

BUSINESS RESEARCH METHODS

Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Introduction | 2 |
| PART I | 2 |
| Research Methodology, Philosophy, Approach and Methods | 2 |
| Research Questions and Background | 6 |
| Data collection, Research Objectives and Aims | 7 |
| PART II | 8 |
| Ethical Considerations | 8 |
| PART III | 9 |
| Data Analysis | 9 |
| Bibliography | 12 |

Introduction

This report reviews social problems of disabled employment and offers the research project to be carried out with financial support of the Committee on Labor and Social Protection of Moscow.

As of July 1, 2018, there are more than 12 million people with disabilities (PWD) in Russia, 3,5 million of them of working age but only 920 thousand (26,2%) are in employ.¹

Maksim Topilin, the Minister of Labor of the Russian Federation, says:

"We set the task to reach by 2020 the employment index of disabled people to 60%, that is, to ensure the level of employment for disabled people at the level of all citizens without disabilities." As Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev noted, at least 30,000 PWD need specially equipped workplaces. This year the government plans to allocate 4 billion rubles for the employment of disabled people and their socialization. It is planned to create some preferences for employers who are ready to provide jobs.

The problem of hiring and employment of disabled people in modern society is relevant and important. PWD experience a number of difficulties in finding a job because employers often do not hire them under various pretexts, restrict their rights, it is discrimination. Employers refuse to employ them due to additional costs; psychological traits of disabled persons, as well as in connection with the provision of a number of benefits. Another important factor is the lack of desire to understand the problems and situation of PWD, all together it plays a decisive role in the employment of this category of the population.

PART I

Research Methodology, Philosophy, Approach and Methods

Methodology is the doctrine of system of concepts and their relations, a system of basic principles, methods, approaches and ways of their implementation when organizing and structuring the scientific and practical activities. In turn, the method is a description of specific samples, techniques and skills. Including goals, principles and content. If we consider the methodology of business research, then the basis of this system of scientific research methods is general scientific, analytical-prognostic methods and techniques engaged from other fields of knowledge.

¹ According to data of Federal Register of PWD of Russia <https://sfri.ru/stat/>

Research philosophy, research approach, research strategy, research design, data collection and data analysis technique – are the six key concepts which form research methodology, i.e. Wilson's the Honeycomb of Research Methodology (Wilson, J., 2014, p. 7). Below in this part we review three of them, namely, research philosophy, approach and strategy.

Epistemology is a philosophical and methodological discipline where the scientific knowledge, also its structure, functioning and development are studied. So it is a part of a philosophy that studies how we obtain knowledge about the research phenomenon, the boundaries of our knowledge and how it is reliable or unreliable. The main question of epistemology is What is admissible knowledge? (Wilson, 2014)

People with disabilities have the same interests and needs as everyone else. But because of their social status, they are less integrated into society.

Since our research concerns social aspects and a certain social group, it is appropriate to choose interpretivism. Positivist approach requires an independent researcher and minimum interaction with participants. Yes, positivism helps to make a research rather objective without personal biases or prejudices but at the same time we might lose some important insights or meaningful perception of participants. Plus, the reality can never be fully apprehended only approximated (Guba, 1990:22).

For the purposes of our research we will need to enter to the social world of people with disabilities, to make the participant observation, to collaborate with them and to understand their needs and problems. Since the problem of employment of disabled persons indissolubly includes public attitude, life style, quality of life, social status, inclusion in society, it will be necessary to enter to the world and environment of these people. In such circumstances the interpretivist approach will fully meet our aims.

On the other hand, we will have to look at another part of the problem – an employer. We will interview the owners and TOP managers, gather statistic data for funds and special purpose financing to give the answer of WHAT additional equipment for PWD (if any) or workspace reconstruction they need and HOW to implement that. From this point of view the pragmatist approach seems to be the best for this part of research.

Ontology studies the fundamental principles of being, its general essences and categories.

Ontology - the metaphysics of being - expresses a picture of the world, which corresponds to the

level of knowledge. Here the subjectivism approach within ontology will provide a better picture of attitudes, emotional and behavioral reasons of respondents.

Axiology deals with values, it is the philosophical theory of values explaining the place of values in the real world within its structure. Since our own perception of the world unavoidably influences the research process and so might influence its results, we should pay attention on the role of values in the inquiry (Wilson, 2014) and solve the ethical issues. Positivist approach is supposed a researcher to be independent and “looking in from the outside”. The interpretivist one makes a researcher interdependent but simultaneously it is a kind of bridge between the practical and cognitive processes, between the theory and the real world.

