

YOUTH ATTITUDES TOWARDS PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES (PWDs): THE ANALYSIS ON INCLUSIVE SETTING, EXPOSURE AND GENDER

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ABSTRACT

People with disabilities (PWDs) in Malaysia continue to encounter obstacles as they are often subjected to harsh attitudes from members of society. This research analyzes the relationship between inclusive settings and exposure to disability with youth attitudes toward PWDs in the Klang District of Selangor, Malaysia. It also determines whether there is a significant difference between gender and youth attitudes towards PWDs in the area. Convenience sampling methods were used to collect data from 384 respondents between the age of 18 years old and 40 years old. This study employs quantitative analysis namely Pearson Correlation, Independent T-test, and Multiple Linear Regression Analysis. The finding reveals that positive attitudes toward PWDs are low among the youth in the Klang District. Both inclusive settings and exposure to disability have a significant relationship with the youth attitudes towards PWDs. However, between the two variables, exposure to disability has a stronger influence. In addition, this research found a significant difference between male and female youth attitudes toward people with disabilities. The effects of studies on youth attitudes towards PWDs have important consequences in fostering inclusiveness and addressing prejudice. This study suggests that policymakers, educators, and advocacy groups could redesign strategies based on the aspect of inclusive setting, exposure, and gender that can effectively shape and influence positive youth attitudes. Subsequent investigations should further examine these aspects more comprehensively, taking into account intersectionality, including race, ethnicity, education level, and socioeconomic status.

Keywords: Youth Attitude, Inclusive Setting, Exposure, Gender, PWDs

INTRODUCTION

Despite countless initiatives taken by the government and NGOs to enhance the welfare and well-being of society, there are still many individuals especially people with disabilities (PWDs) who are unable to enjoy the benefits. Other than issues like accessibility, this was also due to a lack of opportunity and an unfavorable environment derived from negative perceptions. Babik and Gardner (2021) underlined that disability is an idea shaped by society, wherein the perception of an impairment as a handicap is greatly impacted by cultural norms and conventions. The treatment individuals receive from society is significantly shaped by society's perception of them. The World Health Organization (2023) recently reported that the global population of persons with disabilities has increased tremendously. To date, approximately 16 percent of the world's population, or 1.3 billion people is disabled, and this figure is projected to grow due to the rise in non-communicable illnesses and an increase in population aging. With the rise in the number of people with disabilities and different types of disabilities in the community, a new set of challenges must be understood. Often the question posed is, are they receiving fair and equitable treatment from society? People often form negative perceptions and display unfavorable attitudes towards those with special needs, as they struggle to comprehend their unique requirements and challenges (Monika, 2019) in addition to frequently being associated with sin or taboo (Sharma, Yadav, and Sharma, 2021).

Hostile attitudes towards people with disabilities are still prevalent in Malaysia. According to a report in the News Straits Times, the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM) has asserted that those with disabilities continue to face mistreatment in the nation. SUHAKAM acknowledges that PWDs still face disparities in various areas of life, leading to limited access to healthcare, employment, education, and other social activities. Consequently, they are excluded from social participation and are unable to exercise their rights to contribute meaningfully to progress (Babulal, 2017). In Malaysia about 11% of the population above 18 years are PWDs. However, the PWDs registered with the relevant authorities are 637,537, and less than 12,000 of the registered PWDs are in employment. The government is encouraging the hiring of PWDs and has put in place a 1% quota of employment to be given to the PWDs. Based on the allocated 1% of employment quota to PWDs there should be at least 162,000 PWDs in employment (MEF, 2023). Meanwhile, Wan Mustafa et al (2019) claimed that the number of PWDs enrolled in universities was less than 2.5% of the overall enrolment. All these are just small indicators that despite, numerous efforts to promote

the inclusion of individuals with disabilities through governmental policies and legislation for many years in Malaysia, there has been a lack of progress thus far (Narayan, 2018). PWDs continue to face many difficulties and are marginalized.

