

**COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF PUBLIC SECTOR EMPLOYMENT  
POLICIES FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN MALAYSIA AND  
SWEDEN**

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**ABSTRACT**

This article presents a comparative analysis of public sector employment policies for persons with disabilities in Malaysia and Sweden, with the objective of identifying key differences, challenges and best practices that influence inclusive employment outcomes. Using a qualitative comparative methodology, the article examines policy documents, legislation and statistical reports from both countries to assess how legal frameworks and implementation strategies impact the inclusion of persons with disabilities in public employment. The findings reveal that while Malaysia has established legal provisions such as employment quotas and accessibility standards, significant barriers remain due to limited enforcement, negative societal attitudes and insufficient support services. In contrast, Sweden demonstrates a more comprehensive and proactive approach, supported by strong anti-discrimination laws, accessibility measures and employer incentives, resulting in higher employment rates for persons with disabilities. The analysis highlights the role of cultural perceptions, legal structures and social support systems in shaping policy effectiveness. The article concludes that Malaysia can enhance its public sector inclusion by adopting stronger enforcement mechanisms, fostering attitudinal change and drawing on Sweden's integrated policy approach. Promoting meaningful employment for persons with disabilities is essential for achieving equitable societies and strengthening public sector diversity.

**KEYWORDS:** *DISABILITY, PUBLIC SECTOR, INCLUSIVITY, EMPLOYMENT, PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES*

**ABSTRAK**

Artikel ini membentangkan analisis perbandingan dasar pekerjaan sektor awam bagi orang kurang upaya di Malaysia dan Sweden, dengan objektif mengenal pasti perbezaan utama, cabaran serta amalan terbaik yang mempengaruhi hasil pekerjaan terangkum. Melalui penggunaan metodologi perbandingan kualitatif, artikel ini meneliti dokumen dasar, perundangan dan laporan statistik dari kedua-dua negara untuk menilai bagaimana kerangka undang-undang dan strategi pelaksanaan memberi kesan terhadap penyertaan orang kurang upaya dalam pekerjaan sektor awam. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa walaupun Malaysia telah mewujudkan peruntukan undang-undang

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seperti kuota pekerjaan dan piawai kebolehpasaran, halangan ketara masih wujud akibat penguatkuasaan yang terhad, sikap negatif masyarakat dan kekurangan perkhidmatan sokongan. Sebaliknya, Sweden menunjukkan pendekatan yang lebih komprehensif dan proaktif, disokong oleh undang-undang anti-diskriminasi yang kukuh, langkah kebolehpasaran dan insentif kepada majikan, yang menghasilkan kadar pekerjaan lebih tinggi bagi orang kurang upaya. Analisis ini menekankan peranan persepsi budaya, struktur undang-undang dan sistem sokongan sosial dalam membentuk keberkesanan dasar. Artikel ini merumuskan bahawa Malaysia boleh meningkatkan inklusiviti sektor awam dengan memperkukuh mekanisme penguatkuasaan, memupuk perubahan sikap dan mencontohi pendekatan dasar bersepadu Sweden. Pemerkasaan peluang pekerjaan adalah sangat bermakna untuk orang kurang upaya adalah penting bagi mencapai masyarakat yang adil serta memperkukuh kepelbagaian sektor awam.

**KATA KUNCI:** *KETIDAKUPAYAAN, SEKTOR AWAM, KETERANGKUMAN, PEKERJAAN, ORANG KURANG UPAYA*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The imperative of ensuring equitable opportunities for persons with disabilities within the public sector constitutes a cornerstone of modern social justice and inclusive governance (Kamarudin *et al.*, 2014). The employment of person with disabilities displays an integral part of our country's commitment to equality and social inclusion as well in economic participation for this community. The commitment to disability rights is underscored by international frameworks, most notably the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which explicitly mandates the protection and promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities across all facets of life (Naicker *et al.*, 2019). While Malaysia became a signatory to the CRPD on 8 April 2008 and has demonstrated significant domestic efforts through the introduction of the Persons with Disabilities Act 2008 to protect this minority group, (Md Tah, 2013) the discussion on the Act enforceability remains debatable. Sweden formally ratified the CRPD on December 2008 and the Convention was ratified by the European Union which Sweden is a member to the Union (Janhager, 2019). Public sector employment is particularly significant for persons with disabilities due to its potential to offer stable, well-regulated and socially impactful career paths, thereby fostering economic independence and social inclusion (Khoo *et al.*, 2013). The dynamic in public sector employment for person with disabilities may differs considerably when compared to the private sector as the employers is driven to the incentives that may influence the inclusivity of its employment practices for this minority group (Rosli & Rizal, 2024). Apart from the incentives mechanism, the Ministry of Human Resources (MOHR) has operated an online job-matching and placement platform known as SPOKU (Jamil, 2018). The system facilitates employment access by enabling registered persons with disabilities to search for available positions while allowing employers to post suitable vacancies targeted to this group. Even though with the incentives and the establishment of enacted act, the employment of person with disabilities in the private sector remains comparatively low despite the positive attributes demonstrated by this group (Noor, 2018).

