

Employers' Awareness Toward Employees With Disabilities In The Work Environment

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Abstract

This article presents employers' awareness of employees with disabilities in the work environment. The issue of difficulty in obtaining employment opportunities among the disabled is not a new thing. This revolves around the issue of convenience constraints in the workplace and public acceptance, especially for employers. The review study mentioned in this article is to achieve an objective, namely to identify the level of awareness of employers towards people with disabilities. As well, the method used to complete this study was through review. The review was conducted using a literature review that involved a process of searching for articles and journals on employers' awareness of employees with disabilities. Most of the articles were published between 2008 and 2021. Research is conducted by gathering information through

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computer-based searches such as Google Scholar, Semantic Scholar, and ResearchGate. Based on the articles that we reviewed, we have confirmed that the facilities contributed to being a major aspect of the employers' awareness towards workers with disabilities. In conclusion, among the suggestions that can be submitted on this issue is that the government should create a task force to review the policy of one percent disabled workers in the public sector. In addition, the government should introduce a National Disability Strategy for Malaysia.

Keyword: Awareness, people with disabilities, employees with disabilities, work environment, facilities

INTRODUCTION

Since the early 1960s, when the Human Rights Movement was at its peak, the fight for the rights of persons with disabilities (PWDs) has intensified (Samian et al., 2013). The right to work is fundamentally important and should be accessible to everyone, regardless of whether the person is normal or disabled. The ability to get a job allows a person to improve his or her economic status. It also makes it easier for people to increase their self-esteem, participate socially, as well as acquire knowledge and skills (Noor et al., 2018; Abdul Maulud et al., 2021).

Recently, issues related to people with disabilities (PWDs) have become the attention and focus of the community in various media. According to the Persons with Disabilities Act (2008), "PWDs include those with long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments that, when interacting with various barriers, can restrict their full and effective participation in society" (Jabatan Kebajikan Masyarakat, n.d.). They are likened to individuals whose health is not perfect because they need treatment and help, and their condition is seen as a disability (Tah, 2014; Azid, 2015). In addition, people with

disabilities (PWDs) can be considered one of the weakest minority groups. PWDs are included in the category of "vulnerable" groups, meaning they are open to discrimination and persecuted by various parties either within or outside the country. Even more unfortunate, people with disabilities around the world are stuck with the issue of unemployment.

Discrimination against the disabled leads to a "stereotypical" view of disabled workers or job applicants among the disabled. The study by Kim et al., (2020) revealed that the lack of "employability" skills is a major factor that prevents PWDs from gaining a place in the open job market. "Employability" skills refer to the general competencies required in performing a particular type and level of job, such as communication skills, problem-solving skills, teamwork skills, and individual interpersonal skills. Employers confront five major challenges when it comes to adopting handicapped personnel into their organizations: recruiting, selection, training, accommodation, and promotion. Eligibility issues, types of disabilities, types of services to be provided, communication barriers, a lack of soft-skill mastery, co-worker reactions, increased training costs, consultation, and accommodation are all challenges that the disabled must overcome before being accepted into an organization. Employers were also discovered to hire PWDs to satisfy corporate social responsibility (CSR) or merely to improve the company's image.

Low self-confidence was also detected as a cause of PWDs not being able to prepare for positions in the organization. This situation encourages employers to give more space to permanent employees to hold jobs. There are also studies stating that the failure of the disabled to get a job is due to the lack of education and knowledge of employers related to the disabled themselves. The study by Kaye et al., (2011) explains that better knowledge of PWDs will increase the prospects or opportunities of PWDs being accepted to work based on job satisfaction and loyalty to the organization.

Various conversations about the bad attitudes and prejudices faced by women and children have taken place, but not much for people with disabilities. Researchers from around the world are keen to find the best answers to many of the problems of people with disabilities. The purpose of this article is to identify employers' awareness of people with disabilities in the work environment (Jaafar et al., 2010; Samian et al., 2013; Saad et al., 2023; Mustaffa et al., 2023). The difficulty of securing work possibilities for the impaired (OKU) is not a new problem. This concerns the topic of workplace convenience limits and public acceptance, particularly among employers (Discourse, 2021). Because they assume that persons with disabilities will not be good assets to their company, most organisations or enterprises prefer to hire non-disabled staff. The research of this article review has numerous objective, one of which is to discover the welfare provided to the disabled workers'. Do these disabled employees have access to special facilities and benefits at work? For instance, financial help such as the disabled workers' allowance (JPOKU), Then do they raise awareness about the health of individuals with disabilities in their community. If medical services are available in the workplace, and if these groups are safeguarded from all sorts of exploitation, aggression, and abuse. People with disabilities confront greater challenges in the job since they are subjected to numerous prejudices and discrimination (Wiki Impact, 2021). Finally, identify whether employers provide amenities for employees with disabilities in the workplace, such as a barrier-free environment both inside and outside the building.