THE PROBLEM OF SOCIETAL ATTITUDES ON PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

The primary objective of this study is to get an insight into society's attitudes towards PWDs, which focuses on the younger population in Malaysia. Considering that the youth segment is the largest proportion of the population in Malaysia, it is crucial to examine their attitudes towards PWDs specifically in the Klang district of Selangor. Sharma et. al (2021) conducted a study on empathy and the attitudes of young individuals toward people with disabilities. Their findings indicate that the reactions of the youth towards this group vary. While some individuals are more tolerant and inclusive, others, particularly in more traditional regions, are less receptive. The perception of young individuals towards PWDs can be shaped by various aspects, such as educational attainment, socioeconomic status, level of consciousness, and others. Each of these elements must be appropriately addressed, however, each factor has its own set of obstacles.

The problem of developing attitudes towards persons with disabilities seems interesting considering current social and political changes. Many kinds of literature suggest that developing positive attitudes toward persons with disabilities is particularly important and a precondition for the overall activities of educational institutions and social marketing. If these quests are not pursued, the group of people with special needs will always be socially excluded and separated by psychosocial barriers from other members of society. The United Nations places a high priority on promoting social inclusion for all. The concept of disability inclusion where is referred to as an active and meaningful involvement of individuals with disabilities, representing their diverse experiences, and the integration and prioritization of their rights within the operations of any institution (United Nations, 2019). The elimination of discrimination and the promotion of social inclusivity for PWDs in society can be achieved through the cultivation of positive attitudes within the community.

The understanding and acceptance of the issues faced by individuals with disabilities by society as a whole is still lacking (Unicef, 2017). People with disabilities (PWDs) experience both physical and psychological discrimination in their everyday lives. Within the workplace, individuals with disabilities may face many challenges that are related to their disabilities. These challenges encompass receiving lower wages, experiencing unequal treatment compared to their colleagues, encountering difficulties in accessing facilities, and encountering barriers to career advancement, among other issues (Edra, 2021). Within a broader framework, the employment of individuals with disabilities in the public sector in Malaysia remains quite low, standing at approximately 0.31 percent (Azzman, 2019). This situation demonstrates that the level of disability inclusion in this country remains at a low level. To completely achieve social inclusion for disabled individuals, society must have a positive attitude and perception. Positivity will foster beneficial behaviors, thoughts, and positive treatments for this group.

In previous research, attitudes toward persons with disabilities are more likely to be negative. It is believed that this is conditional on social stereotypes, traditional prejudice, or a lack of knowledge of needs, opportunities, and difficulties faced by persons with disabilities (Sadziak et.al., 2021). Negative attitudes are otherwise referred to as rejection attitudes and are manifested by such behaviors as indifference, emotional hostility, reluctance, isolation, or even disgust while a positive attitude is characterized by acceptance of persons with disabilities and is manifested by friendliness, respect, adequate evaluation, friendly behavior, and interaction. While much previous research on attitudes toward PWDs focused on stigma (Caynak et.al., 2022, Septian and Hadi, 2021), discrimination (Wayland et.al., 2022, Temple et.al., 2020), and social inclusion issues (Ahmad et.al., 2022, Labbé et.al., 2021), there was lack of research that explored specifically on the influencing factors of positive attitude on PWDs among youth specifically on inclusive setting and exposure. In addition, more research should also be done to understand the gender influence on the issue especially among the youth (Kalargyrou et.al., 2021).

Despite ongoing endeavors to foster inclusivity and diminish prejudice, individuals with disabilities (PWDs) persistently encounter societal stigmatization and obstacles that impede their complete engagement in society. Gaining insight into the perspectives of young people towards persons with disabilities (PWDs) is crucial for effectively tackling these obstacles and promoting inclusive societies. This study specifically examines the Klang District, which is the most populous area in Selangor. Selangor is not only the most developed state in Malaysia but as a state that has the highest population of individuals with disabilities in Malaysia, according to the World Population Review in 2021. The number of people with a disability registered with the Department of Social Welfare is 637,537. Hence, the possibilities or chances for people to meet and encounter PWDs are high. The objective of this research study is to methodically examine the association of inclusive settings and exposure to disabilities in forming the attitudes of young people toward persons with disabilities. The positive attitude between genders will also be examined. The attitudes and behaviors exhibited by the current generation of young individuals towards PWDs are indicative of the characteristics that future leaders will possess. The research intends to analyze these aspects to generate insights that can guide the creation of effective interventions and policies to foster inclusion and diminish discrimination against persons with disabilities (PWDs) among young people.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The research has several objectives as outlined below:

- i. to determine the level of positive attitudes among youths in the Klang District towards PWDs
- ii. to examine the correlation between inclusive settings, exposure to disability, and the attitudes of youth toward PWDs in the Klang District
- iii. To determine which factor has the most significant influence on the youth attitudes towards PWDs

- iv. to ascertain the difference in the attitudes of young people towards PWDs in the Klang District based on gender.

