

The Opinions of Turkish Civil Servant Employees with Disability and Their Working Experience¹

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore the opinions of civil servant employees with disabilities on their professional context of the study, main research aims/questions. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 30 participants. In the study, a voice recorder was used to record answers to questions in the interview form, information form, and questions in the information form for collecting data. The researcher developed an information form to acquire demographic information on the participants,

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including gender, disability type and experience. Descriptive techniques were used to analyze their opinions. The three major themes of the current study emerged during the interviews with the participants. The results are presented in relation to the aims of the study under three central themes: views about the working environment, perspectives of the profession, and environmental perspectives of individual with disabilities and professions. Participants stated that they have work overload, needs of improvement on physical conditions, are not employed according to their education and disability, and encounter negative attitude from colleagues and managers. It is recommended that future studies compare the private and public sectors as well as examine the differences between working as a laborer in the civil service and as a covenanted employee. It is also recommended that gender equality be examined among employees who have disabilities.

Keywords: Individuals with disability; Civil servant employees; Education; Working experience; Profession.

Kamu Kurumunda Çalışan Engelli Memurların Mesleki Yaşantılarına Yönelik Görüşleri

Öz

Bu çalışmanın amacı kamu sektöründe çalışan engelli memurların mesleki yaşantılarına yönelik görüşlerini incelemektir. 30 katılımcı ile yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme tekniği ile yüzyüze görüşme ve ses kaydı yapılmıştır. Katılımcıların demografik özellikleri için araştırmacı tarafından geliştirilen “Kişisel Bilgi Formu” uygulanmıştır. Formda cinsiyet, yaş, eğitim durumu, yetersizlik türü, meslek yılı gibi değişkenler sorulmuştur. Katılımcılara gönüllü katıldıklarını gösteren “Gönüllü Katılım Formu” uygulanmıştır. Katılımcıların görüşlerini analiz etmek için betimleyici yöntem kullanılmıştır. Katılımcıların görüşleri doğrultusunda çalışma ortamı, mesleğe bakış açısı ve çevrenin engelli birey ve mesleğine yönelik olmak üzere bulgular 3 ana tema altında incelenmiştir. Katılımcılar, iş yüklerinin fazla olduğunu, fizikî koşulların iyileştirilmesi gerektiğini, eğitim ve engel durumuna göre istihdam edilmediklerini, meslektaşlarından ve yöneticilerinden olumsuz tutumlarla karşılaştıklarını belirtmişlerdir. Gelecekteki çalışmalar için özel ve kamu sektöründe çalışan engellilerin görüşlerinin ve cinsiyet eşitliğinin incelenmesi önerilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Engelli birey; Kamu kurumu çalışanı; Eğitim; Mesleki deneyim; Meslek.

Introduction

The World Health Organization (WHO) has defined disability as a representation of separation from the norm in relation to performance (WHO, 1980). Data from the WHO has revealed the rate of disability is approximately 12% and 10% in developing countries such as Turkey and developed countries, respectively (Baykoç, 2017). As individuals with disabilities (ID) constitute a significant part of society, it is imperative to increase their employment rates so as to facilitate their integration and productivity (Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Services of Turkey, 2013). Consequently, both Turkey and developed countries such as the United States (USA) and United Kingdom (UK) have implemented various legal regulations to increase the employment of ID. The US Bureau of Labor Statistics 2019 report noted that while only 30.9% of ID between 16 and 64 years of age are employed in the USA, 53.2% of such are employed in the UK (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019).

The Republic of Turkey was one of the first countries to sign The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which was implemented in 2008. Accordingly, the employment processes of those with disabilities in Turkey are regulated under Labor Law No. 4857. This law specifies an employment rate of 4% for public workplaces that employ 50 or more workers and 3% for private sector workplaces. Thus, according to a law, employers must employ ID. However, despite the mandatory nature of the labor law, employers may still prefer to pay fines than employ ID (Şen, 2018). Furthermore, employment is regulated by the Disabled Public Personnel Selection Exam (EKPS) and the Turkish Employment Agency (İŞKUR) for public institutions and private companies, respectively. In December 2018, 3.487.396 individuals were employed in public institutions in Turkey; among them, 5.777 ID were employed in public institutions in 2002, and this number increased to 53.017 in 2018 (State Personnel Presidency of Turkey, 2018). United Nations (UN) defines that while the working age of %80-%90 persons with disabilities are unemployment in developing countries, the rate of unemployment of persons with disabilities around %50-%70 in developed countries.

Even with an increase in employment rates of ID, in comparison to those without disabilities, the rate is low and those with disabilities may live in poverty and experience a multitude of health problems (Tansey et al., 2017). Lindsay et al. (2017) revealed that although a number of Canadians between

the ages of 15 and 25 years with disabilities are employed, they generally remain excluded from the workforce. Thus, there is a need for increased disability awareness among employers. Shiera et al. (2009) conducted one-on-one and focus group interviews with 56 employees with disabilities who were participating in employment training programs in Canada between 2005 and 2006. Shiera et al. (2009) noted that the participants were discriminated against and were labeled by their employers in the workplace, which had a negative impact on their continued employment. This is in contrast with the 2004 report of the National Organization on Disability, which revealed that that 60% of unemployed ID between 16-64 years preferred to work. In addition to this, Russia provided legal rights to their workers who have a disability on vocational rehabilitation, social rehabilitation, medical rehabilitation and labour environment (Stankevich et al., 2021). In another study, the authors indicate that importance of job trainer and increasing the employment of people with disabilities (Zietek, 2020). In USA, most of managers have a little information about how many disabled workers apply for a job, and they mostly hire people with disabilities because of the disability hiring policies (Bonaccia et al., 2020).

