

Research Article

An Examination of the Sustainability of Inclusive Behaviors Towards Disabled Employees in Ground Handling Businesses

Engelli Çalışanlara Yönelik Kapsayıcı Davranışların Sürdürülebilirliği Üzerine Yer Hizmetleri İşletmelerinde Bir İnceleme

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Abstract

The aim of this research is to identify the behaviors that should be exhibited within the framework of inclusion and how these behaviors can be improved to more effectively integrate existing employees with disabilities into work teams within ground handling businesses. This study is significant as it is the first to address this subject within the context of sustaining inclusive behaviors in ground handling operations. Moreover, the research question could only be addressed through a qualitative approach. Data were collected using qualitative methods, specifically through interviews conducted with both managers and employees. A total of 41 participants were interviewed. The findings revealed that stereotypes play a decisive role in the demonstration or development of sustainable inclusive behaviors toward employees with disabilities in ground handling businesses within the air transportation sector. Attitudes were found to play a significant role in the expression of these behaviors and are shaped by stereotypes based on either compassion or competence. Furthermore, in terms of sustainability, low levels of competence-based stereotypes tend to give rise to negative attitudes, whereas compassion-based stereotypes are associated with more positive attitudes.

Keywords: Disabled Employees, Inclusiveness, Sustainability, Ground Handling Businesses

Öz

Bu araştırmanın amacı, yer hizmetleri işletmelerinde mevcut engelli çalışanların çalışma ekiplerine daha fazla dahil edilebilmesi için kapsayıcılık çerçevesinde hangi davranışların sergilenmesi gerektiğini ve bunların nasıl geliştirilebileceğini belirlemektir. Konunun yer hizmetleri işletmelerinde kapsayıcı davranışlar ve bu davranışların sürdürülebilirliği çerçevesinde ele alındığı ilk çalışma olması nedeniyle önem taşımaktadır. Araştırmada veriler nitel yöntemle elde edilmiş olup hem yönetici hem de çalışan düzeyinde görüşmeler gerçekleştirilmiştir. Araştırma kapsamında 41 katılımcıyla gerçekleştirilen görüşmeler neticesinde elde edilen bulgular; hava taşımacılığı sektöründe yer hizmetleri işletmelerinde engelli çalışanlara yönelik kapsayıcı davranışların sergilenmesinde veya geliştirilmesinde kalıp yargıların belirleyici olduğunu, kapsayıcılık çerçevesinde sergilenen davranışlarda tutumun önemli bir rol oynadığını ve kalıp yargıların aynı zamanda tutumun da bir belirleyicisi olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Ayrıca, sürdürülebilirlik ölçüsünde düşük düzeyde yetkinlik temelli kalıp yargıların olumsuz tutumları ve sevecenlik temelli kalıp yargıların daha çok olumlu tutumları doğurduğu görülmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Engelli Çalışanlar, Kapsayıcılık, Sürdürülebilirlik, Yer Hizmetleri İşletmeleri

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1. Introduction

It is seen that anti-discrimination practices, equal opportunities, and affirmative action approaches, which first became widespread in the USA in the 1990s, have come to the agenda to ensure equality for every employee in the workplace (Esty et al., 1995; Kamp & Hagedorn-Rasmussen, 2004). These approaches are largely supported by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the disability rights movement in the UK (Shakespeare and Watson, 2002). This is because disability is basically characterized as a product of environmental, social, and behavioral exclusion. In addition, this situation shows the low value of the individual and prevents him/her from participating in various activities by making his/her social adaptation difficult (Darcy and Pegg, 2011). Working life is also included in these activities. The European Commission presents various directives that emphasize the importance of sustainable employment of disabled employees, i.e., their presence and continuity in working life, in relation to this situation, which it evaluates within the framework of corporate social responsibility (European Commission, 2011).

It is argued that the presence and continuity of disabled people in working life is largely influenced by the judgments and attitudes of organizational managers and employees, i.e., their colleagues (Stone & Colella, 1996; Nelissen et al., 2016). For this reason, especially in recent years, it has been emphasized that disabled people should be more accepted in the social sphere, their integration should be ensured, and an inclusive approach should be promoted in organizations (Coles & Scior, 2012; European Commission, 2011). Therefore, the existence of inclusive organizations that adopt the inclusion approach and gather individuals with differences under the same roof comes to the fore. It is thought that inclusive organizations, and therefore the display and encouragement of inclusive behaviors in organizations, have a significant impact on the presence and continuity of disabled individuals in working life (Zijlstra et al., 2012).

However, research on employees with disabilities generally focuses on legal regulations to provide equal opportunities in working life (Kruse & Schur, 2003), problems encountered in the recruitment process (Hunt & Hunt, 2004), physical conditions and adaptation efforts, or mandatory costs (Peck & Kirkbride, 2001). Besides, it should be understood that the main issue is to improve the judgments, attitudes, and collegial (inclusion) behaviors that will ensure the presence and sustainability of people with disabilities in working life—in other words, to facilitate their inclusion in work teams and to focus on the factors that will facilitate this. The central question of the current research is: how can all this be made possible? In this context, filling the gap in the literature is the problematic of the research. Ultimately, it is necessary to create conditions where disabled employees can fully realize their potential in working life. Therefore, it is necessary to identify the individual factors that may be effective in the inclusion of disabled individuals in working life and to create conditions that will facilitate them in reaching their full potential. Considering all these and the necessity in question, the questions that the current research seeks to answer are clearly presented.