LITERATURE REVIEW

YOUTH ATTITUDES TOWARDS PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES (PWDs)

The public's attitude plays a vital role in the daily lives, social engagement, and community integration of disabled individuals (Wang et al., 2021). Attitude can be positive, negative, or even neutral depending on the current situation the individual is facing. According to Hepler and Albarracín (2013), people can have distinct attitudes or generalize across items, with people having either generally favorable or negative views. The classic definition of attitude has been coined by Allport (1935) which he referred it as "a mental or neural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence on the individual's response to all objects and situations to which it is related". An individual's attitude might vary between positive, negative, or neutral, based on the specific circumstances they are experiencing. According to Helpler and Albarrachin (2013), individuals can possess either specific attitudes towards certain items or generalize their attitudes across multiple items, resulting in either generally positive or negative opinions. Attitude can be summed as an evaluation of one's thoughts, beliefs, and emotions towards an object or phenomenon, which may be dispositional, constructive, or stable memory structures (Sharma et al., 2021). Various research has acknowledged that perceptions can be shaped by individuals' previous and current experiences, suggesting that various circumstances may influence and affect public attitudes toward disabled individuals (Zheng et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2021).

The significance of youth in enhancing, fortifying, and constructing an educated society is crucial. Therefore, it is significant to comprehend the perspectives of young people today on individuals with disabilities, as well as their attitudes, both favorable and negative, towards disabilities (Khan, et al., 2020). There is an abundance of research on attitudes that focused on youth and reactions to PWDs with polarized findings. Scope (2014) for instance reported that approximately 67% of individuals in the United Kingdom feel uneasy engaging in conversations with disabled individuals. Many individuals appear uncomfortable due to their fear of being perceived as judgmental or making incorrect statements. In contrast, Rehman and Saleem (2022) found that most students displayed a significantly positive attitude towards those with disabilities. It is consistent with several studies that revealed youths have neutral or positive attitudes when encountering those who have different abilities (Alnahdi, 2019; Nowicki & Sanderson, 2002; Satchidanand et al., 2012). Moreover, research reveals that the Greek population exhibits a notable degree of optimism towards those with disabilities, reflecting a favorable attitude towards those with special needs (Konstantia and Helen, 2022). Meanwhile, Friedman (2019) argues that although some individuals claim to have a favorable attitude toward people with disabilities, their actual behavior reveals a disconnect as they distance themselves from or rationalize their negative beliefs. Moreover, those with disabilities continue to encounter unfavorable views. Malaysia also exhibited negative attitudes towards individuals with disabilities. Liang (2016) asserted that individuals with disabilities face limited access to higher education as a result of societal prejudice and discrimination.

INCLUSIVE SETTING AND YOUTH ATTITUDES TOWARDS PWDs

An inclusive setting refers to an atmosphere that allows individuals with diverse abilities to learn together. An inclusive setting is crucial for fostering a comprehensive perspective and knowledge of disability via everyday experiences. However, in an inclusive setting, some individuals may experience discomfort and exhibit a negative disposition towards individuals with disabilities. Reeves et al. (2020) found that although there is an inclusive environment between typical students and students with disabilities in schools, typical students often exhibit negative attitudes towards students with disabilities, leading to their exclusion from the inclusive environment. There exist disparities in the comprehension and awareness of disability among individuals who have engaged in inclusive environments compared to those who have not. Individuals who have experienced an inclusive environment with individuals with disabilities possess a greater understanding of the support and obstacles faced by disabled students, the resources available at educational institutions, and the many approaches to learning methodologies. An inclusive setting with people with disability is also one of the factors that influence people's attitudes towards people with disability. The availability at the institution and instructional strategies like inclusive education and universal design for learning demonstrate the training affected participants' understanding of disabilities, the supports and obstacles that students faced, and the resources. (Carballo, Morgado, & Corte's-Vega, 2021). By fostering an environment that embraces diversity and inclusivity, individuals are afforded the chance to not only gain knowledge about impairments but also contribute to the establishment of social equity for the entire society. Carballo, Morgado, and Cortes-Vega (2021) conducted a study that found that the respondents demonstrated a clear awareness of disability and the necessary accommodations for students with disabilities, as well as inclusive learning methods, after participating in inclusive setting training.