Despite various countries conducting research on the employment of those with disabilities, persistent problems are evident. Many studies in this field have been conducted in Turkey: problems women with disabilities encounter working in public institutions (Tören, 2014), problems those with disabilities working in public institutions experience (Yılmaz, 2014), public policies related to the employment of those with disabilities (Bozatay and Ayyıldız, 2018), problems those with disabilities encounter with regulations on employment (Aydın, 1991), inclusive workplace regulation assessments for employees with disabilities (Kutlu, 2007), the attitudes of employers toward ID (Akardere, 2005), the attitudes of employers and employees with disabilities toward the workplace (Anıl, 2019) and the need for the participation of those with disabilities in the workforce and a general assessment of the social policies implemented in this context in Turkey (Yazıcı et al., 2011). In 2017 and 2018, Öztapak addressed the life expectations of employees with disabilities and focused on the factors that affect choice of profession those with disabilities make. However, a paucity of research has been conducted on the professional lives of ID who work in public services (Öztapak, 2017; Tören, 2014). Accordingly, the purpose of this study was to seek answers to

the following questions in relation to male and female employees with disabilities: (1) Why did the participants choose their professions? (2) How were they affected by their professional lives? (3) What were the participants' attitudes, opinions in relation to their professional lives? (4) What were the participants' needs in their professional lives? (5) How did their training affect their professional lives? (6) What challenges did the participants encounter in their professional lives?

Method

Research Design

The study employed a qualitative research design. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with ID who worked as a civil servant in 2018-2019 to shed light on their thoughts about professional life. Descriptive techniques were used to analyze their opinions. The purpose of the methods employed was to reflect participants' views as a whole and to provide in-depth analysis (DeJonckheere and Vaughn, 2019).

Participants

Purposeful sampling was employed to select the participants. The participants had to meet three criteria: they had to work in the public service as disabled civil servants, had to have at least two years working experience in the sector and have to have an ability of self-expression. The participants included 30 participants from 23 public services. The participants' demographic information is presented in Table 1. An examination of Table 1 reveals that of the 30 participants, 26 were men and four were women. Their educational levels showed that a majority (12) were high school graduates, and among them, 10 had bachelor's degrees. The participants ranged between 22 and 56 years of age, with an average age of 35.9 years. On average, they had 7.46 years professional experience.

Table 1. Demographic Information of Participants

| No | Gender | Education | Age | Type of Disability | Exp. (Years) | Occupation |
|----|--------|------------------|-----|--------------------|--------------|--------------------------|
| 1 | M | High School | 56 | PH | 35 | Control Operator |
| 2 | M | High School | 54 | VI | 3 | Switchboard Operator |
| 3 | M | High School | 36 | PH | 4 | Assistive Service |
| 4 | M | Undergraduate | 22 | VI | 4 | Computer Technician |
| 5 | M | BA | 49 | CD and PH | 22 | Vocational Counselor |
| 6 | F | BA | 30 | VI | 6 | Desk Job Workers |
| 7 | M | BA | 30 | CD and PH | 5 | Vocational Counselor |
| 8 | M | BA | 36 | CD and PH | 5 | Civil Servant |
| 9 | M | BA | 41 | PH | 14 | Switchboard Operator |
| 10 | F | High School | 27 | VI | 5 | Control Operator |
| 11 | M | BA | 43 | CD and PH | 9 | Desk Job Workers |
| 12 | M | Undergraduate | 24 | CD and PH | 3 | Civil Servant |
| 13 | M | Undergraduate | 34 | PH | 8 | Computer Manager |
| 14 | M | Secondary School | 47 | InD and LSD | 6 | Desk Job Workers |
| 15 | M | High School | 35 | VI | 8 | Desk Job Workers |
| 16 | M | Secondary School | 35 | PH and LSD | 19 | Assistive Service |
| 17 | F | High School | 34 | PH | 3 | Janitor |
| 18 | M | BA | 24 | VI | 6 | Administrative Personnel |
| 19 | M | Master's Degree | 33 | HI | 9 | Engineer msc |
| 20 | M | BA | 31 | PH | 3 | Desk Job Workers |
| 21 | M | High School | 33 | PH | 6 | Assistive Service |
| 22 | M | High School | 45 | PH and VI | 3 | Assistive Service |
| 23 | M | Undergraduate | 39 | PH | 5 | Desk Job Workers |
| 24 | M | High School | 44 | PH | 3 | Janitor |
| 25 | M | BA | 39 | CD | 8 | Desk Job Workers |
| 26 | M | High School | 38 | VI | 6 | Janitor |
| 27 | M | High School | 31 | InD and PH | 2 | Janitor |
| 28 | M | High School | 29 | HI | 8 | Janitor |
| 29 | F | Undergraduate | 25 | VI | 4 | Janitor |
| 30 | M | Secondary School | 33 | InD | 2 | Janitor |

VI: Visually Impaired; InD: Intellectual Disability; PH: Physically Handicapped; CD: Chronic Diseases; HI: Hearing Impaired; LSD: Language and Speech Disorders; BA: Bachelor of Arts.