Where both states are parties to the Convention, the obligations under its articles must be clearly observed, despite persistent criticisms regarding the enforcement of domestic legislation concerning the employment of this minority group, particularly in Malaysia (Saidi, 2018). Article 27 of the CRPD, focusing on work and employment, emphasises the right of persons with disabilities to work, on an equal basis with others, including the right to opportunities to gain a livelihood by work freely chosen or accepted in a labour market and work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities (Khoo *et al.*, 2013). Article 5 of the CRPD reinforces the principles of equality and non-discrimination, requiring state parties to prohibit all discrimination on the basis of disability and guarantee to persons with disabilities equal and effective legal protection against discrimination on all grounds. Inclusive public sector policies are not merely a matter of legal compliance but are intrinsically linked to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 8, which advocates for decent work and economic growth for all. Thus, the integration of persons with

disabilities into the workforce is critical for fostering diverse, innovative and representative public services that effectively address the needs of all citizens (Dewi *et al.*, 2020).

The public sector, as a major employer and a symbol of national values, plays a crucial role in setting standards for disability inclusion (Manaf *et al.*, 2019). By actively recruiting, retaining and promoting individuals with disabilities, governments can demonstrate a commitment to equality and inspire similar actions in the private sector (Leslie, 2024). Moreover, the employment of persons with disabilities in public service enriches the workforce by bringing diverse perspectives, experiences and skills that can enhance problem-solving and decision-making processes (Buyl *et al.*, 2022). This commitment extends beyond mere compliance with legal mandates; it embodies a proactive approach to fostering a society where every individual, regardless of their abilities, has the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to the nation's progress (World Health Organisation, 2015). The principles enshrined in Article 3 of CRPD, such as respect for inherent dignity, equality of opportunity and accessibility, guide the development and implementation of policies aimed at removing barriers and promoting the full participation of persons with disabilities (United Nations, 2006). It also creates a new rights discourse and makes human rights more obtainable for persons with disabilities (Harpur, 2011). The implementation of these policies necessitates a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by persons with disabilities, as well as the development of targeted strategies that address specific barriers to employment.

Under the legal framework of the Persons with Disabilities Act 2008, specifically section 29 of the act where person with disabilities are guaranteed the right to equal access to employment. This protection applies not only to the private sector but also to the public sector, ensuring that persons with disabilities are afforded equal opportunities across all employment settings. In Malaysia, a total of 674,548 persons with disabilities (PWDs) were registered with the Department of Social Welfare as of 2022. This cumulative numbers representing approximately 2.0% of the national population and among the different categories, physical disabilities accounted for the highest number of registrations, with 245,015 individuals, followed by learning disabilities (236,972 individuals) and visual impairments (59,143 individuals) while speech impairments had the lowest registration rate, with a total of 3,509 individuals (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2022). As of 2022, a total of 3,724 persons with disabilities were employed in the public sector, comprising 2,195 male and 1,529 female workers. This figure represents less than 1% of the total Malaysian workforce, highlighting the limited participation of this group in public service employment.

**TABLE 1: NUMBER OF CIVIL SERVANTS WITH DISABILITIES BY SERVICE GROUP, CATEGORY OF DISABILITIES AND SEX, MALAYSIA, 2020-2022**

|                           | Year | Total | Visually Impaired | Hearing | Physical | Learning Disabilities | Speech | Mental | Multiple |
|---------------------------|------|-------|-------------------|---------|----------|-----------------------|--------|--------|----------|
| Total Sum                 | 2020 | 3,675 | 775               | 319     | 2,579    | 72                    | 35     | 24     | 54       |
|                           | 2021 | 3,694 | 785               | 322     | 2,554    | 88                    | 37     | 26     | 59       |
|                           | 2022 | 3,724 | 795               | 331     | 2,551    | 99                    | 34     | 34     | 56       |
| Top management            | 2020 | 5     | 1                 | 1       | 3        | -                     | -      | -      | -        |
|                           | 2021 | 4     | 1                 | 1       | 2        | -                     | -      | -      | -        |
|                           | 2022 | 4     | -                 | 3       | 1        | -                     | -      | -      | -        |
| Management & Professional | 2020 | 1,187 | 354               | 119     | 680      | 34                    | 8      | 9      | 20       |
|                           | 2021 | 1,233 | 374               | 121     | 694      | 38                    | 10     | 10     | 24       |
|                           | 2022 | 1,258 | 384               | 128     | 698      | 39                    | 10     | 12     | 23       |
| Support                   | 2020 | 2,483 | 420               | 199     | 1,896    | 38                    | 27     | 15     | 34       |
|                           | 2021 | 2,457 | 410               | 200     | 1,858    | 50                    | 27     | 16     | 35       |
|                           | 2022 | 2,462 | 411               | 200     | 1,852    | 60                    | 24     | 22     | 33       |
| Male / Total              | 2020 | 2,189 | 437               | 186     | 1,602    | 20                    | 17     | 15     | 26       |
|                           | 2021 | 2,183 | 428               | 183     | 1,590    | 29                    | 19     | 14     | 26       |
|                           | 2022 | 2,195 | 430               | 184     | 1,589    | 36                    | 19     | 17     | 25       |
| Top Management            | 2020 | 4     | 1                 | 1       | 2        | -                     | -      | -      | -        |
|                           | 2021 | 3     | 1                 | 1       | 1        | -                     | -      | -      | -        |
|                           | 2022 | 3     | -                 | 2       | 1        | -                     | -      | -      | -        |
| Management & Professional | 2020 | 601   | 191               | 50      | 354      | 5                     | 4      | 6      | 7        |
|                           | 2021 | 612   | 193               | 49      | 360      | 9                     | 5      | 5      | 7        |
|                           | 2022 | 643   | 202               | 51      | 375      | 10                    | 7      | 6      | 7        |
| Support                   | 2020 | 1,584 | 245               | 135     | 1,246    | 15                    | 13     | 9      | 19       |