EXPOSURE TO DISABILITY AND YOUTH ATTITUDES TOWARDS PWDs

Exposure to disability refers to individuals possessing knowledge or having direct interaction with PWDs. These individuals possess a comprehensive understanding of how to effectively communicate and engage with others who have disabilities. Moreover, having personal acquaintance with an individual who is disabled significantly influences judgments in a positive manner (Laat, Freriksen, & Vervloed, 2012). Essentially, individuals who have interacted with PWDs initially have a pessimistic demeanor. Owing to cultural and societal stigmatization, young individuals in the United Arab Emirates often hold negative attitudes towards those with disabilities (Hammad et al., 2022). Nevertheless, once individuals make themselves vulnerable by sharing information about the specific type of impairment they have, their rights as disabled individuals, and the proper ways to engage with them, others tend to display a favorable disposition. Nikolic (2021) conducted a study that found that students in the Faculty for Special Education and Rehabilitations exhibit a favorable disposition toward individuals with intellectual disability. As a result of being exposed to and studying disabilities in their courses, the students possess a comprehensive understanding of how to effectively

engage with others who have disabilities. This indicates that individuals who have been informed about disability exhibit a favorable disposition towards PWDs. This remark aligns with the findings of a study conducted by Shahif et al (2019), which showed that exposure to impairment had an impact on healthcare nurses' attitudes towards PWDs.

Exposure to disability is a significant aspect that shapes people's attitudes towards individuals with disabilities. A study conducted in Nigeria by Onah and Ugwu (2021) discovered a correlation between exposure to disability and the attitudes of Nigerians towards individuals with disabilities. The study conducted by Santilili, Ginevra, and Nota (2023) found that workers' views toward colleagues with disabilities are influenced by their level of experience working with them. Most research has shown that interacting with individuals with impairments can result in improved attitudes toward them (Ten, et.al., 2009; Stachura and Garven, 2007; Sahin and Akyol, 2010; Keith, Bennetto, and Rogge, 2015; Copeland et. al., 2010). The findings from Morin, et. al (2013), Patka, et. al., (2013), and Hsu, et. al., (2015) suggest that increased contact with persons with disabilities may contribute to a decrease in fear and anxiety and foster a more objective and accurate understanding of their functional capability and abilities.

GENDER AND YOUTH ATTITUDES TOWARDS PWDs

Gender encompasses the societal beliefs and expectations on the characteristics, capabilities, and probable conduct associated with femininity and masculinity. Gender plays a significant effect in shaping the attitudes of young people towards PWDs. Previous studies have indicated that gender influences attitudes towards PWDs. Men and women may exhibit distinct attitudes towards individuals with impairments. There are no substantial disparities between men and women in the Greek community, as well as in the attitudes of young people towards those with disabilities (Konstantia & Helen, 2022). Radlinska and Marta (2021) conducted a study that revealed substantial disparities between men and women regarding the attitudes of young individuals toward people with disabilities. Specifically, female students studying Health Sciences exhibited a more favorable attitude compared to their male counterparts. Moreover, Roca-Hurtuna and Sanz-Ponce (2020) found a notable disparity in the views of male and female students at the University of Valencia in Spain towards individuals with impairments. According to Randle and Reis (2016), women exhibit a higher propensity for displaying positive attitudes towards individuals with disabilities in comparison to men. Moreover, women are more predisposed to initiate conversations with individuals who have special needs due to their belief that they can assist in making them feel comfortable. Conversely, men are less willing to do so as they may inadvertently convey unfavorable sentiments towards PWDs (Dachez, Ndobbo & Ameline, 2015). Nevertheless, in Indian universities, there is no discernible disparity between male and female instructors in their treatment of students with disabilities (Sharma, Malik, & Nagy, 2022). This finding aligns with the study conducted by Konstantia and Helen (2022) in the Greek community and Harma, et. al., (2021) which revealed that there is no significant disparity in the attitudes of men and women towards PWDs.