In the light of the information presented, the aim of the study is to examine how disabled people can be included in the work teams in ground handling businesses in the air transport sector and how inclusive behaviors can be developed to help achieve this. In addition, it is aimed to determine which factors are/can be determinative in the display or development of these behaviors in organizations and to ensure the integration of disabled individuals into work teams to a greater extent. In particular, the important reasons for selecting the sample group consisting of ground handling workers include the need for widespread adoption of teamwork and the expectation that the rate of disabled employees will increase within the total number of employees, as the number of employees responsible for ground handling constitutes a considerable number in the air transportation sector. In line with these aims and objectives: how can sustainable inclusive behaviors (additional role behaviors – individual/employee-oriented OCB) be developed in ground handling businesses? How do stereotypes towards disabled employees determine the development of these behaviors? What role do attitudes towards disabled employees play in the display and development of sustainable inclusive behaviors? Are attitudes towards disabled employees determined by stereotypes?

2. Conceptual Framework

While discussions on the subject were carried out on a theoretical basis and propositions regarding the research problematic were developed; theoretical determinations, field observations and other studies carried out in this context (Widadsyah, 2024; Božena, 2024; Brewer et al, 2023; Van Laer et al, 2022; Bredgaard and Salado-Rasmussen, 2021; Moore et al, 2020; Martin and Honig, 2020; Lyubykh et al., 2020; Ellemers, 2018; Nelissen et al, 2016; Dwertmann and Boehm, 2016; Nelissen, 2014; Fiske, 2012; Colella and Bruye're, 2011; Eagly and Chaiken, 2007; Cuddy et al, 2007; Wade and Brewer, 2006; Fiske et al, 2002; Banaji, 2001; Poppe, 2001;

Fiske, 2000; 1998; Wilson, 1996; Stone and Colella, 1996; Colella, 1994; Ashmore and Del Boca, 1981; Morgan, 1980; Allport, 1935; Lippmann, 1922) were taken into consideration.

Proposition 1: It can be argued that stereotypes about people with disabilities are determinant on the development of inclusive behaviors in ground handling businesses.

Colella and Bruyère (2011), who have conducted extensive research on inclusion, state that the terms non-exclusion or inclusion are also used in the literature to correspond to this concept. Some researchers, supporting this idea, argue that the focus of inclusion is on behaviors aimed at helping or benefiting others. In this context, all behaviors exhibited for the benefit of other individuals (targeted group) in the organization are considered within the framework of inclusiveness, and these are described as individual/employee-compassion and altruism-oriented organizational citizenship behaviors. The aim is to ensure that the targeted group is not excluded from the organization or to facilitate their inclusion in the organization and work teams (Nelissen et al., 2016).

It is observed that stereotypes based on prejudice and discrimination—especially those related to perceived warmth (caring) and competence—significantly influence the development of inclusive behaviors in organizations and make it difficult to include people with disabilities in work teams (Nelissen et al., 2016; Nelissen, 2014; Colella & Bruyère, 2011; Stone & Colella, 1996; Colella, 1994). In this context, the research conducted by Colella (1994) focuses on the problems encountered by disabled individuals in working life and offers solutions. However, rather than emphasizing the problems themselves, this study places greater emphasis on the expectations of both colleagues and managers from disabled employees and their efforts toward meeting these expectations.

On the one hand, it is stated that expectations from disabled employees are not based on realistic grounds and are shaped by prejudice. On the other hand, the importance of interaction, cooperation, and courtesy within the organization is highlighted. Moreover, it is noted that even though policies, programs, and interventions developed on this basis are increasing, various prejudices may still exist against people with disabilities in organizations. This situation clearly reveals the necessity for the existence or further development of inclusive behaviors (such as interaction, cooperation, and courtesy) in organizations (Colella, 1994). Accordingly, the relationship between inclusiveness and sustainability at the behavioral level draws attention and is of great importance for businesses.

In 1996, Colella and Stone conducted a much more comprehensive study together. This research examined behaviors toward disabled employees in organizations, the effects and consequences of these behaviors, and ultimately proposed a model. In this model, presented by Stone and Colella (1996), inclusive behaviors are addressed within the framework of observers' behaviors toward disabled individuals. It is emphasized that observers—managers and colleagues—should develop an understanding that encompasses behaviors such as assessing job suitability, job placement, salary increases, training opportunities, mentoring, symbolic behaviors, inclusion in work groups, promotions/advancements, and helping behaviors; in other words, they should exhibit inclusive behaviors.

In the same study, stereotypes are among the psychological constructs derived from information gathered from observers (colleagues and managers). Due to stereotypes, people (observers—supervisors/managers and colleagues) are influenced by the socio-cultural environments in which they live and form mental models of the traits and behaviors they believe disabled individuals should possess. This often results in disabled individuals facing prejudice, differentiation, marginalization, discrimination, and alienation in the workplace, and consequently, inclusive behaviors may not develop or become widespread within the organization. In other words, the development of inclusive behaviors is hindered by stereotypes.

The most fundamental study supporting the argument that stereotypes—essentially prejudice and discrimination—can determine the development of inclusive behaviors in organizations was conducted by Nelissen et al. (2016) with 313 employees in the healthcare, retail, and supermarket sectors in the Netherlands. According to this study, stereotypes are an indirect, if not direct, determinant of the development of inclusive behaviors. However, it is noted that this determinant may vary across sectors, and the factors that render this determinant meaningful may be more prominent in organizations with high work pressure. Nelissen et al. (2016) also highlighted the mediating role of attitudes toward disabled employees in revealing this determinant, which significantly increases its explanatory power. As a result, it is argued that stereotypes may be determinative—albeit indirectly—for the development of inclusive behaviors and the inclusion of disabled employees in work teams. Additionally, considering the research context, it is suggested that the issue can be examined in different sectors/organizations and through different approaches or methods.

Proposition 2: It can be argued that attitude towards disabled employees in ground handling businesses plays an important role in the display of inclusive behaviors.