Recently, there has been an issue of the visually impaired begging for money due to limited job opportunities. Limited employment opportunities and lucrative income from begging are among the reasons why the visually impaired (OKU) choose 'street sympathy' by becoming beggars in order to survive. George Thomas, the Chief Executive Officer of the Association for the Blind Malaysia (MAB), said the activity had increased recently, especially after the

country was afflicted by the COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in employers offering restricted job options. Even though the MAB has undertaken several counselling sessions and conversations with the group to limit such activities, it is even more concerning when the visually impaired are accustomed to collecting money by readily earning the kindness of the general public. George, who has been involved in the management of the visually impaired since 1986, said although various initiatives and skills training were given to the group, their limited abilities gave rise to the perception of employers to hire them (Berita Harian, 2022). Therefore, the purpose of this article review was to identify the level of awareness employers have towards people with disabilities. The study of this article will collect studies from various countries and make a comparison on the level of awareness of workers with disabilities from the aspects of welfare, health, and provision of facilities for people with disabilities in the workplace.

METHOD

This review was carried out using the literature review which involved the process of searching for the articles and journals regarding employers' awareness towards employees with disability. Most of the articles were published between 2008 to 2021. The research was conducted by gathering the information involving employers' awareness and perspective of employees with disability from many aspects around the world with computer-based search engine such as Google Scholar, Semantic Scholar, Microsoft Academic, Bielefeld Academic Search Engine (BASE), ResearchGate and Z-Library. Some of the keywords that were used to collect all of the data and information needed for the review are, disable people, employment, disability rights, welfare, healthcare, facilities.

There are 30 studies that has been successfully gathered for the review. All of the studies had been carefully selected from the duplicates, evaluated from the abstracts at first and then proceed to

the final assessment to guarantee the highest credibility and quality of the review. The addition criteria needed for the studies are: (1) all of the selected studies need to be widely searched, not only in Malaysia, (2) accepted in any language, (3) publication is between year 2008 to 2021. There are no specific exclusion criteria for the studies needed.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on 30 articles that has been discussed and reviewed, there are many aspects of employees' right in terms of work environment that were raised such as welfare, healthcare, facilities and social. In each of these articles, there were 19 papers that discussed about facilities, 14 papers researched on welfare aspect, 11 articles mentioned about healthcare and 7 of the studies exploring social aspect.

All of the researches were reviewed and gathered in hope to show the amounts of awareness that were given from the employers for employees with disabilities in the work environment. Most of the studies collected had the same patterns, however they are also different in terms of scope, methods and geographic region.

As stated in 21 carefully selected papers, the focus of the researches are the three major aspects of rights for people with disabilities in term of work environment based on employers' awareness towards their employees. The three key aspects of rights were: 1. Welfare, 2. Healthcare, 3. Facilities.

Figure 1 shows 43% of articles reviewed argue about employers' awareness towards employees with disabilities from facilities aspect and there are about 32 % of articles that discussed about welfare. The least aspect that was mentioned in the articles reviewed is healthcare which is only 25%.