METHODS

The study employs a cross-sectional study with a quantitative approach to examine the influence of the variables on the attitudes of youth towards PWDs in the Klang District. It focuses on individuals aged between 18 and 40 who reside in Klang. According to Krecjie and Morgan (1970), a sample size of 384 can be used for a maximum total population of 1,000,000. The World Population Review (2021) reported that the population of Klang is 879,867 with approximately 50% being people with the age within the range of 18 to 40. Nevertheless, there is no precise quantification of the young population in Klang. Therefore, the study took a sample size of 384 respondents. This research employs a stratified random sampling technique to subdivide equally the sample population based on gender. The data was collected via a survey questionnaire using Google Forms. The URL link of the Google Form was shared through popular social media platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, specifically targeting the youth residing in the Klang area. The instrument for the study was developed through the adoption of various sources as demonstrated in Table 1.

Table 1: Study Instrument

Variable	Scale	Source of Adoption
Inclusive Setting	Likert Scale 1- Strongly Disagree 2- Disagree 3- Neutral 4-Agree 5-Strongly Agree.	Perez-Jorge (2010) & Barr & Kristi (2014)
Exposure on Disability	Likert Scale	Karaman & Kostic (2017)
Youth Attitudes towards PWDs	Likert Scale	Findler & Vilchinsky (2007) and Rodriguez- Medina et al. (2018)

The data were analyzed in descriptive analysis and inferential analysis using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The analysis includes Descriptive Analysis, Pearson's Correlation, Independent T-Test, and Multiple Regression Analysis as presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Statistical Methods

Research Objective	Statistical Method
1	Descriptive Analysis
2	Pearson Correlation
3	Multiple Regression
4	Independent T—Test

To establish the reliability and consistency of the variables the reliability tests using Cronbach's Alpha were done. As presented in Table 3, the reliability of all variables is assumed since all Cronbach's Alpha values are more than 0.5. According to Hinton, McMurray, and Brownlow (2014), Cronbach's Alpha scale between 0.50 and 0.70 is considered to have moderate reliability hence it is valid to utilize the variables.

Table 3: Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Analysis

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	No of Items	Reliability Assumed
Independent Variables			
Inclusive Setting	.550	5	Yes
Expose on Disability	.742	5	Yes
Dependent Variable			
Youth's Attitudes towards People with Disabilities	.812	7	Yes

RESULTS

This study aims to examine the attitudes of the youth towards people with disabilities. It obtained 384 respondents from the Klang District with 50% male respondents and 50% female respondents. 93.3% of the respondents have tertiary education while only 4.7% finished up to secondary school. Below is the elaboration of the results.

Result 1: The level of positive attitudes among youths in the Klang District towards PWDs

Table 4: Result of positive level of youth attitudes towards PWDs in Klang District

	Mean	Standard Deviation
Level of positive attitudes among youths toward PWDs N = 384	2.2834	.66397

Table 4 demonstrates that the mean for youth attitudes Towards PWDs in Klang District is 2.2834, suggesting a poor level. Ridwan et al (2021) asserted that the average values for low, medium, and high fall between the ranges of 1 – 2.33, 2.34 – 3.66, and 3.67 – 5.00, respectively. Therefore, the finding confirmed that the level of positive attitude of youth towards people with disabilities in the Klang District is low.

Result 2: The correlation between inclusive settings, exposure to disability, and the attitudes of youth towards PWDs in the Klang District.

Table 5: Result of the relationship between inclusive setting, exposure to disability, and youth attitudes towards PWDs in the Klang District

Variables			Youth Attitudes
Inclusive Setting	Pearson Correlation	1	-.106*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.038
	N	384	384
Youth Attitud towards PWDs	Pearson Correlation	-.106*	1
	Sig. (2 tailed)	.038	
	N	384	384
Exposure to Disability	Pearson Correlation	1	-.370**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	384	384
Youth's Attitude Towards PWDs	Pearson Correlation	-.370**	1
	Sig. (2 tailed)	.000	
	N	384	384