Data Collection and Analysis

In the study, a voice recorder was used to record answers to questions in the interview form, information form, and questions in the information form for collecting data. The researcher developed an information form to acquire demographic information on the participants, including gender, disability type, and experience. The researcher asked probe questions to get more detailed answers although participants answered the question. The researcher held a different session with each participant one time and interviewed face to face in quiet rooms which were located in participants' working place rooms

were selected for face to face interview in for only the participant and researcher and they were standing alone. The highest recording time was 57 minutes and 37 seconds and the lowest recording time was 4 minutes and 46 seconds. The average recording time for 30 participants was 10 minutes and 8 seconds. Interview questions were sent to special education experts. After then, pilot study was conducted to three participants. The last question of interview was revised. Opinions of three participants who participated in the pilot study were excluded in the current study.

Descriptive analysis was employed to analyze the data obtained from the interviews with disabled employees who participated voluntarily in the study. Descriptive analysis was conducted in four stages: processing of data in accordance with the thematic framework, description of findings, interpretation of findings and development of framework (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2008). After the audio-recorded interviews, each participant was ascribed a code. The researcher transcribed the interviews verbatim. After checking the transcriptions of the interviews, the *Interview Encoding Key* was employed to classify the data. Two independent researchers subsequently evaluated the categories and sub-categories that resulted from the analysis. This was imperative to ensure the reliability of the data (Kvale, 1996, as cited in Becit, Kurt, and Kabakçı, 2009). The markings performed on the interview coding keys by the two independent researchers were checked to determine whether they were consistent with each other to ensure inter-rater reliability. The inter-rater reliability was calculated by coding the appropriate category containing each answer in the interview coding key. The formula $reliability = (consensus / (consensus + disagreement)) \times 100$ was employed (Miles and Huberman, 1994.) On average, the inter-rater reliability was 95%.

Results

The results are presented in relation to the aims of the study under three central themes: views about the working environment, perspectives of the profession, and environmental perspectives of individual with disabilities and professions.

Theme 1: Views about the Working Environment

There are 4 sub-themes that explained below under “*Views about the Working Environment*”.

Sub Theme 1.1: Workload and Working Hours and Physical Conditions

There are “*Workload and Working Hours*” and “*Physical Conditions*” under the sub-theme 1. Table 2 summarizes the views of participants on sub-theme 1.1. In addition to this, the opinions of participants were explained in detail in each sub-theme.

Table 2. Workload and Working Hours and Physical Conditions

| Participants Who Expressed Their Opinions about Working Hours (F) | P 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 11, 23, 24, 29, 30 (11) | Participants' Negative Opinions |
|---|---|--|
| | | P 3-4-5-6-30 Lack of support and staff members increases workload. |
| | | P 7 Serving troubled citizens creates stress, thus increasing workload. |
| | | P 9-29 Stress of work overload reflected at home. |
| | | P 11-24 Working hours too long. |
| | | P 23-24 Administrators unable to empathize and understand situation, thus increasing workload of those with disabilities. |
| Participants Who Expressed Their Opinions about Physical Conditions (F) | P 9, 12, 13, 15, 23, 26 (6) | Participants' Negative Opinions |
| | | P 15 Need walking track in office. |
| | | P 23 No wheelchair ramps, elevators, and accessible toilets are problematic. Few institutions with suitable physical conditions. |
| | | P 26 Floors not suitable for cleaning and require many problematic chemicals. Materials easier to clean with should be used. |
| | | Participants' Positive Opinions |
| | | P 9-12-13 Physical conditions have been made suitable for working. |

*P=Participants

Workload and working hours.

Participants stated that they have an extra workload and suffer from the lack of personnel and administrators' lack of knowledge about disability as indicated in Table 2. For example, five participants (P3, P4, P5, P6 and P30) related that the lack of personnel resulted in them having an increased workload. P4 explained that the “*lack of many personnel and equipment are the reasons for the extra workload.*”. P3 continued “*School is big. It would be good to have another janitor.*”. P23 asserted that managers do not have empathy: “*They can increase my workload.*”

Moreover, P7 stated, “*I need to visit 10 to 15 places. Thus, I am getting tired more and besides this, I should not do things that need excessive effort. Managers know what I need; however, they do not use initiative.*” P9 reflected that the workload would result in fatigue, not only in the working environment

but also at home. P9 elucidated, “*I reflect my fatigue unwittingly to my children by reason of my myopathy.*”. P29 shared, “*I am visually impaired, I need a more time when I am doing my work ... otherwise, I feel more stressed and being a janitor is more tiring and I reflect my stressful situation at home.*”. P11 and P24 espoused the same thoughts, remarking that the lack of sufficient personnel led to the extra workload and flexible working hours in light of the disabilities were important.

Physical conditions.

The participants’ views about physical conditions at work are presented in Table 2. Only five of the participants expressed their opinions about the physical conditions of their workplaces. While P9, P12 and P13 expressed positive thoughts, P15 and P23 stated that their working environment was not suitable because their disabilities were ignored. For instance, P9, P12 and P13 gave their opinions about the positive changes they experienced in the physical conditions. P9 related that “*toilet bowls and elevators have become easily accessible for ID.*”. On the contrary, P15, P23 and P26 asserted that there was no proper physical working environment for ID in the buildings in which they worked.

Sub Theme 1.2: Needs and Demands (Assistive Devices and Technologies, Regulations and In-Service Training)

There are “*Assistive Devices and Technologies, Regulations and In-Service Training*” under the sub-theme 1.2. That summarizes the views of participants in Table 3.