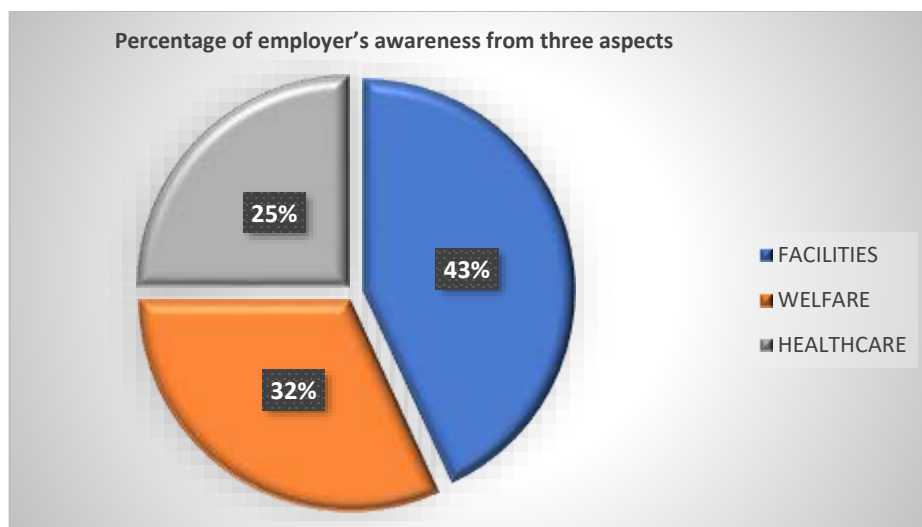


Figure 1: Percentage of employer's awareness from three aspects of rights

From figure 1, we can conclude that facilities score the highest percentage, while healthcare records the lowest percentage and welfare in between the 3 aspects. Based on a total 21 articles that we have gathered, there are about 14 researches that mentioned employers' awareness towards employees with disabilities from welfare aspect. The study was thoroughly carried out about the awareness of the employers for employees with disabilities in the work environment from welfare aspect to achieve a concrete result on the issue. Anizam Mohamed Yusof, et al (2015) mention that all of the countries had revised some policies and acts for people with disabilities to protect the many rights of individual with disabilities such as employment rights to preserve their needs such as welfare. Tiun Ling Ta, et al (2011) had done a study on a subject which was, employers' perspective towards recruiting people with disabilities locating in the northern states of Peninsular Malaysia, with result showing the matter of welfare is hindering the process of employing people with disabilities. The issue about employers' lack of awareness

towards the welfare of employees with disabilities has always been the reason why majority of people with disabilities were unable to sustain their jobs for a long time causing them to lose their source of income.

Santuzzi, et al., (2014) confirm that the lack of awareness from the employers might be because they missed the signs of disabilities, considering some are not as easy to be discerned such as diabetes, depression, arthritis and many more, thus making it harder for the employers to offer the right arrangement causing them to reconsider hiring people with disabilities. Jans et al., (2012) found that some of the people with disabilities might even try to conceal their incapacity on purpose in order to get the job, for example using the skill of lip-reading to hide the fact that they suffered hearing loss, causing the employers to be unnoticed of their true condition. Kaye et al., (2011) conducted a survey with result of 80.9% respondent full with employers that replied in agreement for a question asked about them having no idea how to handle the needs of employees with disabilities.

Gold et al., (2012) concluded that the reluctance of people with disabilities to disclosure their disabilities in fear of discrimination at work evidently as what has been happening since the 1800s was also the cause of employers to be unaware of the issue. The late disclosure will make the employers to have a negative or slow reaction on fulfilling the employees' welfare considering the needs of welfare for people with disabilities would be slightly different and specific. However, in one survey done by Phillips et al., (2019), a total 65% employers and supervisors had noted that they are aware and acknowledge the needs of their employees with disabilities by having them to specifically request accommodations such as specialized equipment, modifications to the work environment or adjustments to work schedules, extra assistance, job training, education and many more, thus showing that some employers does pay attention and did their best to provide welfare for their employees after recruiting them

in hope that the employees will find their work environment to be comfortable and acceptable.

This research concludes that ignorance is not the only reasons for employers' lack of awareness towards people with disabilities in work environment from aspect welfare, the insufficient information and reluctance from people with disabilities, themselves, to share their condition also play role. There are also many employers that try to expand their knowledge on the matter. However, some employers also find the issue to be hard to handle. Therefore, the depth of employer's awareness towards people with disabilities in work environment from aspect welfare could either be influenced by the inside and outside elements.

Figure 2 shows the percentage of non-disabled workers and disabled workers for employment level. The result of this percentage depends on the health level of the employee from 16 years to 64 years. The study was conducted from 2018 to 2019. Up to 80% of workers without working disabilities. While disabled workers with a low employment rate were recorded at 50% (Powell, 2021).