Attitude is defined as a state of mental and neural readiness, organized through experience, which exerts a directive and dynamic influence on an individual's responses to objects or situations (Allport, 1935). While Allport (1967) characterizes attitude as a predisposition or readiness to behave in a certain way toward a specific person or object, Eagly and Chaiken (2007) emphasize that attitude reflects a psychological tendency that involves positive or negative evaluations of those persons or objects. Furthermore, attitude is said to consist of three core components: cognitive, emotional, and behavioral. Our thoughts, beliefs, knowledge, and evaluations about a person or object constitute the cognitive component; our positive or negative feelings form the emotional component; and our actions toward that person or object represent the behavioral component.

When explaining the link between attitude and behavior, it is important to highlight that attitude functions as a trigger and a psychological mechanism that guides behavior. Although not based on objective reality and not directly observable, attitude underlies behavior and can only be inferred through assumptions or indirect indicators (Morgan, 1980). In this context, Nelissen et al. (2016) emphasize that attitude plays a critical role in the development and exhibition of inclusive behaviors, based on their comprehensive research. Similarly, in the study by Stone and Colella (1996), inclusive behaviors are conceptualized as the actions of observers toward individuals with disabilities. According to the researchers, such behaviors are influenced by psychological outcomes, such as stereotypes, formed by these observers. As noted earlier, attitudes involve psychological tendencies that include positive or negative evaluations (Eagly & Chaiken, 2007). Therefore, these psychological outcomes reflect the attitudes held toward employees with disabilities. Ultimately, attitudes shape how observers—namely, managers and colleagues—evaluate job suitability, job placement, wage increases, training opportunities, mentorship, symbolic behaviors, inclusion in work teams, promotion and advancement opportunities, and helping or supportive behaviors.

Finally, several studies support the argument that negative attitudes can play a particularly decisive role in limiting the display of inclusive behaviors within organizations. Lyubikh et al. (2020) highlight that employees with disabilities frequently encounter negative attitudes throughout all stages of their working lives, a claim supported by empirical evidence. Stone and Colella (1996) also affirm this notion, showing through their model that negative attitudes permeate all organizational processes and ultimately influence all behaviors associated with inclusion in the workplace. In general, expectations of low performance (Dwertmann & Boehm, 2016) and assumptions of low competence (Fiske et al., 2002) concerning employees with disabilities are regarded as indicators of negative attitudes—factors that can act as significant barriers to the exhibition of inclusive behaviors in organizations.

Proposition 3: It can be argued that the attitude towards disabled employees in ground handling businesses is determined by stereotypes.

Stereotypes are defined by social scientists as beliefs attributed to a social group—mental constructs that lead to the categorization of individuals. They are ossified and schematic cognitive structures that facilitate quick and effortless decision-making or environmental perception. These stereotypes, shaped by established impressions and generalizations, cause individuals to act based on images associated with specific groups (Lippmann, 1922), thereby preventing a realistic understanding of these groups (Banaji, 2001). Stereotypes are typically examined through their cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions, particularly in relation to prejudice and discrimination (Fiske, 1998; 2000).

In the literature, two primary stereotypes associated with employees with disabilities—warmth (or compassion) and competence—are often identified as critical determinants of attitudes (Fiske, 2012; Cuddy, Fiske, & Glick, 2007; 2008; Wade & Brewer, 2006; Fiske et al., 2002; Poppe, 2001). The warmth stereotype includes traits such as morality, reliability, sincerity, kindness, and friendliness. In contrast, the competence stereotype encompasses qualities like efficiency, skill, creativity, trustworthiness, and intelligence. Research suggests that while individuals with disabilities are often perceived as warm and caring in the workplace, they are simultaneously regarded as lacking the competence required to fulfill their job responsibilities (Fiske et al., 2002; Cuddy et al., 2007; 2008).

The Stereotype Content Model (SCM), developed by Fiske et al. (2002), evaluates how people stereotype groups based on two fundamental dimensions: warmth and competence. This model provides a valuable framework for understanding workplace dynamics. In organizational settings, classifying employees or groups based on perceived warmth and competence can significantly influence collaboration, communication, leadership perceptions, and performance evaluations. For instance, employees perceived as warm but

incompetent may be excluded from decision-making processes despite being liked, whereas those seen as competent but cold may be envied or viewed as a threat. Such dynamics may foster prejudice, exclusion, inequality, and conflict in the workplace.

Moreover, the SCM illustrates how the combination of warmth and competence perceptions shapes attitudes and behaviors toward individuals or groups (Fiske, 2012). Groups perceived as both warm and competent elicit admiration and trust; those seen as warm but incompetent may evoke pity or condescension; groups considered cold but competent may inspire envy or fear; and those perceived as both cold and incompetent may face disdain or exclusion. These perception-based interactions significantly shape the organizational climate by influencing relationships, power dynamics, communication styles, and access to opportunities.

Addressing stereotypes in the context of gender, Ellemers (2018) argues that stereotypes contribute to the perception of individuals as outsiders, leading to prejudice, discrimination, and marginalization in professional environments. Supporting this notion, Nelissen et al. (2016) demonstrate that stereotypes about employees with disabilities influence how colleagues behave toward them at work. Stone and Colella (1996) highlight that the type of disability plays a major role in how employees with disabilities are evaluated, with specific stereotypes emerging depending on the nature of the disability. Similarly, Cuddy et al. (2007) suggest that these stereotypes influence organizational decisions such as hiring, retention, and promotion, with variations in decision-making observed based on the type of disability.