Since there was no a large-scale research in this field yet, so new theory and hypothesis are to be developed. On the basis of collected data the final results, theory and recommendations will be developed, it means that we will follow the inductive research approach which is often associated with qualitative analysis and understanding of the meanings humans attach to events. Deductive analysis usually refers to developing hypothesis based on already “existing theory [...] in this type of research [...] theory comes first [...] and influences the rest of research process” (Wilson J., 2014)

The quantitative analysis determines the numerical value of certain risks assessments. It is based on the theory of probabilities, the operations research theory and mathematical statistics. Its task is to numerically measure the influence of some changes in factors on the dynamics of the criteria that show the effectiveness of the project or company. Often, the following methods of quantitative analysis are used:

- Analysis of such performance indexes as NPV (net present value) and ROR (rate of return), as well as the profitability index;
- Adjustment of the discount rate;
- Monte Carlo method (simulation modeling);
- Decision tree development.

Quantitative measurements and estimates are associated with economic-statistical and economic-mathematical methods of data processing (trend, correlative and regression analysis, etc.).

Quantitative research answers the questions "who" and "how much".

The disadvantages of quantitative analysis are the following:

- the lack of information about the situational context of the phenomenon under study;
- impossibility to control all circumstances and context that do not influence the quality of respondents' answers;
- the limitations of the conclusions that is conditioned by the format of the study: the clarity of the questions formulation, the strict adherence to the goals and set tasks;
- the lack of opportunity to conduct research on evolving processes, phenomena in dynamics.

The qualitative researches include the collection, analysis and interpretation of data by observing what people do and say. Observations and conclusions are of a qualitative nature and are implemented in a non-standardized form. Qualitative data can be translated into a quantitative form, but this is preceded by special procedures. The goal of qualitative research is to obtain data explaining the observed phenomenon. This type of data is not expressed in specific figures and therefore not subject to any statistical treatment. By means of qualitative researches it is possible to define motives of behavior and phenomena. Qualitative research answers the question of "how" and "why".

Disadvantages of qualitative methods:

- the changing of the original research tasks in result of the changing nature of the context formulation of conclusions with personal coloring of the researcher
- the impossibility of investigating the cause-effect relationship between the phenomena under study
- the problematic explanation of the differences between the quality and quantity of information received from different respondents and the formulation on the basis of this information of differing, untenable conclusions
- high level of professionalism of the researcher as a necessary condition for obtaining objective and necessary information
- absence of fully objective and reliable conclusions, because the respondent can choose what to say

It is important to identify values, needs and reasonable preferences (like working on the first floor, having bigger space or table, entrance ramp, Braille keyboard, etc) and how they will be measured. It is obvious that research of our question will include both qualitative and quantitative research strategies. Triangulation, the multi-strategy research, is the best since it adds value to the study. Together “they provide a more complete picture of a phenomenon than

either methodology could accomplish alone” (Van Maanen, 1979). Shan and Corley (2006) state that using of both qualitative and quantitative empirical methods lead the researchers to full understanding of their phenomenon of interest. There is no need to strictly follow either quantitative or qualitative research. Since our research involves two phase study (with PWD and with employers) we will evaluate and analyze data at two levels: qualitatively at the individual (people) level and quantitatively at company (employers) level.

Research Questions and Background

With the participation of Committee on Labor and Social Protection of Moscow, this research will be devoted to answer the questions:

- What kind of companies and for what positions are ready to create jobs and equip workplaces for PWD.
- What percent of PWD is ready to undertake training and retraining courses.

Once again, since no large-scale, substantial and reliable studies on this subject have been conducted over the past 10 years, we have collected a general basis for starting the study based on Russian legislation, existing policies and regulations, general statistical data, and data received from non-governmental organizations and volunteer structures that help people with disabilities in employment.

Work activities for a person is an important condition for having a full, high-quality life. It is not only a way to be financially secured, but also an opportunity to realize his/her abilities, including creative ones. The right to labor is guaranteed to every citizen by the Constitution of the Russian Federation. Labor activity is a factor of inclusion people in social values. The work allows each citizen to respect him/her-self, keep his/her individuality, to be an integrated part of modern society.

A person with disability has a number of psychological factors that reflect his/her position in the labor market, as well as the attitude to society. PWD are classified as a limited mobile group of population and are the least protected, socially vulnerable part of society. This is primarily due to impairments in their physical condition caused by diseases or accidents that have led to disability. Psychological problems arise when people are isolated from the outside world and society. An evil role is played by the lack of specialized equipment and a break in the communication and interaction with others. This entails a number of consequences, namely, the loneliness, the emergence of emotional-volitional disorders, the development of depression and changes in behavior.