*.Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

For the independent variable to have a significant association with the dependent variable, the p-values must be less than 0.05 when determining the link between the two variables. The correlation coefficient is a statistical measure that ranges between -1 and +1. A value of -1 indicates a perfect negative relationship, +1 indicates a perfect positive correlation, and 0 indicates no association at all. Cohen (1988) categorizes the r values of 0.1-0.29, 0.30-0.49, and 0.5-1.0 as representing small, medium, and large effects, respectively. Table 5 displays the correlation results between the Inclusive Setting and the youth attitudes toward PWDs in the Klang District. The table indicates that the Pearson correlation coefficient is -0.0106 and the p-value is 0.38. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, there are statistically significant correlations. Hence, the Pearson Correlation between the inclusive setting and youth attitudes towards PWDs in the Klang District is shown to be small, negative, and statistically significant. Furthermore, there is an association discovered between exposure to disability and the attitudes of young people towards PWDs in the Klang District. According to the table, the Pearson Correlation coefficient (r) is -0.370 and the p-value is 0.000. The p-value is less than 0.05, indicating a statistically significant association between the variables. The link between Exposure and Disability, as well as the attitudes towards PWDs in the Klang District, is negative and statistically significant, with a moderate effect size. This suggests that exposure to disability influences the attitudes of youth towards PWDs in the Klang District.

Result 3: The factor that has the most significant influence on the youth attitudes toward PWDs

Table 6: Result of the most significant factor that influences the youth attitudes towards PWDs.

	Beta	t	Sig	Tolerance	VIF
Constant	4.017	16.204	.000		
Inclusive Setting	.103	1.891	.059	.754	1.327
Exposure on Disability	-.421	-7.721	.000	.754	1.327

Table 6 shows the Multiple Linear Regression Analysis to identify which factor influences the most attitude of the youth. Based on Table 6, the Beta value of Exposure to Disability is higher than in the Inclusive Setting that -.421 and .103 respectively. The Beta value of Exposure to Disability is -.421 and statistically significant, then for each 1-unit increase in the predictor variable, the outcome will decrease by .421 units. The most significant factor that influences youth attitudes towards PWDs in the Klang District is exposure to disability.

Result 4: The difference in the attitudes of the youth towards PWDs in the Klang District based on gender.

Table 7: Result of Difference between the Groups of Gender and Youth's Attitude Towards People with Disability in the Klang District.

	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig	Mean Difference
Male	2.4118	0.73477	-2.685	238.380	.008	-.19873
Female	2.2130	0.61194				

An Independent T-test was conducted to compare the Youth's Attitude towards People with Disability in the Klang District for Females and Males. Based on Table 7, there is a significant difference between (t (238.380) = -2.685, p=0.008) in the score with Mean for Female (M=2.2130, SD=0.61194) is lower than Male (M=2.4118, SD= 0.73477). The Magnitude of the difference in Mean (mean difference -.019873, 95% CI: - 0.33677 to -0.06069) is significant.

DISCUSSION

Level of positive attitudes among youths toward PWDs

The average disposition of young individuals towards those with disabilities in Klang District is 2.2834, signifying a lower degree of positivity. This is consistent with the research conducted by Jing Chai (2019), which found that there is typically a negative perception towards people with disabilities in Johor Bahru. This could be attributed to Malaysia's status as a developing country and a potential lack of knowledge about disabilities among the Malaysian population. In addition, Friedman (2019) highlighted that although individuals may profess to hold positive sentiments towards people with disabilities, some individuals genuinely possess negative emotions, tending to distance themselves or justify their unfavorable attitudes. According to Sharma, Yadav, and Sharma (2021), young people typically display a predominantly negative attitude towards individuals with physical disabilities, suggesting a consistent and enduring lack of positive views. Prejudice and preconceived notions against those with disabilities endure, based on the perception that these people cause disturbances in everyday activities. Moreover, Calloway and Darcy (2020) found that a significant proportion of nursing students in the United Kingdom possess a diminished degree of attitude towards individuals with impairments. This implies that even prospective healthcare practitioners, who will be required to engage with individuals with special needs, can possess unfavorable views impacted by their beliefs, culture, limited exposure, and inadequate training.