3. Purpose and Method

The aviation sector requires teamwork of many organizations in various fields. Individuals can affect organizations and organizations can affect the sector with a more holistic approach. Accordingly, this study aims to determine how disabled individuals can be included in work teams in organizations operating in ground handling businesses and how sustainable inclusive behaviors can be developed to help achieve this. At the same time, it is aimed to determine which factors are/may be determinative on the display or development of these behaviors in organizations and to ensure the integration of disabled individuals into work teams to a greater extent. In the current research, parameters such as gender, age, education level, working in the sector, and tenure in the current business were taken into account in order to determine whether ground handling services require teamwork and coordination, and especially whether there is a difference in the attitudes of the employees.

Two types of data collection methods, namely participant observation and semi-structured interviews, were determined in this research. Participant observation, the researcher's observation-interview notes covering a five-year period in ground handling businesses are subjected to analysis. Regarding the ethics committee approval, this research was found ethically appropriate with the decision of the Recep Tayyip Erdoğan University meeting dated 25.08.2023 and numbered 2023/235. Before the ethics committee approval, institutional permission was obtained from the relevant business and submitted to the university ethics committee. Semi-structured interviews, in this context, interviews were conducted with ground handling businesses managers and employees. First of all, demographic questions included in the questionnaire; they can be listed as age, gender, education level, position, duration of employment in the sector, and duration of employment in the businesses (Year). Some of the questions in the semi-structured questionnaire are given below: How does employing disabled people affect the image of your business (positively-negatively/good-badly)?

- What does the presence and continuity of your disabled colleagues in your business mean to you?
- What kind of behavior is important to demonstrate in order to make your working relationship with them sustainable?
- Is aviation an industry with high work pressure?
- Can anyone do a job in this industry, regardless of level or type of disability?
- Would you help your disabled friends who have problems with their work or have a heavy workload?
- To what extent are the rights of your disabled colleagues respected in your business?
- Would you help your disabled colleagues even if they don't need it?
- Do you take the necessary precautions to avoid problems with other employees or take the opinions of people who may be affected by this decision when making any decision?

- Do you always inform your superior before taking an important step regarding your work?
- Do you think your disabled colleagues are competent, independent, self-confident, competitive and intelligent?
- Do you think your disabled colleagues are tolerant, warm, good-natured and sincere?

Qualitative method is preferred because it includes processes for revealing perceptions and events in a holistic manner (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2006). Qualitative research is seen as a method of exploring the problem or topic on the one hand, and on the other hand, it is seen as a method of examining the predetermined ones in depth in terms of content, scope, and differences (Pathak et al., 2013). However, there is no other study in the literature in which the subject is addressed with the qualitative research method. The research conducted in this framework is important as it is the first study to examine inclusive behaviors towards disabled employees in ground handling businesses in the air transport sector with a qualitative method. Moreover, we can only find the answer to our research question by using the qualitative method. The research conducted in this framework is important as it is the first study to examine inclusive behaviors towards disabled employees in ground handling businesses with the qualitative method.

Within the scope of the research, face-to-face interviews were conducted with individuals working in ground handling businesses. The research data were obtained through semi-structured questionnaires asked to the participants working in ground handling businesses during these interviews. Semi-structured questions are formed within the framework of a literature review. Semi-structured questionnaires provide both the opportunity to ask the planned questions to the participants and the opportunity to ask different questions that are not planned according to the flow of the interview but can be asked during the interview. Thus, it is stated that in-depth and multifaceted data on the subject can be collected (Dworkin, 2012). Participants participated in the study voluntarily. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and the voluntary nature of their participation, as well as assurance about the anonymity and confidentiality of the data. No identification information was requested from the participants due to anonymity. No experimental or clinical data were collected from the participants. Therefore, no additional ethical approval was required. In addition, they were told that they could terminate their participation at any time without providing any justification. In this context, all processes related to the participants were carried out in accordance with the ethical standards of national or institutional research committees, as in the 1964 Helsinki Declaration. In order to protect the integrity of the research, adherence to and compliance with ethical principles were strictly observed. Within the framework of the research, 41 participants were interviewed between September and December 2023 in ground handling companies at Trabzon Airport. The duration of the interview with a participant lasted an average of 50 minutes, and the records were transcribed after the interview. The views of the participants on the display and development of inclusive behaviors in ground handling businesses to a greater extent were carried out through descriptive and content analyses.

4. Findings

Table 1 shows the findings regarding the professional characteristics of the interviewed participants. Approximately 49% of the interviewees were male and 51% were female. It is seen that 59% of the participants have a bachelor's degree, 41% have a master's degree education level, and their average age is 37 years. The participants, who have an average of 12 years of experience in the sector, have been working in their current businesses for an average of 10 years. Most of the interviewees (61%) are experts.

Table 1: Professional Characteristics of the Interviewed Participants

PARTICIPATION NO	Gender	Education	Age	Duration of Employment in the Sector (Year)	Duration of Employment in the Businesses (Year)	Position
Participation 1	Male	Bachelor's degree	30	16	13	Ground Services Officer
Participation 2	Female	Master's degree	28	9	5	Expert
Participation 3	Male	Master's degree	32	6	3	Expert