For those of them who wants to work, a chance to be employed is essential. Around a half of disabled people have graduate degree and special and technologic knowledge.

The refusal to employ a disabled person due to his physical handicap is inadmissible, as stated in Article 64 of Labor Code of the Russian Federation. The only reason for refusal can be insufficient level of professional qualification. If the disabled person has the necessary level of knowledge and skills, the employer must employ his/her.

Nevertheless, society is rapidly continuing to move into a new stage of its development - the information age, which in particular makes it possible to solve the problem of unemployment of PWD. It will play a significant positive role for the country's economy, due to the increase in the number of able-bodied.

It is necessary now to build a system for the gradual inclusion of people with disabilities to the enterprises, both public and private. To do this the following is needed:

- Occupational orientation, psychological support, professional training, occupational adaptation primarily in the sphere of intellectual labor;
- Measures of public services to promote employment in the relevant specialties: quoting jobs in relevant organizations, economic support for workplaces and employers;
- Additional training or retraining at the expense of the Employment Fund; granting tax preferences to employers;
- Assistance in organizing and equipping the workplace and the accessible environment at the enterprise.

According to Article 22 of the Federal Law "On the Social Protection of People with Disabilities in the Russian Federation", the employer should provide special workplaces adapted for the work of disabled people including additional technical and organizational equipment.

Data collection, Research Objectives and Aims

The research will be carried out within 12 weeks, in two parts: quantitative analysis followed by qualitative one. From the 1st of Sep to Nov 30th. Including primary data collection by means of interviews with 10 employers, interview with and questionnaires for 30 employed persons with disabilities and 30 unemployed PWD. Secondary data will include different researches carried out by non-governmental organizations, government sources and articles from reliable journals. "Step-by-step process of collecting, recording, analyzing and interpreting of information" (Wilson, 2014).

The aims of our research are to identify:

- If there is a correlation between the amount of funds required to improve the accessible environment at the expense of the employer and the unwillingness of the employer to hire a disabled person of appropriate professional qualifications. Or this is more about social perceptions and emotions.
- Areas of targeted financing.
- In which areas disabled people prefer to undergo training and retraining.
- What kind of work and positions employers are ready to offer to PWD.

PART II

Ethical Considerations

Discussions on ethical issues of research consider the following principles: the right to privacy, the right to human dignity, voluntary informed consent, voluntary participation, the right to security of person, the right to choice and confidentiality. We will inform the involved respondents about the research aims and answer all their questions. The potential respondent will be aware of the subject of the research and the purpose of the interview. Since the research deals with issues that can potentially cause the respondents anxiety and discomfort, and also touches some personal questions, PWD at any time will have a chance to refuse to answer or finish the interview. The interview protocol will be developed in advance and no ethical code or norms will be breached within the interview or research process. (Oliver, 2010). We are morally responsible for providing the respondent with full and sufficient information on the general content of questions, sources of funding and further use of the collected data. Besides that, we guarantee the complete confidentiality of their answers.

Since the interview will involve obtaining knowledge of life situation of a person and will unavoidably concern personal issues, medical diagnosis (medical confidentiality) and certain features of the respondents' lifestyle, all data will be collecting and storing in accordance with legislation of Russian Federation to avoid any possible emotional harm and laws violations.

The formulation of the questions will be clearly defined and will not allow contradictions or possible alternative understanding. No question will cause embarrassment or discomfort or hurt feelings of respondents.

Conducting of interview is an event that deals with a great moral aspect and must comply all ethical standards. Interpersonal interaction during the interview affects the interviewee, and the knowledge obtained during the interview affects our understanding of human being.

Respondents can be assured of compliance with ethical standards. All questions will be introduce

to them in advance in order to avoid ambiguity and to exclude the possible perception of questions as provocative or incorrect. All personal data will be processed and stored in accordance with the Personal Data Protection Law and strictly following 10 Principles of MRS Code of Conduct (MRS Code of Conduct, 2010).

PART III

Data Analysis

Healthcare Manufacturing company have conducted an employee attitude survey and focus groups with employees collecting primary data of two forms. Employee attitude survey was supposed to cover all 240 employees of the company but only 192 were completed. So 20% of employees ignored the research on some unknown reasons. Below within the qualitative analysis we will approximate this fact in connection with other criteria.

61, 98% of employees are of 30-49 years old. The majority of employee are men – 59,90%. The majority, 27,08%, has been working at the company for 4-6 years. The attention shall be paid at the fact: 20, 31% of employee have been hired less than 1 year ago but percent of those working longer than 1 year and less than 3 years is only 7,29%.

56,25% had been previously employed and 27,60% joint the company straight from school/university. Zero hours contract is applied to 20% of employees, the others contracted with fixed term (14,21%) or permanent members of staff (65,79% - majority).

