service		
0–10 years	27	18.6
11–20 years	55	37.9
21–30 years	47	32.4
31–40 years	14	9.7
41 and more years	2	1.4
Qualification level		
National certificate (Matric)	9	6.2
Degree or diploma	48	33.1
Honours degree or postgraduate diploma	45	31.0
Master's	41	28.3
PhD	2	1.4

agree with 10 of the 11 statements. They disagree with item 3, which was negatively phrased, indicating that they disagree with the statement that they find it hard to make PWDs to adapt to new ways of doing the job. The mean score of the training factor was 2.92, leaning towards the neither agree nor disagree (neutral) category of the scale. Items 1, 3 and 4 were rated the lowest, which showed that managers were in disagreement (44.8% disagree, 20% neither agree nor disagree and 35.2% agree) that they would not use different training methods for PWDs. They are also in disagreement that they will train all people by using the same methods whether they are disabled (47% disagree, 20% neither agree nor disagree and 32.4% agree). Nor are managers in agreement that they would not use the same training tools for PWDs as those without disabilities (50.4% disagree, 20% neither agree nor disagree and 29.6% agree). This indicated that managers are in favour of using different training methods and tools for PWDs. These results support the findings of a study by Paez and Arendt (2014, p.181) that revealed training methods would be used to train PWDs.

All statements of the characteristic factor were rated low (slightly negative perceptions), which indicated that managers were in disagreement that PWDs are more dependable than people without disabilities are (46.2% disagree, 36.6% neither agree nor disagree and 17.2% agree), and that PWDs are absent less often than people without disabilities are (35.2% disagree, 51% neither agree nor disagree and 13.8% agree). Managers do not perceive that PWDs are not more dependable than people without disabilities. The majority of managers neither agree nor disagree with the statement that PWDs are absent less often than people without disabilities. Therefore, they had a neutral perception of the absenteeism of PWDs. The results do not correlate with the Human Rights Commission's (2017) view that PWDs are more dependable and have equal or lower levels of absenteeism than people without disabilities and do not support the opinion of Banks and Polack (2014) that PWDs are very dependable and productive, despite their predisposition. Managers were in disagreement that PWDs cooperate better compared with those without disabilities (31.1% disagree, 46.9% neither agree nor disagree and 22.1% agree), and that PWDs are more loyal to the organisation compared with people without disabilities (26.8% disagree, 56.6% neither agree nor disagree and 16.6% agree). Therefore, managers had neutral perceptions of the cooperation and loyalty characteristics of PWDs.

The majority of managers agree that providing training in communication skills (71.1%), technical skills (81.4%) and social skills (74.4%) is important. If the training of these skills is regarded as important, it could be argued that PWDs lack these critical skills. In the study of Paez and Arendt (2014, p.181), providing training on communication, technical and social skills to employees with disabilities

TABLE 3: Public sector managers' mean scores for the items and factors of the attitudes towards people with disabilities scale.