Participation 4	Female	Bachelor's degree	30	5	4	Expert
Participation 5	Male	Bachelor's degree	33	9	6	Ground Services Officer
Participation 6	Male	Bachelor's degree	48	22	20	Expert
Participation 7	Female	Master's degree	31	6	5	Expert
Participation 8	Female	Master's degree	36	17	14	Expert
Participation 9	Male	Bachelor's degree	42	19	13	Expert
Participation 10	Female	Bachelor's degree	48	15	15	Expert
Participation 11	Female	Master's degree	35	12	10	Expert
Participation 12	Male	Master's degree	40	16	11	Ground Services Officer
Participation 13	Female	Bachelor's degree	53	19	10	Expert
Participation 14	Female	Master's degree	33	13	12	Expert
Participation 15	Male	Bachelor's degree	36	13	9	Expert
Participation 16	Female	Master's degree	32	9	6	Ground Services Officer
Participation 17	Female	Bachelor's degree	41	17	15	Expert
Participation 18	Male	Master's degree	27	5	5	Ground Services Officer
Participation 19	Female	Master's degree	39	14	10	Expert
Participation 20	Female	Bachelor's degree	30	8	3	Ground Services Officer
Participation 21	Male	Master's degree	49	26	20	Expert
Participation 22	Female	Bachelor's degree	33	10	10	Expert
Participation 23	Male	Master's degree	26	4	3	Ground Services Officer
Participation 24	Male	Bachelor's degree	55	32	19	Expert
Participation 25	Female	Bachelor's degree	43	20	13	Expert

Participation 26	Female	Bachelor's degree	37	14	14	Ground Services Officer
Participation 27	Female	Bachelor's degree	40	17	11	Ground Services Officer
Participation 28	Male	Master's degree	31	8	7	Expert
Participation 29	Female	Bachelor's degree	52	29	23	Ground Services Officer
Participation 30	Male	Master's degree	35	9	9	Expert
Participation 31	Male	Bachelor's degree	28	5	4	Ground Services Officer
Participation 32	Female	Bachelor's degree	34	11	4	Ground Services Officer
Participation 33	Male	Bachelor's degree	36	12	10	Ground Services Officer
Participation 34	Female	Master's degree	38	15	12	Expert
Participation 35	Male	Bachelor's degree	44	21	6	Ground Services Officer
Participation 36	Male	Master's degree	29	5	5	Expert
Participation 37	Male	Bachelor's degree	41	16	11	Expert
Participation 38	Female	Bachelor's degree	27	4	3	Expert
Participation 39	Male	Bachelor's degree	38	13	7	Ground Services Officer
Participation 40	Female	Bachelor's degree	43	20	14	Ground Services Officer
Participation 41	Male	Master's degree	33	8	8	Expert

It is found that stereotypes towards individuals with disabilities are determinative on the development of sustainable inclusive behaviors within the scope of the research. In the participant observation, it was noted that positive stereotypes were predominant, as well as low levels of negative stereotypes. This situation is largely in parallel with the findings obtained. Supporting statements on the subject are given below.

"...they spread joy to us in the office, as long as you communicate properly... The responsibility given to them is not exhausting, they have become more self-confident over time... They can act independently, and they are never unqualified, they are intelligent and conscious people... We help them when they are in trouble or in difficulty... today I help them, tomorrow they help me..." (Participant No: 40, Female, Ground Services Officer)

"... Our friends with disabilities are very positive people... If there is no abuse, we stand by each other under all circumstances..." (Participant No: 7, Female, Expert)

"...This is a team job; everyone has to help each other. When this is the requirement of the job, you focus on the job, not the person. You support everyone who shows the necessary dedication for their job in every aspect... Anyway, our disabled friends are good-natured, sane people..."(Participant No: 9, Male, Ground Services Supervisor)

"...The fact that we have disabled colleagues does not hinder our work, but it shows how real team spirit can be experienced and what it means..." (Participant No: 2, Female, Ground Services Supervisor)

"...the sector is dynamic, but it does not require the same level of performance in every job... I would say that there is a job that everyone can do in this sector or enterprise, whether disabled or healthy... our relationship with our colleagues is quite good, we have a smooth and warm environment..." (Participant No: 15, Male, Expert)

"...We are generally harmonious, our disabled friends are sincere, friendly and well-equipped people... The presence or absence of one of us affects the whole process... It is always like this in teamwork, every member, disabled or not, has the obligation to serve the same purpose. My deficiency means his/her deficiency and his/her deficiency means mine..." (Participant No: 26, Female, Ground Services Officer)

"...this job requires some agility and hustle and bustle...our disabled colleagues have no obstacles to do these things...so we work well both in the field and in the office...we like being us..."(Participant No: 25, Female, Expert)

"...they are generally mild and solution-orientated disabled friends, I am happy, I think we will travel together for many more years..." (Participant No: 5, Male, Ground Services Officer)

"...Desk jobs in aviation are more suitable for the disabled, it is difficult for those working in the field and they are inadequate... Then of course we must do the rest of the work..."(Participant No: 21, Male, Expert)

"...I think that especially physically disabled personnel working in departments that require intensive labor would wear them out physically and mentally, and as a matter of fact it does... in this case, our part is to suffer..." (Participant No: 16, Female, Ground Services Supervisor)

Another finding is that the attitudes of the participants towards their colleagues with disabilities play an important role in the display of sustainable inclusive behaviors. The findings obtained with participant observation notes are similar in this context. Supporting statements within the scope of the subject are given below.

"...there are many people with disabilities in my family who have a working life...I don't think this situation creates an obstacle due to the nature of the work..." (Participant No: 1, Male, Ground Services Officer)

"...The sector in which the disabled individual will be employed is important... Employing a disabled individual in a job where he/she is constantly face to face with people, such as passenger greeting, host/hostess, etc., may show a bad image for the business. Because physical appearance has a great importance in the persuasion method in communication..."(Participant No: 4, Female, Expert)

"...The level and type of disability is important for the work to be done... There are cases where even a lisp is not accepted... However, I think that any physical disability (except hand) does not cause problems in the functioning of the work..."(Participant No: 30, Male, Expert)

"...here we are all members of this family...no matter what one's situation is, one does not exclude a member of one's family, one looks at how one moves forward with them...this is an inevitable fact of life, and we may all face the same situation one day...we are each other's supporters in every way possible..."(Participant No: 13, Female, Expert)