Table 3. Assistive Devices and Technologies and Regulations

| Participants Who Expressed Their Opinions about Assistive Devices and Regulations (F) | Participants’ Negative Opinions |
|--|--|
| P 1, 2, 5, 9, 10, 13, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24, 25, 28, 29, 30 (18) | P 10-15-18-19 Government should provide programs and large monitors for the visually impaired and special devices and prostheses for those with disabilities with health problems. |
| | P 16 Using electric bicycles and public transportation are difficult. |
| | P 18 Government must arrange assistive devices. |
| | P 20-24 In-service training programs needed. |
| | P 28 Article–compulsory work assigned by supervisor is abuse. |
| | P 18-19-25 Annual leave problematic. |
| | Participants’ Positive Opinions |
| | P 1-2-5-9-13-18 Needs are met. |
| | P 18-21-25-29 In-service training and education support is beneficial. |
| | P 30 Safer materials (mask, protective gloves) necessary for hygiene. |

*P=Participants

As seen in Table 3, participants expressed that they need assistive devices and technologies such as screen reader programs, and electrical bicycle. For instance, P10 and P19 needed technological devices and tools. P19 explained “*Without hearing aids and prosthesis, doing my work is impossible.*”. P10 also asserted how those programs should be provided free for ID: “*Audio programs such as JAWS are vital for visually impaired people. I applied to get it from ministry when I started my job, but they said they could not send it because the price of the license is expensive.*”. P15 also explained about the programs that “*Although we have eye-glasses, we may not see. It would be better for us if there are screen reader programs for visually impaired people.*”. In another participant (P16) also highlighted the importance of electric bicycles: “*We sometimes go to a provincial directorate of national education. If there is an electric bicycle, we can do our work more easily on time.*”. P18 explained that although devices and technology such as a screen reader and the JAWS program were expensive, when the government provided such, they could afford them. He thus expressed his gratitude: “*I need programs such as the JAWS program. I appreciate my institution they provided programs that I needed. But some institutions do not provide these types of equipment for their disabled workers and it should be provided free.*”

As listed in table 3, participants indicated their needs on arrangements related to health leave, financial assistance, exams, and annual leave. For example, P19 and P25 stated that the government provided financial assistance for buying such devices, this support was insufficient. P19 also added, “*The government supports hearing aids; however, they have to be exempted from value-added tax and special consumption tax.*”. P25 needs devices that are related to diabetes: “*I have diabetes and I use insulin. I would like to get free all devices for diabetes from the government.*”. P18 expressed a different view:

“It is wrong for ID to benefit both [from a] disability living allowance and disability working allowance [...] besides that, using free bus and train passes are indicative of exclu[sion] from the society. People who invigilate an exam for visually impaired people need to be trained, and some arrangements should be made on accessibility and utilization of public services.”

P19 stated that legal action should be taken with regard to annual leave and health leave to improve conditions. For example, P19 expressed that:

“My inner ear infection recurred. When I first arrived, I had no annual

leave because I was a candidate officer. And administrative leave is only given hourly. I can't go and get treatment the day before. I go to the treatment for at least five to six days a year. I have my ear cleaned annually and go for a checkup at least three to four times. I use a hearing aid. Normally, they have to give us extra permission. If they can allow for 30 days directly instead of 20 days, it is very good, because I spend all of them on treatment."

P28 concurred, *"Our job description is written on a Turkish Labor Law. But, work that is not my duty can be given by our supervisors and administrators."*

Finally (P1, P2, P5, P9 and P18) acknowledged that their needs were met by the government. For example, P9 explained *"Sometimes I need a hearing aid for work. Our need was met when we told it to our supervisors."* On the contrary, P18 had a different opinion. He asserted that legal arrangements such as free travel stigmatize those with disabilities as well as the government and public servants rather than benefiting them. He added *"We have a disabled group that not only wants to get a salary from the government but also benefits from the disability relief."*

Participants stated in Table 3 that in-service training contributes them to do their profession right and therefore they need in-service training. For example, P18, P20 and P24 added that various arrangements for in-service training activities should be made so as to create a workplace with enhanced quality. P24 also explained that in-service training related to their profession was beneficial and added that there was a need for legal rights training because most disabled employees did not have information about their legal rights: *"The best part was to be informed about both in-service training and legal rights; most of the ID do not know their rights."* P18 declared that the training they received on the systems they were using was beneficial: *"After I received one-to-one training assisted with screen reader software, I was able to use it."*

Sub Theme 1.3: Attitudes of Employees and Managers and Assigning Jobs/Tasks Appropriate to Disability and Education

There are *"Attitudes of Employees and Managers and Assigning Jobs/Tasks Appropriate to Disability and Education"* under the sub-theme 3 that summarizes the views of participants in the Table 4. Additionally, the opinions of participants were explained in detail in each sub-theme.