|                           |      |       |     |     |       |    |    |    |    |
|---------------------------|------|-------|-----|-----|-------|----|----|----|----|
|                           | 2021 | 1,568 | 234 | 133 | 1,229 | 20 | 14 | 9  | 19 |
|                           | 2022 | 1,549 | 228 | 131 | 1,213 | 26 | 12 | 11 | 18 |
| Female / Total            | 2020 | 1,486 | 338 | 133 | 977   | 52 | 18 | 9  | 28 |
|                           | 2021 | 1,511 | 357 | 139 | 964   | 59 | 18 | 12 | 33 |
|                           | 2022 | 1,529 | 365 | 147 | 962   | 63 | 15 | 17 | 31 |
| Top Management            | 2020 | 1     | -   | -   | 1     | -  | -  | -  | -  |
|                           | 2021 | 1     | -   | -   | 1     | -  | -  | -  | -  |
|                           | 2022 | 1     | -   | 1   | -     | -  | -  | -  | -  |
| Management & Professional | 2020 | 586   | 163 | 69  | 326   | 29 | 4  | 3  | 13 |
|                           | 2021 | 621   | 181 | 72  | 334   | 29 | 5  | 5  | 17 |
|                           | 2022 | 615   | 182 | 77  | 323   | 29 | 3  | 6  | 16 |
| Support                   | 2020 | 899   | 175 | 64  | 650   | 23 | 14 | 6  | 15 |
|                           | 2021 | 889   | 176 | 67  | 629   | 30 | 13 | 7  | 16 |
|                           | 2022 | 913   | 183 | 69  | 639   | 34 | 12 | 11 | 15 |

Notes:

1. Status of appointment as per Warrant
2. Data exclude Police and Military
3. An officer can have more than one category of disability

Source: Department of Public Services (Year: 2020-2022)

Within this context, the objective of this article is to conduct a comparative analysis of public sector employment policies for persons with disabilities in Malaysia and Sweden. Recognising both countries are parties to the CRPD with different socio-economic and legal systems, the contrast allows for a clearer identification to highlight the gaps in the legislative and best measures for the implementation of employment policies for person with disabilities in Malaysia. As a developed European country, Sweden is subject to dual monitoring both by the United Nation and the European Union (S. L. Ashalatha, 2024). These dual-layered enforcement highlights best potential practices that could be adapted to strengthen Malaysia’s public sector inclusion of person with disabilities. By examining the legal frameworks, policy instruments and implementation mechanisms in both countries, this study seeks to identify key differences, challenges and best practices that shape inclusive employment outcomes. The analysis aims to provide critical insights into how Malaysia can strengthen its public sector inclusivity by learning from Sweden’s integrated and proactive approach, thereby ensuring that persons with disabilities are afforded meaningful opportunities to participate fully in the workforce.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Existing research on disability-inclusive employment policies presents a multifaceted landscape, highlighting both progress and persistent challenges in Malaysia and Sweden. Malaysia, despite having enacted the Persons with Disabilities Act in 2008 and establishing a 1% employment quota for persons with disabilities in the public sector via Public Service Circular No. 3/2008, still faces considerable hurdles in effective implementation and enforcement (Zahari *et al.*, 2020). Academic studies and government reports indicate that negative perceptions among employers, accessibility issues and a lack of adequate training and support systems continue to impede the employment prospects of persons with disabilities in Malaysia (Manaf *et al.*, 2019). In addition, studies suggest that the application of the acts and legislation should be comprehensive covering all types of public buildings in Malaysia (Kamarudin *et al.*, 2014). Further, despite various awareness initiatives, many employers remain hesitant to hire this group due to inability to provide appropriate system and facilities at workplace for person with disabilities (Maideen, 2023).

The United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific have consistently advocated for intensified efforts in Malaysia, emphasizing the criticality of comprehensive awareness campaigns to combat societal stigma and misconceptions surrounding disability (Jaafar *et al.*, 2020) (Zahari *et al.*, 2020). Research reveals a significant gap between policy formulation and practical application, with many public sector organisations struggling to meet the mandated quota (Wickenden, 2023). The country signed the Convention of Rights of Person with Disabilities and put oath to promote, protect and ensure the full

and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities (Zahari *et al.*, 2020).

Furthermore, Sweden, recognised as a leader in disability rights and social welfare, has implemented a range of progressive policies aimed at promoting the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the workforce (Ombati, 2022). The Swedish Discrimination Act (2008:567) serves as a cornerstone of this framework, explicitly prohibiting discrimination based on disability across various domains, including employment, education and access to goods and services (Bjørnshagen *et al.*, 2023). The Swedish Agency for Government Employers plays a pivotal role in guiding and supporting public sector entities in their efforts to create inclusive workplaces (Bjørnshagen *et al.*, 2023). Academic literature and reports from organisations such as the European Disability Forum highlight Sweden's proactive recruitment practices, accessibility audits and comprehensive support services as key factors contributing to its relatively high employment rates among persons with disabilities (Sharma & Mehra, 2020). Sweden has published a set of buildings and urban rules and regulations that make the whole physical environment accessible to all (Shahraki, 2020). The theoretical framework underpinning these policies often draws upon the social model of disability, which emphasises societal barriers and attitudes as primary factors contributing to the exclusion of persons with disabilities.

Comparing the approaches of Malaysia and Sweden reveals distinct contrasts in policy implementation and outcomes. While Malaysia has made legislative strides, challenges persist in translating these policies into tangible improvements in the employment rates and experiences of persons with disabilities (Hussein & Yaacob, 2012) (Kamarudin *et al.*, 2014). However, Sweden demonstrates a more robust and integrated approach, characterised by comprehensive legal frameworks, proactive employer engagement and a commitment to accessibility and support services (Tøssebro, 2016). The existing literature underscores the importance of addressing both attitudinal and systemic barriers to employment.