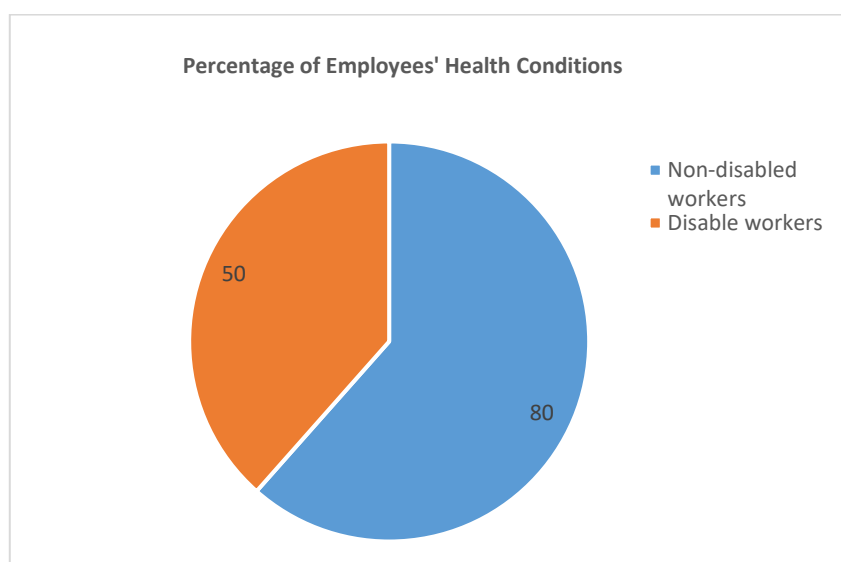


Figure 2: Percentage of the health status of disabled and non-disabled employees.

Figure 3 shows the health of disabled workers from the age of 16 to 64 years. Disabled workers who have one type of health condition have the most in this study, which is 62%, while up to 26% of disabled workers have five or more types of health conditions (Powell, 2021).

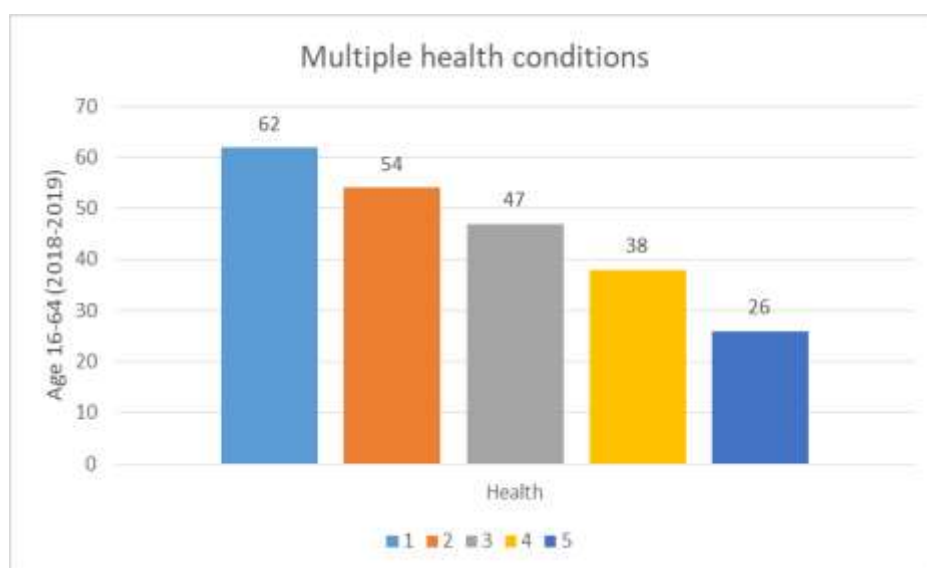


Figure 3: Percentage of disabled workers with poor health.

There are 11 studies mentioning the awareness of employers towards disabled employees from the aspect of health. People with disabilities are one of the weakest minority groups. Employers' awareness of people with disabilities in terms of health requires some rehabilitation services. (Rosli et al., 2015) In Malaysia, the People with Disabilities Act 2008 was created so that people with disabilities have the right to enjoy equal health with other people (Versi & Talian, n.d.). Accessibility to healthcare is one of the main issues for developing countries such as Malaysia, with a wide geographic distribution of the

population. Although in principle, accessibility to health services is quite adequate for the general population, studies show that residents in large states such as Sarawak, Sabah, and Pahang have limited access to local health services (Aizan Sofia Amin & Manap, 2015). So far, the disabled often face obstacles in getting a job. Not only that, OKU staff are often subjected to constant mental and psychological stress and oppression in the workplace.