Nevertheless, certain studies present opposing evidence, indicating a prevalent and favorable disposition among young people towards individuals with disabilities. According to Rehman and Saleem (2022), the majority of pupils demonstrate a strong positive attitude, which is likely a result of regular encounters with individuals who have special needs. Research conducted by Konstantia and Helen (2022) reveals that the Greek community exhibits a notable inclination towards those with disabilities, characterized by a favorable attitude. This might be linked to a heightened awareness of impairments. Overall, the benefits of the youth's positive

views towards PWDs are significant. Advocating for inclusivity and combating stigma, may cultivate understanding and compassion, ultimately leading to a fairer and more inclusive society. Through the acceptance and promotion of diversity, the championing of equal opportunities, and the encouragement of innovative thinking from all viewpoints, young people have a vital role in constructing communities that prioritize the inclusion and support of all individuals. A healthy society fosters favorable attitudes towards those with disabilities and ensures their social integration (Maftei, 2022). Fostering positive attitudes towards individuals with disabilities has advantages for both the disabled individuals themselves, young people, and society as a whole. This results in increased acceptance, comprehension, and possibilities for everyone.

Inclusive Setting and Youth Attitudes towards PWDs

The Pearson correlation coefficient between Inclusive Setting and Youth's Attitude Towards People with Disability in the Klang District is -0.0106, with a p-value of 0.38. Given that the p-value is below 0.05, there exists a statistically significant association. This finding aligns with the study conducted by Paseka and Schwab (2020), which revealed limited correlations between the opinions of parents of typically developing children and inclusive education. Research indicates that people in inclusive environments, where people with special needs are present, often have less favorable attitudes towards individuals with disabilities. This may be attributed to the effect of their attitudes and behaviors. Inadequate knowledge of available resources may also contribute to less favorable attitudes. According to Reeves et al. (2020), ordinary students in inclusive educational settings may exhibit unfavorable attitudes toward students with impairments, resulting in their exclusion. In Kenya, parents often underestimate the importance of offering inclusive education to students with intellectual disabilities (Alshemari, Brushnahan, & Albagshi, 2023). This suggests that simply having an inclusive setting does not guarantee that students with disabilities would feel included. Nevertheless, certain research indicates that engaging in inclusive environments can cultivate favorable attitudes toward those with impairments. According to Szumski and Smogorzewska (2020), students who participate in inclusive settings generally display more favorable sentiments in comparison to those in standard classroom situations. Engaging with individuals who have disabilities in the same setting fosters compassion and understanding, facilitating improved engagement with individuals who have specific needs. A study conducted in Southwestern Nigeria found that students in an inclusive setting often had a supportive attitude towards their classmates with impairments (Olaleye et al., 2012).

Youth Exposure to Disability and their Attitudes towards PWDs

The Pearson correlation coefficient between exposure to disability and youth's attitude towards people with disability in the Klang District is -0.370, indicating a negative relationship. The p-value is 0.000, suggesting a significant association between the two variables. Given that the p-value is below 0.05, there exists a statistically significant correlation between the two variables. The correlation finding is negative, suggesting a moderate level of association, and it is statistically significant. This indicates that the level of exposure to disability has an impact on the attitudes of young individuals toward people with disabilities in the Klang District. This finding aligns with the study conducted by Hammad et al. (2022), which discovered a detrimental correlation between the level of exposure to disability and the attitudes of young individuals toward individuals with disabilities in the United Arab Emirates. The adverse perception could be shaped by societal stigma, cultural prejudices, and the ongoing marginalization of those with special needs. Young individuals may adopt negative perceptions regarding impairments, resulting in feelings of fear or contempt. Nevertheless, it is crucial to acknowledge that in general, greater exposure to impairment tends to enhance attitudes. According to Wang et al. (2019), respondents exhibited a greater tendency towards optimism when they possessed a heightened awareness of disability-related restrictions and knowledge. In the same vein, Shahif et al. (2019) emphasized a direct relationship between nurses' expertise and their exposure to impairment, resulting in a more favorable attitude. Nurses, via their professional training and exposure to individuals with disabilities, frequently demonstrate favorable attitudes as a result of their comprehension and expertise acquired through training, seminars, and courses.