Factors and items	M	SD	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Teamwork and costs	3.47	0.593	-	-	-	-	-
I feel it is not too costly to give additional training to people with disabilities.	3.71	1.154	6.9	11.7	8.3	49.7	23.4
People with disabilities do not make other people uncomfortable.	3.70	1.259	6.9	15.9	9.0	36.6	31.7
People with disabilities do not increase operational costs.	3.37	1.201	7.6	20.0	17.9	37.2	17.2
Supervisors find/would find it hard to get disabled people to adopt new ways of doing the job.	2.63	1.130	13.1	42.8	19.3	17.9	6.9
People with disabilities do not need special attention from co-workers.	3.30	1.101	3.4	24.8	24.1	33.1	14.5
Depending on the job, it does not cost/would not cost me more to train people with disabilities.	3.65	1.071	4.8	14.5	8.3	55.9	16.6
Depending on the job, people with disabilities are not harder to train than people without disabilities.	3.62	0.913	0.7	13.1	24.1	47.6	14.5
People with disabilities do not work slower than people without disabilities.	3.42	1.052	4.8	15.2	26.2	40.7	13.1
Depending on the disability, it does not cost/would not cost me more to train people with disabilities.	3.69	0.968	3.4	10.3	15.2	55.9	15.2
Depending on the disability, people with disabilities are not harder to train than people without disabilities.	3.70	0.953	2.8	9.7	19.3	51.7	16.6
After training, people with disabilities do not need special attention from supervisors.	3.41	1.017	2.8	20.7	20.0	46.2	10.3
Training	2.92	0.759	-	-	-	-	-
I do not use/would not use different training methods for people with disabilities.	2.89	1.081	6.9	37.9	20.0	29.7	5.5
I do not believe disabled people need to be trained differently than people without disabilities.	3.23	1.093	6.2	23.4	19.3	42.8	8.3
I train/would train all people using the same methods, whether they are disabled or not.	2.80	1.188	13.1	34.5	20.0	24.1	8.3
I do not use/would not use the same training tools for people with disabilities as those without disabilities.	2.75	1.096	9.7	40.7	20.0	24.1	5.5
Characteristics	2.81	0.615	-	-	-	-	-
I feel people with disabilities are more dependable than people without disabilities.	2.68	0.933	6.9	39.3	36.6	13.1	4.1
People with disabilities are absent less often than people without disabilities.	2.73	0.868	8.3	26.9	51.0	11.0	2.8
I believe that generally, people with disabilities cooperate better than people without disabilities.	2.95	0.908	2.8	28.3	46.9	15.2	6.9
People with disabilities are more loyal to the organisation than people without disabilities.	2.89	0.783	3.4	23.4	56.6	13.8	2.8
Skills	3.83	0.820	-	-	-	-	-
Providing training in communication skills for people with disabilities is important.	3.77	0.991	2.1	11.7	15.2	49.0	22.1
Providing training in technical skills for people with disabilities is important	3.92	0.829	0.7	8.3	9.7	61.4	20.0
Providing training in social skills for people with disabilities is important.	3.80	0.932	2.1	9.7	13.8	55.2	19.2
Total attitude scale	3.30	0.410	-	-	-	-	-

TABLE 4: Comparison of mean scores between males and females.

Factors	Gender	N	M	SD	Effect size
Teamwork and costs	Male	64	3.42	0.641	
	Female	81	3.51	0.553	-0.14
Training	Male	64	2.96	0.721	
	Female	81	2.88	0.791	0.10
Characteristics	Male	64	2.81	0.602	
	Female	81	2.82	0.629	-0.02
Skills	Male	64	3.90	0.809	
	Female	81	3.77	0.830	0.16

was reported as important. Numerous studies revealed that PWDs lack essential skills and competencies compared with those without disabilities (Banks & Polack, 2014; Chao et al., 2018; Graham et al., 2014; Groce et al., 2011). The lack of job and technical skills is a significant barrier to the employment of PWDs.

The second research question explored the differences in mean attitude scores between gender groups, age groups and management groups.

The reported effect sizes between males and females on all four factors showed no practically significant difference in

the mean scores of the two gender groups (see Table 4). Therefore, gender did not have any bearing or impact on the attitudes of managers towards PWDs. Similarly, Paez and Arendt (2014, p. 185) and Chi and Qu (2003, p. 75) found no statistically significant difference in the mean scores between gender groups. However, the study of Goreczny et al. (2011, p. 1598) revealed that females had more positive attitudes towards PWDs compared with males.

The small reported effect sizes for all four factors showed no practically significant difference between the mean scores of the three age groups (see Table 5). These results do not correlate with those of Paez and Arendt (2014, p. 185), who found a statistically significant difference in the mean skill factor scores between age groups.

The comparison of mean scores between management groups is depicted in Table 6. The reported medium effect sizes ($d = 0.52$ and $d = 60$) indicated a practically visible difference in the teamwork and cost mean scores between the junior management group ($M = 3.19$; SD = 0.564), middle management group ($M = 3.52$; SD = 0.634) and senior

management group (M= 3.53; SD = 0.547). The middle and senior management groups had a more favourable attitude compared with the junior management group towards the teamwork and cost factor. The medium effect size (0.65) showed a practically visible difference in the skills factor mean scores between the junior management group (M = 4.35; SD = 0.562) and middle management group (M = 3.78; SD = 0.874). Besides, the large effect size (0.81) showed a practically significant difference in the skills factor mean scores between the junior management group and senior management group (M = 3.71; SD = 0.789). The junior management group perceives the training in communication, technical and social skills for PWDs as more important compared with the middle and senior management groups. These findings do not support those of a study conducted by Paez and Arendt (2014), which showed no statistically significant differences in the mean scores of the factors of teamwork and costs, training, characteristics and skills between management levels or positions. Therefore, management levels did influence attitudes towards teamwork and cost, as well as the skills factor.