"...Everyone is actually satisfied when work is given according to disability... We all perform for the same purpose and deserve the same treatment (wages, leave, etc.). Working is a right or a necessity for everyone, but this situation should not cause problems for either the individual or the company..." (Participant No: 29, Female, Ground Services Supervisor)

"...Aviation is a sector with a high level of work pressure and stress, but it is literally a teamwork... You are not there when you are one, but when you are together. When this is the way the job works, it is necessary to make decisions together with your colleagues, to take their opinions and to keep them informed of the situation

under all circumstances... Even if the final decision belongs to me, this is still the case..." (Participant No: 5, Male, Ground Services Officer)

"...these friends can work in all sectors, not just aviation...I believe that this is a social and individual need and I believe that I have done my part on their behalf...there are those who we have been working with for years and even admire us with their climb up the career ladder..."(Participant No: 41, Male, Expert)

"...we had a disabled friend in passenger reception, he is now in team allocation... so his disability did not hinder his career, so we did not find this process strange, and we tried to help him as much as we could..." (Participant No: 20, Female, Ground Services Supervisor)

"...since aviation requires teamwork, we focus on our work without discriminating between people, gender or any other kind of discrimination...everyone is responsible for each other in a sense and we maintain this solidarity as much as possible...our disabled friends are very compatible and aware of this solidarity awareness..." (Participant No: 39, Male, Ground Services Supervisor)

In the participant observation, it was noted that the determinant of attitude is stereotypes, and that the structuring in the mind of the person is reflected in his/her emotions, moreover in his/her thoughts and behaviors. The findings obtained within the scope of the research are like the participant observation notes. The findings show that caring-based stereotypes are the determinants of positive attitudes towards disabled employees, while competence-based stereotypes are the determinants of negative attitudes.

Compassion-based stereotypes towards disabled employees are determinants of the positive attitudes of other employees. Statements supporting this finding are given below.

"...actually, they are friendly and approachable, even the reception teams are not like them...everyone here is worried about their job, we can all have flaws and shortcomings..." (Participant No: 8, Female, Expert)

"...our disabled crew mate is working as a flight operations Expert...I believe that his communication skills and friendliness will take him to better places, and I support him..."(Participant No: 22, Female, Expert)

"...we could not establish a relationship with our manager as well as he did, believe me... he expresses what he has to say sincerely without conflict and argument so well... communication is really the key to our field and although he stutters, he sets an example for us..."(Participant No: 36, Male, Expert)

"...we have a physically disabled friend in the office who has no fingers on only one arm...I think he is an excellent person, and I can say that he is the only deficiency in his life... he is very successful in his working life, happy in his family life...you should be surrounded by such people..."(Participant No: 23, Male, Ground Services Supervisor)

"...we are always in a hustle and bustle in the field...we get tired most of the time, but without the support of our teammates, we would be finished...I swear I am healthy, whether disabled or not, but his energy and enthusiasm is one of the things that creates synergy that makes us who we are...may there always be people with whom you will be happy to work and get tired..."(Participant No: 17, Female, Expert)

"...the heart of the sector beats with us...we are doing a job that requires labor, effort and sacrifice...it is not the disability or lack of disability of my colleagues that concerns me, on the contrary, when I think about it, a correct and complete communication, courtesy and tolerance are enough..."(Participant No: 3, Male, Expert)

"...his sincerity and smile are enough to do his job... I think there is no harm in their active work in the field..."(Participant No: 12, Male, Ground Services Officer)

"...she is very good at her job and most importantly, she is honest, sincere, someone I like...we need to be aware of what makes us who we are...since aviation is a field that reminds us of ourselves and each other frequently, no one is busy with anyone else's flaws or shortcomings...what we do together and what we can do together is important, I am proud..."(Participant No: 27, Female, Ground Services Officer)

It is understood that competency-based stereotypes towards disabled employees are a determinant of employees' negative attitudes. Statements supporting this finding are given below.

"...our friends with disabilities are usually in very invisible areas anyway... they may have difficulty working in the field with intense work tempo... maybe they can learn the job, but who will teach them needs a lot of time..."(Participant No: 37, Male, Expert)

"...in general, disabled friends do not go out to the field much... even if they do, those jobs are not jobs they can do anyway... If one of us fails, all of our jobs will fail, I think it is better that they do not go out like this..."(Participant No: 33, Male, Ground Services Supervisor)

"...I believe that they will not be as active as us and their competences are weak... therefore our performance will decrease..." (Participant No: 10, Female, Expert)

"...when we compare it with a normal person, you realize the real difference... I think the way of doing business and the level of success can be different... as such, you feel like going out on the field alone..." (Participant No: 18, Male, Ground Services Officer)

"...since team performance is an indicator of our success, disabled friends are able to do the job, yes, but if I do that operation with another teammate, I will gain speed and I will not be so tired..." (Participant No: 24, Male, Expert)

"...it's like what's in one hand is in two hands...it's just like that, it's just the sound of it, it's like there's nothing for us...I'm not saying that disabled friends should not work in this field, but if their disability is an obstacle to their work, our work should not be disrupted...let them work in other fields..."(Participant No: 38, Female, Expert)

"...there is no problem if it is suitable for the obstacle of the job, but sometimes we have operational failures and these friends are weak when they go to the field... that is where the chain is broken..." (Participant No: 11, Female, Expert)

"...everyone working in the aviation sector may have health problems, in fact, that is also an obstacle for us... I think our disabled colleagues are aware of this... I am sure that they know their own shortcomings, so when I go out on an operation, I can easily say, "Brother, you stay and I'll go..." (Participant No: 28, Male, Expert)

"...when I go to the office in the morning, the first thing I look at is who is in the team that day... I don't want to have any problems while our friend is working, not because he is disabled... there is already a lot of stress in this field and I don't want mishaps to tire me out..." (Participant No: 32, Female, Ground Services Supervisor)