The most significant factors that influence Youth Attitudes towards PWDs

The beta value of exposure to disability indicated that it is the most significant factor that influences the youth's attitudes toward PWDs. According to Wang et al (2021), exposure to disability shows the main factor influencing people's attitude toward people with disability. People who have been exposed to and know knowledge about disability, equipment for special needs, and have been going training, know and understand well how to interact and show better attitude towards people with disability. This finding is also in line with research conducted by Febriana (2013) in which the participants agree that their exposure to disability such as knowledge, awareness, and situation influence their attitude towards people with disability.

Gender and Youth Attitudes towards PWDs

The scores exhibit a notable difference, as evidenced by the t-test ($t(238,380) = -2.685, p = 0.008$). The average score for girls ($M = 2.2130, SD = 0.61194$) is less than that for males ($M = 2.4118, SD = 0.73477$). The statistical significance of the mean difference magnitude ($-0.19873, 95\% CI: -0.33677$ to -0.06069) has been established. This study aligns with the observations made by Maurya and Parasar (2017), who noted distinct attitudes toward individuals with impairments among males and females. Roca-Hurtuna and Sanz-Ponce (2023) also arrived at a comparable finding, documenting a substantial disparity in opinions among male and female students at the University of Valencian, Spain. The differences in compassion expression between men and women can potentially be attributed to the cultural construction of gender roles. Women tend to exhibit higher levels of sympathy, which can be seen as a reflection of societal expectations and gender norms. Nevertheless, there exists research that presents conflicting evidence to support this discovery. Sharma N, Yadav V, and Sharma A (2021) discovered that there was no notable disparity in the views of Indians young towards individuals with disabilities based on gender. Ranga and Kumar (2019) found comparable outcomes among students at an Indian college, whereas Konstantin and Helen (2022) saw similar results within the Greek community, indicating that there were no significant variations in attitudes between males and females. Kalargyrou, Pettinico, and

Chen (2021) further claimed that there is no substantial disparity in the views of male and female undergraduate students towards those with impairments. While certain research provides evidence for the notion that gender disparities influence attitudes, others present contradictory findings, indicating that gender may not exert a significant influence on attitudes toward those with disabilities.

CONCLUSION

This study examines the attitudes of youth towards individuals with disabilities in the Klang District. The findings indicate a low positive attitude of the youth towards PWDs, highlighting the necessity for more awareness and enhancement of programs that could build empathy. This study also concluded that inclusive settings and exposure have a strong negative correlation with youth attitudes and there is gender difference in attitudes towards PWDs. However, there are several limitations encountered in this study. There were limited variables tested which hindered a better understanding of the low positive attitudes among the youth. Constructs like social barriers, norms, and educational background should be included and tested for future research. In addition, this research did not cover the other socio-demographic influences such as the level of education and the existence of PWD in the family which could enrich the findings. Future research may also consider employing multi-methods for data collection which include interviews with youth groups to obtain a deeper understanding of what constitutes their attitudes towards PWDs. Furthermore, it is imperative to include the viewpoints of young individuals with impairments to guarantee that interventions are both inclusive and significant.

The findings of this study suggest that although individuals may be involved in inclusive environments, adverse responses might occur because of uncomfortable interactions, apprehension, cultural ideologies, or insufficient involvement with those with special needs. Hence, it is recommended that strong advocacy for cultivating a culture of inclusivity, implementing tangible measures, and tackling disability with a receptive mindset should be in place. By fostering empathy and avoiding prejudice or stigma, society may establish a more robust and all-encompassing community for everyone residing in the Klang District and beyond. The strategies for addressing attitudes towards individuals with disabilities encompass the promotion of positive views via social media, the emphasis on awareness campaigns across diverse platforms, and the honest portrayal of those with disabilities. In addition, promoting inclusivity can be achieved by enriching the curriculum not just in schools but also in higher learning institutions. It is recommended that the government implement additional training, seminars, and programs focused on disability for both young people and educators, to cultivate a more inclusive educational, learning, and social setting. Promoting a sense of duty towards community service and facilitating the engagement of young individuals with disability-focused groups can have a beneficial effect on attitudes. Enhancing cultural and social norms is necessary to foster a more inclusive treatment of individuals with disabilities, taking into account their personal views and opinions as a foundational aspect. In summary, more efforts should be emphasized in exposing the youth to disability-related information and programs. Ultimately, the goal is to create a more inclusive, emphatic, and supportive environment for people with disabilities.

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