Based on the reviewed literature, it is evident that while substantial research exists on disability inclusion in both Malaysia and Sweden, comparative studies focusing specifically on public sector employment policies remain limited. Previous studies have often concentrated either on general disability rights or on accessibility issues, without fully addressing how legal frameworks, implementation mechanisms and cultural perceptions interact to influence employment outcomes for persons with disabilities. For example, Hao and Li (2020) argue that the anti-discrimination legal framework is undermined by vague definitions of disability and discrimination, while the quota system remains ineffective because enforcement is weak and employers sometimes prefer to pay fines rather than hire people with disabilities. Saleh and Bruyère (2018) highlight that demand-side policies must leverage employer interests, such as recruitment, retention and meaningful workplace inclusion, to improve employment for people with disabilities. In addition, Rezai *et al.* (2023) find that negative organisational climates and employer biases are among the most persistent obstacles to inclusive work. Meanwhile, Xue and Chen (2025) demonstrate that despite legal mandates, stable recruitment norms persist, leading to what they term “quarantined enforcement,” where courts avoid challenging discriminatory hiring practices by government-linked entities. Together, these studies suggest that legal frameworks, implementation mechanisms, and cultural perceptions must be understood as deeply interconnected in shaping real employment opportunities for persons with disabilities.

Therefore, this article seeks to address this gap by providing a comparative analysis of Malaysia and Sweden, with the aim of identifying challenges, best practices and lessons that can inform more effective disability-inclusive employment policies in the Malaysian public sector.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative comparative analysis approach to examine and contrast employment policies for persons with disabilities in the public sector in Malaysia and Sweden. Qualitative comparative analysis is a systematic and rigorous method used to identify causal relationships and patterns across different cases based on the comparison of qualitative data (Dewi *et al.*, 2020). In this

context, it allows for a nuanced understanding of how different policy configurations and contextual factors contribute to varying levels of inclusion and employment outcomes for persons with disabilities in the two countries. The methodology focuses on in-depth analysis of policy documents, legislation and statistical reports from both countries (Johannesson & Schmid, 1980). Official government websites, policy papers, legal documents and international reports constitute the primary sources of information (Iravani *et al.*, 2021). For Malaysia, key documents include the Persons with Disabilities Act 2008, Public Service Circular No. 3/2008, guidelines from Public Service Department (JPA) and statistical data from the Department of Statistics Malaysia and JPA Annual Reports. For Sweden, relevant materials encompass the Discrimination Act, policies of the Swedish Agency for Government Employers and Arbetsförmedlingen, statistical data from Statistics Sweden and the Swedish Agency for Participation and reports from the European Disability Forum. Arbetsförmedlingen is the Swedish Public Employment Service and function as a government agency for facilitating employment, providing vocational guidance, and supporting both job seekers and employers in Sweden.

The selection of Malaysia and Sweden as case studies is purposeful and strategic. Malaysia, as a developing country, provides insights into the challenges and opportunities associated with implementing disability-inclusive employment policies in a context marked by resource constraints, cultural norms and evolving legal frameworks. Sweden, on the other hand, represents a developed welfare state with a long-standing commitment to social inclusion and disability rights, offering a benchmark for progressive policy approaches and outcomes. The comparison between these two countries allows for the identification of best practices, policy gaps and contextual factors that influence the effectiveness of employment policies for persons with disabilities.

Data collection involves gathering relevant policy documents, legislation, statistical reports and scholarly articles from both Malaysia and Sweden. For Malaysia, key sources include the Persons with Disabilities Act 2008, Public Service Circular No. 3/2008, guidelines from Public Service Department (JPA) and statistical data from the Department of Statistics Malaysia. For Sweden, relevant sources include the Discrimination Act (2008:567), policy documents from the Swedish Agency for Government Employers and statistical data from Statistics Sweden and the Swedish Agency for Participation.

The cumulative number of persons with disabilities registered under the Malaysian Department of Welfare has increased to 8.6% from 621,248 in 2021 to 674,548 in 2022 and from this figure, the physical disability category recorded the highest registration of 245,015 persons, followed by learning disability category (236,972 persons) and the visually impaired (59,143 persons) while speech recorded the lowest registration of 3,509 persons (Department of Social Welfare, 2022).

**TABLE 2: CUMULATIVE NUMBER OF REGISTERED PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (PWD) BY CATEGORY OF DISABILITIES AND STATE, MALAYSIA, 2020-2022**