The main problem facing job placement for the disabled is the attitude of employees who are not interested, lack trust, and refuse to provide appropriate infrastructure facilities for the disabled. Employers have a stereotypical view of the disabled. They consider the visually impaired to be unreliable because they often fall ill and require a lot of expense (Rosli et al., 2015). What's more, the behavior of employers and co-workers who show neglect of the visually impaired in the workplace seems to be prejudicial because it causes the visually impaired to feel lonely and neglected (Hammad Mohd Saidi et al., 2018). The study was conducted on the awareness of employers toward people with disabilities from the aspect of health. The study was conducted on subjects who were visually impaired and aged 18 and up, and it demonstrated the type of employer support for the subject and psychosocial are high (50% to 60%). Previous studies have found that the high cost of providing support in the workplace is a reason for employers not to implement it (Mohammed et al., 2021).

The OKU Act 2008 only states the responsibilities and obligations of employers to safeguard their rights and does not follow the effects or implications of a failure to comply with the provisions contained in the act. The absence of a form of punishment for violation of the provisions of the law in this act also invites the problem of the failure of the act to function effectively. If reference is made to the provisions of the law in the United Kingdom, the rights of the disabled are given due attention so that they can be imposed on parties who violate the provisions of the law that protects the disabled. For example, section 8 of the 'UK Disability Discrimination Act 1995' states

that any employer who violates this act can be fined in the form of compensation to the disabled employee (Jaafar et al., 2016). This study indicates a lack of monitoring of employers who hire disabled employees even though section 29 (3) of the OKU Policy Act 2008 has stated the need to provide workplace facilities that are appropriate to the needs of the disabled (Mohammed et al., 2021).

A total of 19 articles show that facilities have played an important role in raising employers' awareness of workers with disabilities. A study was totally administered regarding the attention of employers to workers with disabilities within the work setting from facet facilities. Visually impaired employees regularly work in the role of telecell smartphone operators. They offer information to customers, take orders and transfer calls from telecell smart phones to many workstations within the plant. The most common problems at work are desks and the presentation of cabinets, chairs, and tools in the workplace. They may have trouble with items falling off a desk that cannot be retrieved. Employees with physical disabilities regularly work in offices. Their largest issues are containing the use of tables and submitting cabinets. They have to move from their wheelchair to a work chair. Objects will fall from tables and can't be retrieved. Deaf employees are routinely selected to stock cabinets after customers purchase hardware. The deaf cannot regularly talk about their issues (Pruettikommon & Louhapensang, 2018).

Furthermore, co-workers' and employers' attitudes, understanding, and data regarding the incapacity or malady to be a barrier or a help in employment are also relevant. For example, flexibility in planning the work schedule and organizing work as facilitating factors for retentive employment (Nevala et al., 2014). Therefore, employers must take reasonable accommodation measures when recruiting and employing workers, following a request from a person with disabilities, in order to improve situations that hinder the assurance of equal opportunities for people with and without disabilities. After hiring, employers must take steps to

accommodate workers with disabilities, in order to improve situations that hinder the assurance of equal treatment compared to people without disabilities or the effective exercise of abilities by people with disabilities. When providing reasonable accommodation, employers must fully respect the wishes of people with disabilities and must prepare a system necessary for responding to consultation from workers with disabilities (Hasegawa, 2015). Employers do not want to hire or retain people with disabilities. For example, misconceptions about poor job performance of employees, inaccurate knowledge about housing, worries about legal liability, and beliefs about housing-related expenses influence organizational access and treatment for people with disabilities (Kulkarni et al., 2016). Companies are a significant factor in making certain the disabled get connected to labor markets. Currently, personal sector interventions in this sector are limited. The deterrents vary from attitudes towards hiring the disabled to apprehensions regarding having to create high investments for workplace changes if the disabled are hired. Combining the matter is the indisputable fact that there are few organizations that presently facilitate corporations that need to rent disabled individuals by either helping to make their infrastructure disabled-friendly or holding sensitization workshops (Shenoy, 2011).