"...with age, one's tolerance for negativities decreases and you want everything to come like a sock... the team must be solid for things to run smoothly... we have one of our disabled friends who works very well, but when the other one joins the team, things become a knot... his knowledge and experience are not enough..." (Participant No: 6, Male, Expert)

"...in the end, we are all human beings, but if I were disabled, I would not work in this field...it is not a job for one person, it affects all of us as a result...it is not about doing the job, it is about doing the job properly..." (Participant No: 31, Male, Ground Services Supervisor)

5. Conclusion

Theoretical Implications

This research is consistent with studies in the literature on the determining role of stereotypes on attitudes (Fiske et al., 2002) and the reflection of these attitudes on behaviors (Ajzen, 1991; Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). The research findings show that stereotypes, especially in the dimensions of kindness and competence, shape attitudes together, and this is reflected in behaviors. This situation reveals which stereotype contents are associated with positive or negative attitudes towards disabled employees in the workplace, based on the Stereotype Content Model (Fiske et al., 2002).

Practical Implications

The most important practical contribution of the research is that it points out that, in order to develop inclusive behaviors in ground handling companies, employees' stereotypes must be recognized and managed (Payne & Pugh, 1976; Schneider & Reichers, 1983; Colella, 1994; Moore et al., 2020; Widadsyah, 2024). In addition, it is seen that organizational culture, teamwork, and communication dynamics are of critical importance in displaying inclusive behaviors (Schneider & Reichers, 1983). In this context, it is recommended that managers and employees use inclusive language, develop empathy, and seek training that will reduce the effects of stereotypes.

Future Directions and Limitations of the Research

In future studies, it is important to examine whether the stereotype–attitude–behavior relationships differ based on position by considering the employee and manager groups separately. In addition, conducting similar studies in different sectors, regions, and cities will strengthen the generalizability of the findings (Colella, 1994). Addressing the issue with different methods (e.g., quantitative studies) and new variables (e.g., organizational culture, leadership style) will contribute to the literature.

The study is limited to ground handling companies at Trabzon Airport in the Black Sea Region. In addition, the data were collected using qualitative methods. Therefore, future studies conducted in different regions, sectors, and with different methods will contribute to the diversification of the findings (Schneider & Reichers, 1983).

Final Notes

Ensuring the presence and continuity of employees with disabilities in the workforce—whether in ground handling companies or businesses operating in other sectors—is a significant responsibility for both managers and employees. The behaviors of managers and other team members should be supportive, sincere, and genuinely inclusive toward their colleagues with disabilities. In other words, the behaviors exhibited must reflect inclusivity.

This is particularly crucial in sectors where teamwork is essential, such as air transportation, and in organizations functioning within this sector. In these settings, communication, collaboration, and coordination among employees are inevitable and indispensable. Therefore, this study emphasizes the importance of inclusive behaviors toward employees with disabilities in ground handling companies and, more broadly, across the air transportation sector.

Moreover, in a broader context, the existence of an inclusive organizational culture, the inclusive leadership approach of managers, and the widespread demonstration of inclusive behaviors are all of vital importance for ensuring sustainable inclusion.

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Araştırma Makalesi

An Examination of the Sustainability of Inclusive Behaviors Towards Disabled Employees in Ground Handling Businesses

Engelli Çalışanlara Yönelik Kapsayıcı Davranışların Sürdürülebilirliği Üzerine Yer Hizmetleri İşletmelerinde Bir İnceleme

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Genişletilmiş Özet

1990'lı yıllardan itibaren özellikle Amerika'da yaygınlaşan ayrımcılık karşıtı uygulamalar, iş yerlerinde fırsat eşitliği ve olumlu eylem (affirmative action) politikaları aracılığıyla tüm çalışanlar için eşitliği sağlamayı amaçlayan yaklaşımların gelişmesine öncülük etmiştir (Esty et al., 1995; Kamp & Hagedorn-Rasmussen, 2004). Bu yaklaşımlar, başta Engelli Amerikalılar Yasası (ADA) olmak üzere, İngiltere'deki engelli hakları hareketi ve buna paralel fırsat eşitliği yasalarıyla da desteklenmiştir (Shakespeare & Watson, 2002). Engellilik, bu çerçevede yalnızca bireysel bir sınırlılık değil; çevresel, sosyal ve davranışsal dışlanmanın bir sonucu olarak ele alınmaktadır. Bu durum bireyin toplumsal değerini düşürmekte, toplumsal uyumunu zorlaştırmakta ve çeşitli aktivitelere katılımını sınırlamaktadır (Darcy & Pegg, 2011).

Bireyin iş yaşamındaki varlığı ve sürdürülebilirliği ise, büyük ölçüde yöneticilerin ve meslektaşlarının engelli bireylere yönelik yargı ve tutumlarıyla şekillenmektedir (Stone & Colella, 1996; Nelissen et al., 2016). Bu nedenle, son yıllarda engelli bireylerin toplumsal kabulünün artırılması, örgütlere entegrasyonlarının sağlanması ve kapsayıcılık ilkesinin örgütsel kültürde yer edinmesi gerektiği vurgulanmaktadır (Coles & Scior, 2012). Bu bağlamda, farklılıklara sahip bireyleri kucaklayan ve onları aynı çatı altında birleştiren kapsayıcı örgütlerin önemi artmaktadır. Nitekim, engelli bireylerin iş gücü piyasasında kalıcılığı açısından kapsayıcı davranışların benimsenmesi ve teşvik edilmesi kritik öneme sahiptir (Zijlstra et al., 2012).