Table 4. Attitudes of Employees and Managers and Assigning Jobs/Tasks Appropriate to Disability and Education

| | | | | |
|---|---------------|---|--|--|
| Participants Who Expressed Their Opinions about Attitudes of Employees and Managers (F) | P 6, 13, 14, | Participants' Negative Opinions | | |
| | 16, 17, 18, | | P 6-29 | Managers unable to empathize. Need to share our difficulties. |
| | 20, 21, 23, | | P 13 | Many superior-subordinate relationships, similar to the military. |
| | 24, 27, 29, | | P 7-23-24 | Managers no understanding of situation of those with disabilities and unable to empathize. |
| | 30 | | P 27 | Jealousy among colleagues is a major problem. |
| (13) | P 18 | Managers have negative attitudes and prejudices us. | | |
| | | Participants' Positive Opinions | | |
| | | P 14-16-17-20-21-24-29-30 | Managers very understanding and helpful. | |
| | | P 13 | Managers help with admin when staff with disabilities are transferred. | |
| Participants Who Expressed Their Opinions about Assigning Jobs/Tasks Appropriate to Disability and Education (F) | P 2, 4, 7, 8, | Participants' Negative Opinions | | |
| | 17, 18, 20, | | P 7-17 21-24-28 | Problems with assigned jobs and tasks that are not suitable for disability. |
| | 21, 24, 28, | | P 7-8-20-21-29 | Problems with assigned jobs and tasks that are not suitable for education. |
| | 29 | | P 21 | The profession increases the level of disability and exacerbates it. |
| | (11) | | Participants' Positive Points | |
| | | P 2-3-4-18-19 | Positive effects of employing individuals with disabilities in a job related to their education. | |

*P=Participants

Attitudes of employees and managers.

As listed in Table 4, participants explained that while eight participants stated that their managers have a lack of empathy and have a negative attitude towards to ID, others indicated that their managers are helpful and understanding. For example, P23 and P24 believed that that their disability status was ignored because the managers did not empathize with their situation and treated them as though they did not have any disability and therefore, conflict resulted. On the contrary, P18 related that the supervisors did not communicate and associate with those with disabilities. Furthermore “*they did not give ID any work to do since they found them inadequate because of their prejudices or protective attitudes. They even directed disabled workers to just draw the salary but not do any job.*”. P13 shared that the superior-subordinate relationship in the institution was evident and he felt as though he was in the military. P27 related that when he wanted to do something useful, his colleagues

accused him of trying to “*get in someone’s good book.*”. P6 and P29 said that although their managers had difficulty understanding them, their attitudes were positive when they explained themselves. Some participants (P14, P16, P17, P20, P21, P24, P29 and P30) believed that their managers and colleagues had a positive attitude toward them and understood them. Thus, they got on well with their superiors and friends. They added that their supervisors were very understanding, provided necessary help, helped them with the work that their friends and managers could not do, and were understanding when they could not do the jobs given to them. P17 expressed her satisfaction with the managers when she related, “*My colleagues, manager, help me in my job. My health report says that I cannot work standing, but when a person is in the work environment and does not work properly, he is questioning himself psychologically.*”. P20 related, “*From my colleagues in the room and also with the help of my manager, I am slowly learning something new.*”. Similarly, P24 shared that the administrators in his new institution were understanding of the “*disability in my right hand.*” He wished others would take this “*into consideration. ... and behaved more positively in such matters.*”.

However, P7, P18 and P23 expressed the view that individuals in supervisory or managerial positions should distribute work and take initiatives that are mindful of the employees’ disability status. They added that the managers did not understand them and exhibited negative attitudes toward them. P7 asserted,

“I think managers should take initiatives in this regard. For instance, since they know my condition, they should assign tasks that are suitable for me. I don't mean this to isolate myself from work or to escape work. But I mean that the work I do in such intensity affects my health negatively and I do not want to go through the same situation again, so I want them to assign me a suitable task.”

P23 related a personal story about to illustrate that managers made no attempt to understand them:

“Our only problem is the managers’ lack of empathy. I told my administrator to come and sit down in the wheelchair. Sit in the wheelchair when you get up in the morning and try to wear your pants without using your feet. The situation changed a little more positively afterwards.”

Similarly, P18 thus deliberated on the superiors’ negative attitudes:

“The attitude of the supervisor is as if he/she is going into a rage when

he/she sees a disabled person. The supervisors have a tendency to push the disability away from themselves in their working life. It is an outcome of prejudices and protective policy: the ID can't do that. The managers don't assign any work to the disabled because of their personal attitudes."

P27 related his thoughts about his colleagues' behavior:

"When I want to do something positive, they think that I am trying to get in my superior's good book or lackey. Although I think it will be beneficial for the school, I come across a lot of envy among the colleagues."

Sub Theme 1.4: Assigning Jobs/Tasks Appropriate to Disability and Education

The participants' opinions are presented in Table 4, indicates that eight participants' job are not suitable for their education and disabilities. The other participants think that jobs they have contribute to their life. For example, P2, P3, P4, P18 and P19 stated that they were employed in jobs related to their school or university education and thus, believed their education contributed to their professional and/or daily life. P2 explained that his job was related to his training: *"I also received switchboard training. Here I work as a switchboard operator. I had also received switchboard training at the school for visually impaired people."* P4 related he had the opportunity to use the education he had received in his current job: *"The training I received so far are about computers, so I applied most of the things I have learned at school in my professional life."* Similarly, P18 explained that although his job was not related to his profession when he was first appointed to the public office, this was currently not the case: *"Here, I worked as a switchboard operator although it was not my duty. Now, I am doing my own job. The education I received has contributed many things to me in the public service."*

However, P7, P8, P20, P21 and P29 complained they did not have an opportunity to use the education they had received from the schools or universities they had graduated from in their professional lives, they were not employed in jobs or tasks appropriate for their education, and that they were doing jobs for which they were unqualified. P7 explained, *"I am a textile engineer. I have received training on, for example, textile machinery, on fabrics, etc. It has nothing to do with the processes or duties I am doing now."* Similarly, P8 shared *"My real profession is teaching. I worked as a teacher for 6 years. I took KPSS [the entrance exam for civil service] and was appointed to*

here rather than my profession.”. P20 related, “I do accounting, but I have not received any training on accounting, so it is rather with my own efforts.”. Similar to P7, P24 stated that because he was not given a job that was suitable for his disability, he had to change jobs: “I worked at the university before too, I had difficulties there as a disabled person. They asked me to do things beyond my capabilities.”