| State           | Year | Total   | Visually Impaired | Hearing | Physical | Learning Disabilities | Speech | Mental | Multiple |
|-----------------|------|---------|-------------------|---------|----------|-----------------------|--------|--------|----------|
| Malaysia        | 2020 | 586,558 | 52,111            | 40,319  | 213,716  | 201,355               | 2,996  | 48,644 | 27,417   |
|                 | 2021 | 621,248 | 55,112            | 41,819  | 227,032  | 213,592               | 3,204  | 51,599 | 28,890   |
|                 | 2022 | 674,548 | 59,143            | 43,962  | 245,015  | 236,972               | 3,509  | 55,064 | 30,883   |
| Johor           | 2020 | 68,685  | 5,504             | 4,417   | 25,357   | 23,294                | 364    | 6,467  | 3,282    |
|                 | 2021 | 72,368  | 5,840             | 4,567   | 26,737   | 24,580                | 383    | 6,855  | 3,406    |
|                 | 2022 | 77,850  | 6,280             | 4,767   | 28,479   | 27,022                | 422    | 7,269  | 3,611    |
| Kedah           | 2020 | 51,260  | 5,461             | 3,401   | 20,185   | 15,220                | 323    | 4,254  | 2,416    |
|                 | 2021 | 54,216  | 5,756             | 3,551   | 21,471   | 16,036                | 347    | 4,485  | 2,570    |
|                 | 2022 | 58,661  | 6,185             | 3,713   | 23,086   | 17,833                | 374    | 4,740  | 2,730    |
| Kelantan        | 2020 | 41,545  | 3,779             | 2,569   | 12,777   | 15,491                | 273    | 4,533  | 2,123    |
|                 | 2021 | 44,167  | 3,976             | 2,712   | 13,742   | 16,477                | 289    | 4,741  | 2,230    |
|                 | 2022 | 48,136  | 4,276             | 2,853   | 14,876   | 18,437                | 310    | 5,017  | 2,367    |
| Melaka          | 2020 | 27,054  | 1,996             | 2,363   | 10,644   | 8,983                 | 125    | 2,060  | 883      |
|                 | 2021 | 28,450  | 2,112             | 2,469   | 11,238   | 9,455                 | 135    | 2,131  | 910      |
|                 | 2022 | 30,467  | 2,259             | 2,593   | 11,976   | 10,366                | 141    | 2,198  | 934      |
| Negeri Sembilan | 2020 | 26,758  | 2,062             | 1,892   | 10,742   | 8,494                 | 90     | 2,165  | 1,313    |
|                 | 2021 | 28,275  | 2,186             | 1,970   | 11,378   | 8,938                 | 100    | 2,310  | 1,393    |

|                  |      |         |       |       |        |        |     |       |       |
|------------------|------|---------|-------|-------|--------|--------|-----|-------|-------|
|                  | 2022 | 30,434  | 2,358 | 2,066 | 12,165 | 9,811  | 111 | 2,446 | 1,477 |
| Pahang           | 2020 | 34,163  | 3,073 | 2,018 | 12,696 | 12,323 | 202 | 2,179 | 1,672 |
|                  | 2021 | 36,257  | 3,302 | 2,080 | 13,556 | 12,969 | 220 | 2,354 | 1,776 |
|                  | 2022 | 39,511  | 3,572 | 2,193 | 14,563 | 14,463 | 243 | 2,578 | 1,899 |
| Pulau Pinang     | 2020 | 34,003  | 3,421 | 2,633 | 14,278 | 10,136 | 117 | 2,135 | 1,283 |
|                  | 2021 | 35,884  | 3,580 | 2,732 | 15,139 | 10,695 | 122 | 2,282 | 1,334 |
|                  | 2022 | 38,467  | 3,805 | 2,870 | 16,169 | 11,685 | 125 | 2,408 | 1,405 |
| Perak            | 2020 | 51,458  | 4,500 | 3,393 | 18,757 | 16,941 | 191 | 5,227 | 2,449 |
|                  | 2021 | 54,485  | 4,788 | 3,517 | 20,111 | 17,776 | 211 | 5,559 | 2,523 |
|                  | 2022 | 58,920  | 5,145 | 3,716 | 21,903 | 19,329 | 238 | 5,934 | 2,655 |
| Perlis           | 2020 | 7,464   | 796   | 384   | 2,576  | 2,486  | 74  | 859   | 289   |
|                  | 2021 | 7,984   | 832   | 404   | 2,746  | 2,710  | 80  | 907   | 305   |
|                  | 2022 | 8,799   | 891   | 441   | 2,963  | 3,100  | 88  | 981   | 335   |
| Selangor         | 2020 | 95,101  | 7,084 | 6,272 | 38,213 | 31,852 | 388 | 6,324 | 4,968 |
|                  | 2021 | 100,835 | 7,535 | 6,466 | 40,342 | 34,153 | 407 | 6,691 | 5,241 |
|                  | 2022 | 111,095 | 8,200 | 6,890 | 44,333 | 38,289 | 450 | 7,228 | 5,705 |
| Terengganu       | 2020 | 28,961  | 2,575 | 2,330 | 8,768  | 11,696 | 144 | 2,083 | 1,365 |
|                  | 2021 | 30,753  | 2,733 | 2,420 | 9,309  | 12,424 | 155 | 2,249 | 1,463 |
|                  | 2022 | 32,975  | 2,883 | 2,493 | 9,838  | 13,667 | 173 | 2,370 | 1,551 |
| Sabah            | 2020 | 37,623  | 3,232 | 2,746 | 10,350 | 15,858 | 316 | 2,875 | 2,246 |
|                  | 2021 | 39,751  | 3,392 | 2,845 | 10,985 | 16,755 | 340 | 3,029 | 2,405 |
|                  | 2022 | 43,210  | 3,597 | 3,007 | 11,682 | 18,686 | 371 | 3,267 | 2,600 |
| Sarawak          | 2020 | 39,246  | 4,542 | 2,665 | 11,320 | 14,291 | 231 | 4,556 | 1,641 |
|                  | 2021 | 41,731  | 4,780 | 2,744 | 12,120 | 15,258 | 241 | 4,839 | 1,749 |
|                  | 2022 | 45,349  | 5,084 | 2,861 | 13,236 | 16,848 | 264 | 5,190 | 1,866 |
| WP Kuala Lumpur* | 2020 | 41,421  | 3,950 | 3,151 | 16,571 | 13,380 | 133 | 2,831 | 1,405 |
|                  | 2021 | 44,199  | 4,163 | 3,252 | 17,657 | 14,412 | 151 | 3,067 | 1,497 |
|                  | 2022 | 48,596  | 4,462 | 3,407 | 19,219 | 16,346 | 175 | 3,333 | 1,654 |
| WP Labuan        | 2020 | 1,816   | 136   | 85    | 482    | 910    | 25  | 96    | 82    |
|                  | 2021 | 1,893   | 137   | 90    | 501    | 954    | 23  | 100   | 88    |
|                  | 2022 | 2,078   | 146   | 92    | 527    | 1,090  | 24  | 105   | 94    |