Bununla birlikte, engelli bireyler üzerine yapılan araştırmalar sıklıkla hukuki düzenlemelere (Kruse & Schur, 2003), işe alım süreçlerindeki engellere (Hunt & Hunt, 2004), fiziksel düzenlemelere ve maliyetlere odaklanmaktadır (Peck & Kirkbride, 2001). Oysa, esasen engelli bireylerin iş yaşamına entegrasyonunu kolaylaştıracak tutumların, kalıp yargıların ve özellikle meslektaşlarının kapsayıcı davranışlarının incelenmesi gerekmektedir. Bu çalışmanın temel problemi de literatürdeki bu boşluğa yanıt aramak üzerine kuruludur. Araştırmanın amacı, hava taşımacılığı sektöründe yer alan yer hizmetleri işletmelerinde engelli bireylerin çalışma ekiplerine entegrasyonunun sağlanması ve bunu destekleyen kapsayıcı davranışların nasıl geliştirilebileceğinin incelenmesidir. Ayrıca, bu davranışların gelişimini etkileyen faktörlerin belirlenmesi ve engelli çalışanların ekip içi uyumunun artırılması hedeflenmiştir. Bu çerçevede araştırma şu sorulara yanıt aramaktadır: Yer hizmetleri işletmelerinde kapsayıcı davranışlar nasıl geliştirilebilir? Kalıp yargılar bu davranışlar üzerinde nasıl belirleyici olmaktadır? Engelli bireylere yönelik tutumların rolü nedir ve bu tutumlar hangi faktörlerce şekillenmektedir?

Çalışma, nitel yöntemle gerçekleştirilmiş ve iki veri toplama aracı kullanılmıştır: Katılımlı gözlem ve yarı yapılandırılmış mülakatlar. Katılımlı gözlem, araştırmacının beş yıllık saha tecrübesinden elde edilen gözlem ve görüşme notlarını içermektedir. Yarı yapılandırılmış mülakatlar ise yer hizmetleri işletmelerinde görev yapan yönetici ve çalışanlarla gerçekleştirilmiştir. Araştırma, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan Üniversitesi Etik Kurulu'nun 25.08.2023 tarihli ve 2023/235 sayılı kararıyla etik onay almıştır. Etik kurul başvurusu öncesi ilgili işletmeden kurum izni alınmış ve belge etik kurul onayı için üniversite etik kurul komisyonuna sunulmuştur.

Nitel yöntem, algı ve olayların derinlemesine ve bütüncül biçimde incelenmesini olanaklı kıldığı için tercih edilmiştir (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2006; Pathak et al., 2013).

Araştırma bulguları, yer hizmetleri işletmelerinde engelli bireylere yönelik kapsayıcı davranışların sergilenmesinde kalıp yargıların belirleyici olduğunu, bu kalıp yargılar aracılığıyla oluşan tutumların da davranışları yönlendirdiğini ortaya koymaktadır. Özellikle sevecenlik temelli kalıp yargıların olumlu tutumları, yetkinlik temelli kalıp yargıların ise olumsuz tutumları beslediği gözlenmiştir. Olumlu kalıp yargılarla şekillenen tutumlar, daha fazla kapsayıcı davranışın sergilenmesine zemin hazırlarken; düşük yetkinlik algısına dayanan olumsuz kalıp yargılar ise görev dağılımında belirli sınırlamalara yol açsa da tüm işlerin aksamadan yürütülmesi temel hedef olarak ön plandadır.

Ayrıca, hava taşımacılığı sektörünün yüksek tempolu yapısı ve ekip çalışması gerekliliği, çalışanların birbirine daha fazla destek olmasını zorunlu kılmakta ve bu da kapsayıcı davranışların yaygınlaşmasına katkı sağlamaktadır. Elde edilen sonuçlar, iletişim, etkileşim, empati ve kapsayıcı dilin önemine işaret eden önceki araştırmalarla da örtüşmektedir (Payne & Pugh, 1976; Schneider & Reichers, 1983; Colella, 1994). Bu doğrultuda, kapsayıcı davranışların yaygınlaştırılması ve kapsayıcı örgütlerin desteklenmesi, engelli çalışanların iş yaşamına entegrasyonunu kolaylaştıracaktır.

Çalışma hem çalışanlar hem de yöneticileri kapsayan bir örnekleme gerçekleştirilmiştir. Ancak, gelecekte yapılacak araştırmalarda pozisyon (yönetici/çalışan) ve sektör (kamu/özel) ayrımı gözetilerek yapılacak çalışmalar yeni ve önemli sonuçlar sağlayabilir. Ayrıca, farklı sektörlerdeki yöneticilerin perspektifiyle karşılaştırmalı araştırmalar yapılabilir ya da kapsayıcılık, yönetim tarzı veya örgüt kültürü gibi farklı değişkenlerle yeniden ele alınabilir. Farklı bir metodolojik yaklaşım da konuya ilişkin bakış açısını zenginleştirebilir. Özellikle yüksek çalışan sayısına sahip sektörler bu tür çalışmalar için uygun zemin sunmaktadır. Çünkü toplam çalışan sayısı ile birlikte engelli çalışan sayısı oranı artışı paralellik göstermektedir.

Sonuç olarak, engelli çalışanların iş yaşamındaki varlığını sürdürebilmeleri, örgüt yöneticileri ve çalışanlarının kapsayıcı ve destekleyici tutumlarıyla doğrudan ilişkilidir. Özellikle ekip çalışmasının zorunlu olduğu hava taşımacılığı gibi sektörlerde iletişim, iş birliği ve koordinasyon kaçınılmazdır. Bu nedenle, kapsayıcı örgüt kültürü, liderlik anlayışı ve kapsayıcı davranışların yaygınlığı büyük önem taşımaktadır.