When asked about the importance of employee benefits, the majority ranked free tea/coffee/cold drinks as important (65,54%) and 25 days paid leave as very important (28,57%). Surprising too.

Almost 43% thinks that bonuses and incentive plans should be calculated based on the overall company's performance and only 10% - on team performance.

We apply the qualitative and quantitative analysis to have a full picture.

As per focus groups, there were 40 employees randomly chosen from each department. Five groups with 8 employees in each. The question was about the importance of benefits and rewards. It should be noted that 0-hour contract and fixed term employees are not eligible to the full range of benefits. And they deem what is called “rewards” in the company as “perks”, not really rewards (Group 4; respondent 2). Plus they are frustrated about not having the access to pension plan, private healthcare program, staff shop and shop discounts. The HR policy of Healthcare Manufacturing has been changed for last years. The respondents say that they are not all motivated in the same way and the difference is disappointing. Now more and more contracts

are designed only as 0-hour or fixed term and that is causing issuers (Group 5; respondent 4), the newbies under those contracts are not included in the bonuses scheme and are not really willing to work additional hours and contribute even when the team faces the deadlines.

Cross Tabulation 1.

Here we can see that perceived importance of benefits naturally depends on the age of respondents. We have 11 statistically significant answers, where the majority of two ages group of 30-49 deems benefits important and very important, while employees under 29 rank highly X-mas party and 25-days paid leave. And all together most of all appeal to free beverages.

Cross Tabulation 2.

Bonuses and incentives scheme VS age. As it came out of focus group, the majority tends to the base of the overall company's performance but younger people want it on individual performance. It is linked to the fact that in this age category there are many 0-hour and fixed term contractors who are poorly recognized by the managements of the company and are not included into the additional benefits available to those hired under permanent conditions.

Cross Tabulation 3.

Influence of the type of contract on perception of benefits. The majority of respondents here are on the permanent contract with full access to benefits, so it is predictably that they mark them as important and high important. Those who are on 0-hours and fixed term contract demonstrate little interest due to less quantity of participants and limited access to benefits. Paid leave and Christmas party have importance for them. Beverages again won in all categories regardless the type of the contract. We note here that 9 of 13 types of benefits have statistical significance.

Group 2 Respondent 6: Zero hours contracts are not eligible for the same rewards, mainly the big ones, you know, being part of the company pension, private healthcare etc.

Respondent 4: Don't forget the important ones, like the staff shop and shop discounts...they're the ones I'd actually use...if we were allowed.

Cross Tabulation 4.

The influence of contract type on bonuses and incentives system. The permanent contractors' majority prefer distribution of bonuses and incentives on company performance base, those of zero hours and fixed term contracts – on individual base. Though there is an opinion expressed within focus groups that flexible and variable system (Focus group 4) shall be applied. The

whole technical department, which is completely of fixed term, would prefer team-based benefits (Focus Group Interview 2).

Respondent 7: My whole team is fixed. [...] I think it should be team based. My team work really hard and we get no other benefits. We're not part of the company bonus, but I'd like to see the company perform without our help!

Cross Tabulation 5.

The correlation between the term of employment in the company and the system of bonuses and incentives. The employees with the length with company over 20 years almost united, except for one, prefer overall company performance base, as well as the majority in other age categories. Only those who have worked less than one year – individual base.

Cross Tabulation 6.

The influence of previous employment on bonuses and incentive system. The majority in “previously employed” group (which is twice bigger than the second group) express preference for overall company performance base. The majority among those who joined the company straight after school or university – individual performance base.

So, from this research we can highlight the following reasonable recommendations:

1. Taking into account that free tea/coffee became the most important benefit in general and the fact that 20% of people ignored the survey, it needs to specifically look the interests of employees about the company. Do they all feel good about the company? Do they all feel loyalty, do they all see their future in the company, want to stay with it and do their best? Even of those under permanent contracts.
2. For 0-hour and fixed term contracts employees, unfortunately only social corporate events like X-mas party give a chance to feel recognized and encouraged by TOP management.
3. Apparently there is a very weak HR policy and unreliable team relations. The team building program shall be developed and implemented to make all employees feel necessary and recognized.
4. There is extremely low proportion of young people under 29. It makes a sense to develop some programs for young employees to attract young talented specialists to start with Healthcare Manufacturing and build a carrier within the company. The need of such program is demonstrated by the fact that only 7,29% have been working for 1-3 years.

Young people tend to leave the company. Indirectly that is why “childcare voucher” benefit is not a popular answer.

5. To pay attention that percent of women is less than that of men.

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