\* Includes WP Putrajaya

Sources: Department of Social Welfare (Year: 2020-2022)

Meanwhile, in Sweden, according to Section 5 of the Sweden Discrimination Act 2008 defined disability as permanent physical, mental or intellectual limitation of a person's functional capacity that as a consequence of injury or illness existed at birth, has arisen since then or can be expected to arise. Additionally, any temporary limitations of a person's functional capacity are not a disability within the meaning of this section. Thus, from the definition, the three categories of disability recognised under the legal framework of this Sweden Discrimination Act 2008 are permanent physical disabilities, intellectual disabilities and other permanent mental or psychological disabilities. Besides the Sweden Discrimination Act, a reform act known as Act Concerning Support and Service to Persons with Certain Functional Disabilities (LSS) was introduced in 1994. The three categories of groups entitled for personal assistance are; (1) Persons with intellectual disability, autism or autism-like conditions; (2) Persons having a significant and permanent intellectual disability because of brain injury in one's adult life due to external violence or body illness; (3) Persons with other permanent physical or intellectual disabilities that are not due to normal ageing (Askheim, 2025).

The analysis involves a detailed examination of the content, scope and implementation mechanisms of the policies. The collected data will be analysed using a combination of content analysis and comparative analysis techniques. Content analysis will be used to identify key themes, provisions and approaches within the policy documents and legislation. Comparative analysis will involve comparing and contrasting the policies and implementation strategies of Malaysia and Sweden.

#### 4. FINDINGS

##### *Malaysia: Policies and Outcomes*

Malaysia's commitment to promoting the rights and inclusion of persons with disabilities is reflected in its policy landscape, which includes the Persons with Disabilities Act 2008 and Public Service Circular No. 3/2008 (Khou et al., 2020). The Persons with Disabilities Act 2008 serves as the primary legislation aimed at protecting the rights of persons with disabilities and promoting their participation in society (Rahmat et al., 2021). The Public Service Circular No. 3/2008 mandates a 1% employment quota for persons with disabilities in the public sector (Zahari et al., 2020). The Malaysian government has reinforced the Persons with Disabilities Act 2008 with the MS 1184:2014 Universal Design and Accessibility in the Built Environment, which determines the accessibility standards for public and commercial buildings (Jaafar et al., 2020).

Despite these policy measures, challenges persist in achieving meaningful employment outcomes for persons with disabilities in the public sector. Statistics from the Department of Statistics Malaysia and JPA Reports reveal that the employment rate of persons with disabilities in the public sector remains below the mandated quota. This indicates a gap between policy intent and actual implementation (Dewi et al., 2020). Several factors contribute to this gap, including attitudinal barriers among employers, lack of awareness about the capabilities of persons with disabilities and inadequate support services for both employers and employees (Maulana et al., 2020).

Various agencies play a role in supporting the employment of persons with disabilities in Malaysia. Department of Social Welfare Malaysia is responsible for providing support services and vocational training to persons with disabilities (Amin et al., 2024). Social Security Organisation (SOCSSO) offers employment incentives and rehabilitation programs to encourage the hiring of persons with disabilities (Arshad et al., 2022). TalentCorp promotes diversity and inclusion in the workforce, including initiatives to attract and retain persons with disabilities (Anal et al., 2021). Despite these efforts, coordination challenges and resource constraints limit the effectiveness of these agencies in achieving significant improvements in employment outcomes for persons with disabilities (Kim et al., 2025).

While the Persons with Disabilities Act 2008 and MS 1184:2014 establish accessibility standards for buildings, many Malaysian landlords view ramps and braille signage as optional rather than essential features (Yusoff et al., 2025). Many HR managers are hesitant to hire people with disabilities because they are worried about workplace disruption and additional management burden (Krishnasamy et al., 2025). Developers view accessibility features as cost centers rather than value-added components (Ismail & Zulkurnain, 2019). The implementation of Civil Servant recruitment for people with disabilities in 2018 carried out some problems such as they cannot apply to general formations and the special formations provided do not match their educational background (Mughtar et al., 2020).

##### *Sweden: Policies and Outcomes*

Sweden has made significant strides in promoting the employment of persons with disabilities through a comprehensive legal and policy framework. The Discrimination Act (2008:567) prohibits discrimination based on disability in various areas, including employment (Parchomiuk et al., 2024). The Swedish Agency for Government Employers plays a crucial role in promoting diversity and inclusion in the public sector, providing guidance and support to government agencies in implementing disability-inclusive employment practices (Ruželè et al., 2024). Arbetsförmedlingen, the Public Employment Service, offers specialised services to assist persons with disabilities in finding and maintaining employment (Bates et al., 2023). Sweden has taken the most prominent steps to adapt its cities to the needs of the disabled and its standards can be a good example (Shahraki, 2020).

