



**T.C
HALIÇ UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE FOR GRADUATE STUDIES
DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION
BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION MASTER WITH THESIS
PROGRAMME**

**THE MANAGERIAL PRACTICES OF LEBANESE
RESTAURANTS TOWARDS WORKFORCE WITH
DISABILITIES**

MASTER THEISES

**BY
Rasha AL SHAER**

**Thesis Advisor
Assist. Prof. Dr. Mustafa ŞENYÜCEL**

**İSTANBUL
June 2022**





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TO THE DIRECTORATE OF INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE EDUCATION

MBA Study prepared by the Department MSc Program Student Rasha Al SHAER with the subject '*Management Practices of Lebanese Restaurants Towards Workforce with Disabilities*' is approved by our jury as a Project.

Thesis Defense Date: 30/06/2022

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MANAGEMENT PRACTICES OF LEBANESE RESTAURANTS TOWARDS WORKFORCE WITH DISABILITIES

ORJİNALLİK RAPORU

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THESIS ETHICS STATEMENT

I declare that I have completed this study titled “*The managerial Practices of Lebanese Restaurants Towards Workforce with Disabilities*”, which I submitted as an MA thesis/Dissertation, under the responsibility of my advisor Dr. Saver Omeraki Cekirdekci from the beginning to end, that I have collected the respective data/examples myself, that I have done/had the experiments/analysis done in the relevant laboratories and that I have fully indicated the information I received from other sources in the text and in the references, I have acted in accordance with the scientific research and ethics rules during the working process, and that I accept all legal consequences in the contrary case.

Rasha AL SHAER

PREFACE

I praise the Lord for His unending grace and mercies. I would want to begin by expressing our heartfelt gratitude to all business administration faculty members and others who have supported me throughout my master's degree, particularly Assist. Prof. Dr. **Şahver Omeraki Cekirdekci**. I also want to thank Assist. Prof. Dr. **Mustafa Şenyücel**, my academic supervisor, for his continuous patience, assistance, motivation, advice, and vast knowledge, as well as for always taking the time to help us when we needed it.

In addition, I also like to thank everyone who contributed to and participated in this study and everyone who shared their unique ideas and perspectives on the subject with me. Finally, my family and friends have extended unwavering support to me no matter what these past few months have brought.

June, 2022

Rasha AL SHAER

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ABBREVIATIONS

ADA	: Americans with Disabilities Act
CRDP	: Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
ESCWA	: Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
HR	: Human Resources
LMICs	: Low- and Middle-Income Countries
LPHU	: Lebanese Physical Handicapped Union
PWD	: People With Special Needs
WHO	: World Health Organization

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ÖZET

LÜBNAN RESTORANLARININ ENGELLİ İŞGÜCÜNE YÖNELİK YÖNETSEL UYGULAMALARI

Lübnan'da engelli insanlar, erişilebilirlik gibi sorunlar da dahil olmak üzere, istihdamın önünde sayısız engelle karşı karşıyadır. Hala yüksek maliyetli konaklama ile ilişkilidirler. Bu tezin amacı, yöneticilerin engelli bireyleri barındırmak için nasıl benimsediklerini keşfetmektir. Bu tez, bu kişilerin işyerinde karşılaştıkları nedenleri, zorlukları ve engelleri araştırmaktadır. Lübnanlı yöneticilerle yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler yapılmıştır. Veriler daha sonra tematik bir yaklaşım kullanılarak analiz edildi. Farklı temalar bir araya geldi ve bulgular, Lübnan restoranlarının özel ihtiyaçları olan kişilerin işyerlerindeki olumlu etkisini algıladıklarını ortaya koydu. Ancak, iş yeri kültürü, ayrımcılık vb. gibi farklı zorluklarla karşılaştıklarından istihdamları konusunda şüphelidirler. Araştırmacılar bu çalışmayı Lübnan'ın konaklama endüstrisindeki engelli insanları incelemek için bir rehber olarak kullanabilirler.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Engelli İşgücü, Çeşitlilik Yönetimi, Lübnan.*