P17 explained that he had undergone training, engaged in various studies and taken exams to acquire a promotion “Because I am orthopedically impaired, it is not a suitable job for me at all. For that reason, I am still taking exams. I have further thoughts about education, now I am better; I want to be promoted in my profession.”. P21 thus deliberated about the legal rights of the ID:

“My job brings additional obstacles to me. The law, it says that an employee with disabilities cannot be given a job which causes another disability. I had a nerve compression in my left arm which is not disabled. I have submitted a petition to the provincial directorate of national education that I work twice, explaining that I can’t do much work here and that my body was collapsing. There was no answer. I did not have the opportunity to use the training I received in my professional life.”

Theme 2: Perspectives of Profession

There are 2 sub-themes that explained belowunder “*Perspectives of Profession*”.

Sub Theme 2.1: Perspectives of Self and Profession of Individuals with Disabilities and Reasons for Choice of Profession

Table 5 summarizes the views of participants on sub-theme 2.1. In addition to this, the opinions of participants were explained in detail in each sub-theme.

Perspectives of self and profession of individuals with disabilities.

As listed in Table 5, while 11 participants related that their profession was good for them, that it helped them forget about their obstacles, and helped them to participate in society, two of the participants shared that their profession exhausted them and they worked out of necessity. For instance, 11 participants believed their performance in various things was superior to that of those without disabilities because they had developed greater self-confidence, overcome the problems arising from their disabilities, had time for their social and cultural lives and were involved in society. P9 explained:

“I had an incredible self-confidence with the job. Until I was 30, I lived without any financial income like a parasite. I was a successful student,

Although I was accepted to University I did not want to study. After I got a job, I finished the university with the advantage of my economic income.”.

Table 5. Perspectives of Self and Profession of Individuals with Disabilities and Reasons for Choice of Profession

| Participants Who Expressed Their Opinions about Perspectives of Self and Profession of Individuals with Disabilities (F) | Participants' Negative Opinions |
|--|---|
| P 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 28, 29 (22) | P 5-8 Negative attitudes toward the profession. P 4-7-8-9-11-18-21-22 The profession very tiring and stressful. |
| Participants Who Expressed Their Opinions about Perspectives of Self and Profession (F) | Participants' Positive Points |
| P 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30 (26) | P 1-2-4-9-10-12-13-15-23-24-29 Positive attitudes toward the profession. P 9-12-23-24-25-29 Professional life beneficial to hold onto life and overcome disabilities. P 18-23-24 Better for those with disabilities to work than stay at home. Working helps socialization, psychological health, paying health expenses, and good finances. Employment of individual with disabilities should be supported. |
| Participants Who Expressed Their Opinions about Reasons for Choice of Profession (F) | Participants' Negative Opinions |
| P 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30 (26) | P 1-3-7-8-9-13-14-17-25-29 Chose profession due to unemployment problem. do not feel productive. Expectations not met. P 11 Chose profession only to work in a public institution. P 21 Chose public sector instead of private sector because those with disabilities experience difficulties such as negative attitudes and low job security in latter. |
| Participants Who Expressed Their Opinions about Reasons for Choice of Profession (F) | Participants' Positive Points |
| P 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30 (26) | P 1-2-4-5-6-9-10-13-16-18-19-20-25-26-27-28-29-30 Chose job loved. Love profession right now. P 21-24 Being a civil servant employee is a guarantee of job. |

*P=Participants

P12 related *“I was isolated from the society. Thanks to my job, I started to communicate. Due to some problems caused by my disability, I have been away from living close to the society for a long time.”*. P24 also stated that thanks to his job:

“I improved myself both socially and culturally. I could not spare time for myself in private sector. After I switched to the public institution, I had more time to deal with social activities. As long as I can go out, see around, and do shopping like normal people, I never notice that I have a disability.”.

Likewise, P1 believed that he was able to do what other people could not do, thanks to his job; he shared, *“Sometimes, disability disappears in our eyes. Therefore, we have the belief that we can do very superior things than a normal citizen. In this way, we go to our job whole heartedly.”*

Eight participants acknowledged that they became tired while doing their job. They added that they loved their job even though they experienced difficulties in their professional life, which they were able to overcome. P4 shared *“We come across problems in our professional life. But I still love my job, I like to find solutions despite the difficulties.”*. However, P11 related, *“I get mentally tired. Sometimes it gets so tiring. Sometimes I wish to be an office boy. At least, office boy has a clear job definition.”*.

Reasons for choice of profession.

The participants' reasons for choosing their profession are mostly related with the job that they have is appropriate for their disability, avoid the unemployment and having a job in public sector as presented in Table 5. For example, P2, P18 and P26 stated that they had chosen their particular jobs because it was suitable for their disability. Furthermore, they thought that working as a civil servant was suitable for them after having different jobs, they chose to work as a staff servant because being visually impaired was not suitable for office jobs, and that they consciously preferred the job as they had been educated in that field. P2 related, *“My reason for choosing this job is because I can't see. Visually impaired people have a tendency to do this since they do it well.”*. P20 chose to work as a civil servant based on his experience in the private sector: *“I engaged in trade a lot, I worked in the private sector. I came here because I thought being a civil servant would suit me.”*.