Sweden's proactive recruitment practices and accessibility audits demonstrate a commitment to creating an inclusive work environment for persons with disabilities (Baroudi & Haidar, 2025). Statistics from Statistics Sweden, the Swedish Agency for Participation and the European Disability

Forum indicate relatively high employment rates for persons with disabilities in the Swedish public sector compared to other countries (Carlsson *et al.*, 2021). However, challenges remain, including addressing attitudinal barriers, promoting career advancement opportunities and ensuring reasonable accommodations in the workplace (Ruželė *et al.*, 2024). Sweden has been working to harmonise the definition of disability for data collection purposes, to accurately reflect the lived experiences of persons with disabilities (Perez & Crowe, 2021).

Sweden provides state support to employers that hire people with disabilities through wage subsidies (Boman *et al.*, 2020). The wage subsidies cover a part of the employer’s costs for salary, social security contributions and other costs (Engelbrecht *et al.*, 2017). The wage subsidies for people with disabilities can last up to 4 years (Jacobsen *et al.*, 2024).

The comparison of disability-related employment policies, implementation practices, and outcomes between Malaysia and Sweden is illustrated in Table 3 below.

**TABLE 3: COMPARISON SUMMARY BETWEEN MALAYSIA AND SWEDEN**

| <b>Component</b>                   | <b>Malaysia</b>   | <b>Sweden</b>  |
|------------------------------------|---|--|
| CRPD Status                        | Ratified in 2010; Optional Protocol not ratified.   | Ratified CRPD and Optional Protocol; integrated into domestic law.   |
| Primary Legislation on PWD Rights  | Persons with Disabilities Act 2008; non-punitive and no legal remedies.   | Discrimination Act 2008 – enforceable; prohibits discrimination; includes duty to accommodate.               |
| Public Sector Employment Framework | Public Service Circular No. 3/2008. The circulars and guidelines; not legally binding.                                    | The Swedish Agency for Government Employers regulations legally require equality measures and accessibility. |
| Quota System                       | 1% quota (policy only); no penalties; low achievement.  | No quota; inclusion driven by enforceable rights.  |
| Reasonable Accommodation           | Encouraged in policy; not a legal duty.   | Legal obligation under Discrimination Act.   |
| Accessibility Requirements         | MS 1184:2014 Universal Design and Accessibility in the Built Environment, but not uniformly mandated; varies by ministry. | Mandatory universal design for buildings, digital services, and recruitment.                                 |
| Support for PWD Employees          | SOCSSO with employment incentives and TalentCorp promote inclusion but with limited resources.                            | State-funded wage subsidies, workplace adaptations, job coaches.   |
| Representation in Public Sector    | Generally below 1% target.  | Higher representation; public sector as model employer.  |
| Approach to Inclusion              | Quota-based, soft enforcement.  | Rights-based from Act and enforcement agency, legally enforceable.   |
| Overall Effectiveness              | Moderate progress; hindered by non-binding rules.   | High effectiveness due to strong legal framework.  |

Source: Table by Authors

In summary, the employment of persons with disabilities in Malaysia is predominantly promoted by enacted act and through policy incentives and quota-based system particularly in public sector. Efforts have centered on promotional and supportive measures, such as the implementation of

accessibility guidelines for buildings, which provide a framework to facilitate this minority group participation in the workforce. Despite these initiatives, enforcement mechanisms remain relatively weak, limiting the practical impact of these policies. In Sweden, a robust legal framework exists to guarantee the rights of person with disabilities in employment. However, challenges persist in addressing attitudinal barriers and other factors that affect the effective implementation of employability measures, particularly within the public sector.

## 5. DISCUSSION

Malaysia and Sweden represent distinct approaches to promoting the employment of persons with disabilities in the public sector, shaped by their socio-economic contexts, legal frameworks and cultural norms. Sweden's comprehensive welfare state model emphasises universal access to employment opportunities and social support services, underpinned by a strong legal framework and proactive policies (Lewin, 2004). Malaysia's approach is characterised by a combination of legislative measures, policy initiatives and agency-led programs, but faces challenges in implementation and enforcement (Azmi *et al.*, 2021). While Sweden has seen considerable success with its labor market policies, other European countries have not had the same results (Delsen & Veen, 1992).

Sweden's anti-discrimination law can be used to protect people with disability from discrimination in employment (Raache & Ataouat, 2024). This anti-discrimination law covers all aspect of employment including support at the workplace in assertive technologies or physical adaptation through the government or municipalities (Bratan T, 2020). In contrast, Malaysia relies on policies like the Persons with Disabilities Act 2008 to protect PWDs (Rai, 2016). The social model of disability, which is very important to Sweden, views disability as a social construct that is made worse by barriers in society (Jemon *et al.*, 2021), while the charity model, which is still common in Malaysia, views disability as a personal problem (Yusoff *et al.*, 2025).

Malaysia's approach to disability inclusion in the public sector reflects a developing country context, characterised by resource constraints, capacity limitations and attitudinal barriers (Zahari *et al.*, 2020). Sweden's approach reflects a developed welfare state context, characterised by robust legal frameworks, comprehensive social support services and a strong commitment to equality and inclusion (Österholm *et al.*, 2025). The comparison of employment policies in Malaysia and Sweden reveals important lessons for promoting disability-inclusive employment practices in different contexts.