ABSTRACT

THE MANAGERIAL PRACTICES OF LEBANESE RESTAURANTS TOWARDS WORKFORCE WITH DISABILITIES

In Lebanon, people with disabilities face numerous barriers to employment, including issues like accessibility. They are still associated with high-cost accommodations. The aim of this thesis was to explore how managers adopt to accommodate people with disabilities. This thesis investigates the reasons, challenges, and barriers these people encounter at the workplace. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with Lebanese managers. Data were then analyzed using a thematic approach. Different themes emerged and findings revealed that Lebanese restaurants perceive the positive impact of people with special needs in their workplace. However, they are skeptical of their employment since different challenges confront them, such as workplace culture, discrimination, etc. Researchers could use this study as a guide to study people with disabilities in Lebanon's hospitality industry.

Keywords: *Workforce with Disabilities, Diversity Management, Lebanon.*

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background and Overview

Fulfilling human rights standards related to the Community for people with disabilities became a norm. However, the real adoption of inclusive practices is lower than claimed. People with disabilities also continue to experience a variety of impediments to full community integration (United Nations, 2018, p. 24). In April 2018, the Executive Committee set up by the Secretary-General stressed the urgent need for the United Nations system to improve its performance in the inclusion of people with disabilities.

Kiernan et al. (2011, p. 303) reported that “although not every person with a disability will work, we know that the vast majority want to work and are calling for real jobs”. Working-age disabled individuals have a lower employment rate than non-disabled individuals, and they receive lower wages than their non-disabled counterparts when employed (WHO, 2011).

A disability is defined as an impairment, psychological or physical, that interferes with basic living activities or bodily function, according to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). When describing disability in 1980, the World Health Organization (WHO) emphasized on activity limits (WHO, 2011). In 2001, disability’s meaning based on the World Health Organization has expanded to include activity restrictions, environmental factors, barriers, and participation restrictions (Smeltzer, 2007).

According to Alston and Hampton (2000), individuals with special needs remained underrepresented in a number of work domains. In fact, according to the United Nations' international program of action reported that more than half of the world's disabled people are unemployed. In the United States, for example, roughly 65 percent of persons with impairments claim they can't find work. Further, half of universities and college graduates with special needs cannot find a job. Several research papers revealed that disabled people can usually do the same tasks as others (Hartnett et al., 2011).

Throughout the years, the perception of people about special needs has dramatically changed. In fact, people with disabilities, in today's contemporary culture, are perceived to have a lot more to offer to the public society (Mergenhausen, 1997).

This group of folks is all too familiar with "the painful and discouraging memories of being referred to as "crippled" and deemed worthless by many in society" as claimed by Bevins (2003, p. 9). Perceptions of people about disabilities have been slow to enhance in the working environment since these individuals are perceived as incapable of taking part in or contributing to society and that they should rely on charitable organizations or welfare. Foley and Ferri (2012) also found that people with special needs often feel lonely and isolated at work. They also realized that people with disabilities lack friendship or socialization with others, which hinders their career development.

On the other hand, other studies have shown that persons with certain impairments represent a key and vital diversity value for companies (Nafukho et al., 2010), and if employed, they are perceived to live longer and with a greater quality of life (McKinley et al., 2004). There are different benefits to both parties, such as people with special needs and organization, when they get together at work.

Disability access services provide organizations with a loyal and qualified workforce, a greater diversity of knowledge, and opportunities to raise public awareness about the provision of accommodations for people with disabilities. Equal opportunity in the workplace provides freedom and better life quality for people with disabilities (McKinley et al., 2004).

By empowering people with special needs, society can obtain independent citizens. It is possible to narrow the skill gap in many fields. Thus, to guarantee opportunities for such a category of people, "appropriate employment of individuals with disabilities will rely heavily on training, testing, evaluation, and performance support" (Freeburg, 1994, p. 94).