The third research question explored public sector managers' familiarity and compliance with disability policies, guidelines and legislation that govern disability employment. Respondents were asked whether they are familiar with and comply with the *Employment Equity Act*, the Code of Good Practice and Technical Assistance Guidelines on employing PWDs (TAG) and *Skills Development Act* that govern disability employment. Their responses are summarised in Table 7.

The majority of the respondents indicated that they are acquainted with all the applicable legislation and acts shown in Table 4, such as the *Employment Equity Act* (91%), Code of Good Practice (83.4%), Technical Assistance Guidelines (73.1%) and *Skills Development Act* (73.1%). However, there are still a noticeable percentage (between 9% and 26.9%) of respondents who indicate that they are not familiar with these. It is therefore crucial that the government should communicate effectively to all the managers in all the public entities to embrace the contents of this legislation guiding the employment and development of people living with disabilities.

Chi-square tests were carried out to investigate whether there is an association between gender and managerial levels and participants' familiarity and compliance with disability policies, guidelines and legislation that govern disability employment (see Table 8). The reported phi-values (0.007–0.11) for gender and all four familiarity and compliance questions indicated small or practically non-significant associations. Furthermore, the reported phi-values (0.009–0.194) for managerial levels and all four familiarity and compliance questions indicated small or practically non-significant associations. This indicated that gender and the managerial level do not play a role in terms of familiarity and compliance. The results revealed that the majority of participants indicated that they were familiar and comply with the *Employment Equity Act* (91%), Code of Good Practice (83.4%), Technical Assistance Guidelines (73.1%) and *Skills Development Act* (73.1%). Based on the results, participants seem to be informed and knowledgeable about the acts and policies regulating disability employment. The chi-square tests revealed no statistically significant association between both gender and managerial levels, and familiarity and compliance with the *Employment Equity Act*, Code of

TABLE 5: Comparison of mean scores between age groups.

Factors	Age group	N	M	SD	Age group 30–39 differences with age group 40–49 and 50–59 Effect sizes	Age group 40–49 the difference with age group 50–59 Effect size
Teamwork and costs	30–39	23	3.56	0.514	-	-
	40–49	62	3.44	0.648	0.19	-
	50–59	53	3.52	0.569	-0.12	0.07
Training	30–39	23	3.07	0.739	-	-
	40–49	62	2.88	0.737	0.26	-
	50–59	53	2.89	0.824	-0.01	0.22
Characteristics	30–39	23	2.77	0.635	-	-
	40–49	62	2.79	0.682	-0.03	-
	50–59	53	2.85	0.524	-0.09	-0.13
Skills	30–39	23	3.87	0.790	-	-
	40–49	62	3.78	0.814	0.11	-
	50–59	53	3.87	0.875	-0.10	0.00

TABLE 6: Comparison of mean scores between management groups.

Factors	Management groups	N	M	SD	Differences between junior, middle and senior management groups Effect size	Difference between middle management and senior management groups Effect size
Teamwork and costs	Junior management	21	3.19	0.564	-	-
	Middle management	57	3.52	0.634	0.52	-
	Senior management	67	3.53	0.547	0.02	0.60
Training	Junior management	21	2.89	0.705	-	-
	Middle management	57	3.00	0.764	0.14	-
	Senior management	67	2.85	0.775	0.19	0.05
Characteristics	Junior management	21	2.86	0.645	-	-
	Middle management	57	2.74	0.662	0.18	-
	Senior management	67	2.87	0.565	0.20	0.02
Skills	Junior management	21	4.35	0.562	-	-
	Middle management	57	3.78	0.874	0.65	-
	Senior management	67	3.71	0.789	0.08	0.81

Good Practice, Technical Assistance Guidelines and *Skills Development Act*. However, the statistics regarding the employment of PWDs in the public service did not support the practice of compliance and implementation. Despite these numerous acts and policies, Kok (2017) observed that compliance levels are low.

The fourth research question explores the correlations between the four factors of the attitude scale. *P*-values are reported for completeness sake, but will not be interpreted because a non-random sample was used (see Table 9). There was a medium positive linear correlation between the teamwork and cost factor, and the training factor ($r = 0.304$). However, the small positive linear correlation with characteristics ($r = 0.031$) and negative linear correlation with skills ($r = -0.048$) show no practically significant relationships. Regarding training, the results revealed a small positive linear relationship with characteristics ($r = 0.064$) and a small negative linear relationship with skills ($r = -0.133$), indicating no practically significant relationships. The characteristic factor had a weak positive linear correlation with skills ($r = 0.072$), which also indicates no practically significant relationship.