Numerous studies have tested the effect of the location of job incapacity facilities on workers' protection and determined a wonderful and large affiliation between the two variables. They examined the relationship between the location of business disability facilities and perceived working safety and found that disabled people that worked in offices that had more disability facilities were more likely to perceive their offices as stable than people with fewer or no facilities. Similar outcomes were moreover located in another study, which used course assessment to have a look at the relationship between workplace adaptations for disabled people, the perception of safety at work and pleasure at work among disabled employees. Hence, inside the study, they examined how business disability

facilities have an effect on disabled employees' project retention plans, collectively with every perceived place of business safety and work delight as mediators in their model (Kim et al., 2020).

In one of the interview analysis, the employers at each organization validated their preferred consciousness regarding non-discrimination, equality, and accessibility standards. However, they related it neither to the UN CRPD nor to the antidiscrimination law. Neither corporation had a company policy to particularly cope with non-discrimination, identical remedy, or lodging of people with disabilities, considering the fact that their worldwide company regulations already covered those principles. The employers stated corporate HSE coverage as the primary coverage regulating administrative workplace diversification for employees. The employers at each organization expressed excessive consciousness of accessibility norms in terms of buildings and facilities, although they didn't explicitly link them to anti-discrimination legislation (Toriman ety al., 2015; Kuznetsova & Bento, 2018).

This study concludes that lack of understanding isn't the handiest motives for employers' lack of understanding of employees with disabilities in the working environment from the welfare aspect, but the inadequate facts also additionally play a role. In conclusion, it is clearly important for employers to pay a high amount of attention towards disable employees especially from welfare aspect so that the employees will feel appreciated and taken care of. Moreover, employees with disabilities required a lot more attention such as on-site day care, financial aids, education, subsidized meals, fitness centers and many more to make sure they can work efficiently. Employers need to make sure that they are aware of the issue to avoid troubles in the future. Not only that, in terms of health is also very important. This is because there are disabled workers who have one or more diseases in them. Therefore, employers' awareness of health care for disabled workers should be increased so that disabled workers get the right to health care. This step can also build a way of life that

understands each other between employers and employees with disabilities in the world of work.

However, Interventions by the private sector in this area are limited. We also discovered that the association between workplace disability facilities, perceived workplace safety, and work delight among disabled employees is not particularly impressive. Based on the articles that we reviewed, we have confirmed that the facilities contributed to being a major aspect of the employers' awareness towards workers with disabilities.

CONCLUSION

Every person born has the right to share life with others. Article 23 (1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, often known as the "Universal Declaration of Human Rights" (UDHR), declares that "Everyone has the right to employment, the freedom to choose his employment, suitable benefits and circumstances, and protection against unemployment." It indicates that the right to work is included in the list of human rights. People with disabilities have the freedom to seek and obtain employment that is suitable for their needs. With the awareness of the disabled people in the workplace, the well-being of the disabled will be improved, including adequate facilities and provide awareness among the community to open opportunities for the disabled people to enjoy the same life as other human beings in social affairs, employment, education and so on.

Among the suggestions that can be put forward on this issue is that the government establish a task group to review the one percent disabled workers (OKU) policy in the public sector, which has only reached 0.4 percent despite being implemented more than three decades ago. In order to aid the disabled, the policy, which was developed in 1988 and implemented through Service Circulars in 2008 and 2010, must be carefully considered. Only four ministries have achieved more than 1% of that, including the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development, the

Ministry of Entrepreneur Development and Cooperatives, and the Ministry of National Unity.

In addition, the government should introduce a "National Disability Strategy for Malaysia" as the country does not have any strategic planning document for the disabled so far. This is the government's best opportunity to introduce the "National Disability Strategy for Malaysia", in line with the Vision for Shared Prosperity 2030, which emphasises an inclusive society in which "no one's left behind." The last proposal is that the government, through Prasarana Malaysia Berhad (Prasarana), should re-introduce 'Rapid Mobility', which provides door-to-door services to facilitate the movement of the disabled to a location, especially in major cities such as Kuala Lumpur, Shah Alam, Penang, Johor Bahru, and Kuantan.

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