The reasons P1, P9, P13, P28 and P29 gave for choosing their profession include to secure a livelihood, avoid unemployment, meet financial needs, marry, and establish a home. Their choices were also related to the low wages the disabled earned and their inability to do other jobs in the private sector. Almost all of the participants also stated that they liked their profession and derived satisfaction from it. For example, P1 acknowledged, *“This is not my choice. Then there was a problem of unemployment.”*. On the other hand, P9 related, *“I was unemployed and decided to work. As the shortest way, I wanted to enter a public institution and be able to meet my financial needs.”*. In addition, P9 shared, *“About my job, I love it. It is a job I can do successfully. I've been doing it for 14 years with love. Communicating with people is a part of this job. Helping them makes me happy.”*. However, P13's choice was related to physical strength; he elucidated, *“When you are disabled, you can't do any work that requires physical strength. You know, you can't do animal husbandry, farming or things like that either. Since disabled wages were too*

low in order to get married, to have a profession, to meet the needs. So, I had to choose working as a civil servant.”. Similarly, P29 chose a profession outside her field of education because she could not find a suitable job; she related, “There was not an open position suitable for my field of education. Even the highest scores had to be janitor because it was the only position opened to us.”. However, P14, P16, P17, P21 and P24 related that they had chosen their profession because they enjoyed the benefits of being a civil servant, which included government guarantees, the helplessness they experienced because of the problems in the private sector, job security, job guarantees, social rights provided by the government, financial reasons, opportunities provided by the government, and status and ease of the profession. P16 explained, “I chose my profession because it has a government guarantee.”. Unlike the other participants, P14 said that his job was vitally important to him: “To gain dignity in the society, my friend! I would die if not for this job.”.

Theme 3: Perspective of the Environment toward Individual with Disabilities and their Professions

Table 6. Perspective of Environment toward Individual with Disabilities and their Profession

| Participants Who Expressed Their Opinions (F) | P 2, 3, 9, 10, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 24, 28, 29 (13) | Participants' Negative Opinions |
|---|--|--|
| | P 2 | Individuals with disabilities are mocked. |
| | P 3 | Position as a civil servant questioned. |
| | P 9 | Both society and government perceive doing those with a disability a favor by employing them. Endeavors to conceal disability when they work because of others' negative attitudes. |
| | P 10 | People with visually impairments have problems with tables, chairs, and cars on pavements. Others ignore them. |
| | P 18 | Others' react negatively toward those who are visually impaired and question actions because they cannot see. There is a negative perception toward individuals with disabilities because others perceive they cannot do anything. |
| | P19 | Conceal disability when applying for job because of the reluctance to employ those with disabilities. |
| | P 22 | Ridiculed because of type of profession such as cleaner and janitor. |
| | P24 | Pressurized in private sector because jobs are too difficult. |
| | P 28 | Leader-minded people are imperative when doing job. |
| | P 29 | Assigned jobs in private sector those are too difficult. |
| | | Participants' Positive Opinions |
| | P 9-18 | Improvements in social policies and attitudes toward individuals with disabilities. |
| | P 16 | Encounter positive attitudes of others in professional life; treated with love and respect. |

*P=Participants

The participants' opinions of the perspectives of the environment toward ID and their professions indicates that most participants think that they have a problem with working environment because of the negative react of colleagues towards to ID and managers' unwillingness to hire them as listed in Table 6. For example, P9 stated, "*The way our people or civil servant administrators look at ID is that 'let's find a job for the disabled.' They see it as if they are doing a favor. I think it's extremely wrong.*". P10 expressed the view that one of the prejudices inherent in society was that those with disabilities were incapable even though she experienced a positive change with social awareness: "*People behave differently, when there are a few people working in the room, they do not come to me. They direct what I do as a job to somebody else. When I say let me do it, they do not want me to do it. It has changed a little compared to the past; the public has now more awareness.*".

Similarly, P19 related that during an interview, the interviewer frowned and appeared to want to end the interview when he spoke about his disability. Consequently, he had since tried to conceal his disability. He explained,

"When you apply online, the person doesn't see or know you. If I tell the same person about my disability in the job application, I know for certain that they won't hire me. I am a technical university graduate. I have a master's degree; I have experience abroad. I received a certificate of occupational safety expertise. I know three to four programs related to the profession. They usually assign the ID to the servant position. I am one of the qualified personnel who can work in the disabled staff. But at first, people look at it negatively."

Discussion

The three major themes of the current study emerged during the interviews with the participants. The first major theme of the study, *views about working environment*, are similar to those in the literature (Crawshaw, 2002; Holmqvist, 2009; Newton et al., 2007; Russell, 2002; Schur et al., 2005; Stapleton and Burnhauser, 2003; Tören, 2014). The participants related that their workload and working hours were one of the primary sources of stress in the working environment, especially because those with disabilities may be cope stressed. Therefore, employees with disabilities are affected negatively by workload stress. Schur et al. (2005) found that a high level of stress in the working environment can cause occupational accidents and health issues. The opinions of the participants in the present study are consistent with those expressed in the literature. It is apparent that managers' negative attitudes and not assigning jobs to employees that are suitable to their disability may be

linked to their lack of knowledge about that particular disability. Crawshaw (2002) emphasized the importance of attitudes and appropriate work assignments and argued that knowledge of a disability is vital for employees that do not have disabilities. The findings further revealed that ID often do not have the devices and technologies that they need and that most of their managers had negative attitudes toward to them. Tören (2014) revealed that in Turkey, managers are reluctant to hire disabled people. Furthermore, disabled women struggle to find jobs that have sufficient materials and appropriate technologies.