## 6. IMPLICATIONS/CONTRIBUTIONS

The study underscores the importance of comprehensive legal frameworks, proactive policies and multi-stakeholder collaboration in achieving meaningful progress towards the employment of persons with disabilities in the public sector. Malaysia and Sweden have different ways of handling employment policies for people with disabilities in the public sector. Sweden's approach is based on a strong welfare state model and a dedication to equality, which is shown in its anti-discrimination laws and proactive initiatives (Östlund & Johansson, 2018). Malaysia, on the other hand, deals with difficulties such as a lack of resources, gaps in execution and deeply ingrained prejudices, even though it has legislation and policies in place (Lan *et al.*, 2019).

The Persons with Disabilities Act of 2008 and the Public Service Circular No. 3/2008, which mandates a 1% employment quota, show Malaysia's dedication to addressing disability inclusion (Zawawi *et al.*, 2023). However, problems such as a lack of suitable accommodations, insufficient enforcement procedures and persistent societal prejudices impede the program's efficiency (Dewi *et al.*, 2020). Sweden's Discrimination Act and the Swedish Agency for Government Employers, on the other hand, show the country's commitment to diversity and inclusion. Sweden's Arbetsförmedlingen provides specialised services to help people with disabilities find and keep jobs and its proactive hiring practices and accessibility audits show that it is dedicated to creating an inclusive workplace (Östlund & Johansson, 2018).

Sweden's strong legal framework, comprehensive social support services and strong commitment to equality and inclusion are reflected in its approach, which is consistent with a developed welfare state context (Giraldo, 2024). The employment rate of people with disabilities in the public sector is higher in Sweden than in Malaysia, according to data from Statistics Sweden, the Swedish Agency for Participation and the European Disability Forum (Johar *et al.*, 2022). To improve employment opportunities for persons with disabilities in the public sector, Malaysia can draw lessons from Sweden's experiences and implement targeted reforms.

First, Malaysia should harmonise the different definitions of disability used by various government agencies and adopt a social constructive framework to address discriminatory practices in the education and employment sectors. Secondly, Malaysia should increase monitoring and enforcement of the Persons with Disabilities Act 2008 to ensure compliance by public sector organisations. Thirdly, Malaysia should develop targeted training and awareness programs to address misconceptions and biases among employers and co-workers. Fourthly, Malaysia should enhance collaboration between government agencies, employers and disability organisations to promote effective implementation of inclusive employment policies.

Moreover, Malaysia can establish partnerships with organisations like TalentCorp and SOCSO to offer people with disabilities job-specific training, internships and job placement services. Malaysia should enhance accessibility audits in public buildings, drawing inspiration from studies on universal design implementation (Kadir & Jamaludin, 2018). Also, Malaysia should make sure that people with disabilities are involved in the design and execution of accessibility projects in order to meet their unique requirements. In addition to structural improvements, Malaysia's public sector needs to tackle deeply ingrained cultural prejudices. This requires promoting diversity and inclusion programs that change attitudes and encourage a more accepting workplace culture.

## **7. CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

Future research should focus on assessing the long-term impact of employment policies on the career advancement and overall well-being of persons with disabilities in both Malaysia and Sweden. Longitudinal studies could examine the factors that contribute to successful employment outcomes and identify best practices for promoting disability-inclusive workplaces (Hau & Rashid, 2023). Additional research could explore the experiences of individuals with different types of disabilities in the public sector, as well as the intersection of disability with other social identities such as gender, ethnicity and socioeconomic status.

Furthermore, comparative studies could examine the effectiveness of different approaches to disability inclusion in other countries with diverse socio-economic and cultural contexts. More research is needed to determine how well Malaysia's commercial complexes are accessible, particularly in light of flaws like subpar solutions, subpar materials, unclear standards and lax enforcement (Hashim *et al.*, 2012). A greater comprehension of these obstacles will facilitate the creation of focused treatments and the prioritisation of resources for accessibility enhancements.

However, this study is subject to several limitations. First, the analysis relied primarily on secondary sources such as policy documents, legislation and statistical reports, which may not fully capture the lived experiences of persons with disabilities in the public sector. The absence of primary data, such as interviews or surveys with stakeholders, limits the depth of insights into the practical realities of policy implementation. Second, the comparative scope was confined to Malaysia and Sweden, which, while offering valuable contrasts, may not reflect the full diversity of approaches to disability-inclusive employment in other socio-economic and cultural contexts. Finally, differences in data availability and reporting standards between the two countries may affect the comparability of findings.

In conclusion, this comparative analysis has highlighted the strengths and weaknesses of employment policies in the public sector for persons with disabilities in Malaysia and Sweden. While both countries have made progress in promoting disability inclusion, significant challenges remain in terms of policy implementation, enforcement and societal attitudes. By learning from each other's experiences and implementing targeted reforms, both Malaysia and Sweden can create more inclusive and equitable public sectors that provide meaningful employment opportunities for all persons with disabilities (Marsin *et al.*, 2014).

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Sustainable Development Goal 8 serve as essential frameworks for guiding national policies and international collaboration in this area. It is imperative that we continue striving toward a society where every person, irrespective of their abilities, can fully participate in and contribute to the workforce (Wickenden *et al.*, 2020). The public sector must lead the way in establishing inclusive workplaces, serving as an example for the commercial sector and society at large. In the end, an inclusive society benefits everyone by encouraging innovation, economic growth and social cohesion (Fardan & Morris, 2019). Malaysia's cultural environment, which is rooted in community-based support and family ties, can either help or hinder the incorporation of persons with disabilities into the workforce.

By embracing its cultural strengths while actively addressing systemic barriers, Malaysia can draw valuable lessons from Sweden's inclusive public sector model and move toward a future where inclusion is not merely a policy goal but a lived reality, reaffirming every citizen's universal right to work with dignity and purpose.

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