Managerial implications and recommendations

This study has implications for both the public service and PWDs regarding employment and improving the lives of PWDs. Although the results have shown that participants reported favourable attitudes towards PWDs, some concerns were identified. Based on the results, the following main concerns identified by the participants necessitate remedial interventions. Public managers should use different training methods and tools depending on the different types of disabilities based on proper need assessments and performance gaps identified during the performance management cycle. Respondents indicated that the PWDs do not have unique characteristics such as more dependability, less absenteeism rates, better cooperation and are more loyalty compared with those without disabilities. During recruitment and selection, public managers should ensure, through appropriate psychometric tests and other selection tools, that candidates with different types of disabilities meet the job requirements such as qualifications, skills, attributes, knowledge, personality characteristics and other requirements specified in the job descriptions. Managers should also ensure that PWDs perform jobs if they meet the physical and mental requirements. The results indicated that PWDs lack communication, technical and social skills. These deficiencies should be addressed by providing training and development programmes for PWDs. Managers should comply with the *Employment Equity Act*, Code of Good Practice, Technical Assistance Guidelines and *Skills Development Act*. The equity targets for the employment of PWDs should be included in the critical performance areas

TABLE 7: Response to knowledge and compliance with acts and policies regulating disability employment.

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Are you familiar with and comply with the *Employment Equity Act* that governs disability employment?		
Yes	132	91.0
No	13	9.0
Are you familiar with and comply with the Code of Good Practice that governs disability employment?		
Yes	121	83.4
No	24	16.6
Are you familiar with and comply with Technical Assistance Guidelines that govern disability employment?		
Yes	106	73.1
No	39	26.9
Are you familiar with and comply with the *Skills Development Act* that governs disability employment?		
Yes	106	73.1
No	39	26.9

TABLE 9: Correlation between the four factors of the attitudes towards people with disabilities scale.

Factors	1	2	3	4
Teamwork and costs				
Correlation coefficient	1.000	0.304**	-	-
Sig. (2-tailed)	-	-	-	-
N	145	-	-	-
Training				
Correlation coefficient	0.304**	1.000	-	-
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	-	-	-
N	145	145	-	-
Characteristics				
Correlation coefficient	0.031	0.064	1.000	-
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.712	0.442	-	-
N	145	145	145	-
Skills				
Correlation coefficient	-0.048	-0.133	0.072	1.000
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.563	0.110	0.388	-
N	145	145	145	145

TABLE 8: Results of chi-square tests and descriptive statistics for familiarity and compliance with disability policies, guidelines and legislation that govern disability employment.

Variable	*Employment Equity Act*				Code of Good Practice				Technical Assistance Guidelines				*Skills Development Act*			
	Yes		No		Yes		No		Yes		No		Yes		No	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
Gender	*Phi = -0.110*				*Phi = -0.090*				*Phi = 0.074*				*Phi = 0.007*			
Male	56	87.5	8	12.5	51	79.7	13	20.3	41	64.1	23	35.9	47	73.4	17	26.6
Female	76	93.8	5	6.2	70	86.4	11	13.6	46	56.8	35	43.2	59	72.8	22	27.2
Managerial level	*Phi = 0.009*				*Phi = 0.194*				*Phi = 0.071*				*Phi = 0.042*			
Junior	19	90.5	2	9.5	20	95.2	1	4.8	14	66.7	7	33.3	15	71.4	6	28.6
Middle	52	91.2	5	8.8	50	91.2	7	12.2	35	61.4	22	38.6	43	75.4	14	24.6
Senior	61	91.0	6	9.0	51	76.1	16	23.9	38	56.7	29	43.3	48	71.6	19	28.4

of managers. Managers should undergo sensitivity and awareness training regarding the accommodation and employment of PWDs.

Conclusion

This study investigated public sector managers' attitudes towards PWDs. This study was motivated by the challenges faced by employees with disabilities in receiving assistance and gaining employment in the South African Public Service. The various factors that determine attitudes were discussed. The study was conducted within the quantitative paradigm by using a cross-sectional survey design. A convenience sampling method was used to collect data. The main limitation of this study was that a convenience sampling method was used, and because of the small number of 145 completed questionnaires, the results cannot be generalised to all the national and provincial government departments. However, this study has contributed to the body of knowledge by providing a theoretical–conceptual framework and a reliable measuring instrument to measure public sector managers' attitudes towards PWDs.

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