The participants' opinions about the physical condition of their working environment revealed the conditions were often not suitable for ID. Newton et al. (2007) revealed that those with disabilities can only apply for jobs in buildings designed to accommodate them. During the construction of buildings, the needs of those with disabilities are ignored. Also, automatic doors pose an increased risk for those who are visually impaired.

The findings of the first theme of this study revealed that ID are not given jobs that they can do and that most tasks assigned are not suitable for the individual's particular disability. In essence, these findings contradict Turkish legislation. Article 16 of Regulations on EKPSS of Disabled Persons as Civil Servants states that institutions and organizations must ensure there is a suitable and accessible working environment for ID, take due precautions to enable them to participate in the working environment and provide assistive devices and technologies to make their work easier. Although this law requires that workplace adjustments be made for those with disabilities, the findings of this study revealed that there is a discrepancy between the law and reality. Stapleton and Burnhauser (2003) noted that there are loopholes in the enforcement of the laws governing the employment of ID. The existing law should be amended to improve this situation. Russell (2002) viewed the law from a different perspective and stated that the rate of employment of ID is unsatisfactory. This violates the principle of equality of opportunity and suggests that the main reason for not hiring or retaining workers with disabilities is financial.

Participants' opinions about second theme which is "*perspectives toward the profession*" indicate that being employed has a positive effect on participants' life. On the other hand, some participants think that having a job may cause the stress and the reason of being employed is the concern for the

future. These findings concurred with the literature (Gündüz et al., 2013; Houser and Chace, 1993; Lukas et al., 2018; Öztabak, 2017; Öztabak, 2018; Pagánand Malo, 2013). The results concerning disabled people's perspectives on themselves and their profession are mixed. Öztabak (2017, 2018) revealed that while the professional life of ID had a positive effect on them socially and psychologically, some participants experienced anxiety about being dependent on someone in the future. However, it appears that working with those without disabilities has contributed positively to the lives of disabled work.

Lukas et al. (2018) revealed that 83% of workers who are mentally disabled feel good when they work mainly because of the positive collaboration with their colleagues. In the present study, the participants' opinions on professional satisfaction varied in relation to their level of disability and job adaptation. Houser and Chace (1993) revealed that workers with disabilities congratulated themselves on having a job and thus, they enjoyed a high level of professional satisfaction. Pagán and Malo's (2009) findings on the relationship between having a job and professional satisfaction concurred with those of the present study. In essence, although those with a disability enjoyed a higher level of job satisfaction, if their disability was exacerbated, their level of job satisfaction decreased dramatically.

The third theme of the current study was *perspectives toward individuals with disabilities and professions*. The participants stated that people preferred not to employ those with disabilities. They suffer discrimination in the private sector and are mostly assigned tasks that they are unable to perform because of their disability. Although some humane managers hired disabled workers, they were ridiculed in the workplace. Thus, they suffer stigmatization and prejudgment. The findings of the study concur with the literature (Jean-Joseph, 2020; Lindsay et al., 2017; Perućica et al., 2018; Snyder et al., 2010).

The participants also spoke about discrimination, prejudgment and stigmas. Goffman (1986) revealed that the reason they face stigmas and prejudice is related to their first interaction with those who are referred to as normal. The latter perceive that those with disabilities do not appear to be normal. Similarly, Tören (2014) found that the appearance of disabled men and women failed to satisfy the expectations of physical attractiveness, thus the continuation of society's negative attitude toward them.

Physical disabilities have a more significant negative influence on managers during their first interaction with those who are afflicted than other types of disabilities (Jean-Joseph, 2010; Snyder et al., 2020). Lindsay et al. (2017) revealed that although some managers hired ID, these employees were socially excluded by their colleagues at work. Perućica et al. (2018) revealed that civil servant employees have more positive attitudes toward the employment of ID than employee in the private sector. The current study, an examination of opinions as a civil servant employee, deduced that some participants experienced less discrimination than others working in the private sector, wherein they had a negative experience. In essence, the reasons the participants decided to work in the public sector included job security, dignity, greater benefits than in the private sector, and the obligation to work. Although the participants were satisfied with their jobs, they faced problems such as excessive workloads, negative attitudes and behavior, and not being assigned jobs or tasks appropriate to their disability and education. They believed there was a need to amend the law. ID do not only work as civil servants in Turkey but also as laborers in the public sector. Özbey and Cavkaytar (2020) highlights importance of education of people with disabilities, and they state that people with disabilities need to get vocational education in local and national labour requirements. The current study relationship between people with disabilities' education and their jobs are incompatible and authors also recommends that vocational education should be implemented to people with disabilities according to labour requirements. Artar and Ergenekon (2020) state that leisure time might be beneficial for people with disabilities both earning income and having a job. For further studies, it is recommended that getting opinions of people with disabilities who have an income with leisure time activities. This study was limited in that only four of the participants were female. Furthermore, none of the participants were laborers. It is recommended that future studies compare the private and public sectors as well as examine the differences between working as a laborer in the civil service and as a covenanted employee. It is also recommended that gender equality be examined among employees who have disabilities.

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