1.2. Problem Definition

Organizations must involve, enlist, and support people with impairments in the workplace if they want to take advantage of their abilities (Lunsford and Dolison, 2019). Research indicates that people with disabilities can carry out many jobs;

however, they are much less likely to keep and maintain their job (Nafukho et al., 2010). Hughes et al. (2016) articulated the importance to deal with human beings fairly, equally, and equitably. In addition, they emphasized the significance of using techniques that encompass more than one discipline whilst presenting offerings for men and women with disabilities. Professionals can also have some particular narrow-minded perspectives of people with special needs, which can have an impact on their attitudes toward people with impairments (Hidegh and Csillag, 2013). These perspectives can also further motivate employees to stop treating people with disabilities with dignity and respect.

This study aims to investigate the practices of the hospitality sector as well as the barriers in relation to people with special needs as employees, mainly in Lebanon the past years from 2000 to 2022. Further, it is expected to encourage companies to incorporate them in the work environment by implementing additional strategies, which help managers easily accommodate these individuals. Businesses are recommended to create a culture that acknowledges and respects people with disabilities. Hence, new perspectives on disability need to be considered.

1.3. Research Significance

Currently, people with disabilities are perceived to have a lot more to offer such as loyalty and productivity at work (Mergenhagen, 1997). This research is conducted in an attempt to explore the role of managerial practices at the workplace to help people with disabilities to adapt the challenges in today's world.

Lebanon is a developing country with a unique socio-economic background. In Lebanon, there is a systemic absence of protections for disabled people's rights, resources, and services. According to the most trustworthy figures and data available, between 10% and 15% of the Lebanese population suffers from intellectual, physical, sensorial, or mental problems (Combaz, 2018). Eighty percent of disabled individuals "are not or have never been employed" (CESCR, 2016, p.4). Furthermore, only 1% of children with impairments in school attend conventional public schools (JS15, n.d., p. 3). Furthermore, popular understanding, attitudes, and behaviors concerning individuals with disabilities are frequently centered on philanthropic or medical approaches to dealing with impairments, rather than administrative or managerial approaches to dealing with disabilities (Combaz, 2018).

Despite legislation aimed expressly at promoting and safeguarding the rights of people with disabilities, employment engagement among individuals with disabilities continues to fall behind that of their able-bodied and similarly educated peers. Disability in Lebanon is a poorly explored topic (Wehbi and El-Lahib, 2007). Lebanon lacks investigations that help managers understand the importance of integrating people with special needs into work settings. Further research might be also encouraged through this thesis. Furthermore, workers with disabilities are more likely than their non-disabled counterparts to report underemployment, compulsory part-time or contingent employment, and lower-than-average incomes even when employed. This study is significant to encourage managers to benefit from people with special needs to increase the workplace's competitive advantage for example.

1.4. Research Questions and Objectives

Most research on accommodating disabled employees in companies is conducted in Western countries, such as in the United States, Canada, etc. Due to ethnic cultural differences, the results obtained in the Western context may not apply to the Lebanese context. Thus, conducting such a study might be helpful to fill the gap in the literature regarding people with special needs in the service sector.

It would be interesting to study how Lebanese companies interact with people with special needs at the workplace. To achieve these purposes, this study focuses to achieve the following objectives. First, this paper is intended to examine the practices of managers accommodating people with disabilities. Second, it investigates the barriers which prevent disabled people from working as normal individuals. Finally, this study pursues developing recommendations for managers to encourage them to incorporate people with special needs in their companies.

Research Questions:

After reading several studies and based on the literature existing, some research questions were created to limit the research area and help the author with the optimal tools to explore the selected field of research. Thus, to better understand how disabled people are incorporated in the workplace, mainly in the hospitality industry. Conducting a study in this field is of high significance since it positions the author right in the center of service. Because this industry type is a service and human-to-human industry, it will also require diligent and imaginative workers in the future. The

author will also learn some skills that are transferable to several other industries. Research questions designed for the thesis are the following:

- What are the practices managers use to accommodate employees with disabilities in restaurants?
- What are the barriers that prevent the accommodation of people with special needs at work?

1.5. Thesis Structure

This research study is divided into six sections, which are organized in the following order. The first chapter serves as an introduction to the research, outlining the research and, its objective. The second chapter contains a review of the existing studies. The research methodology, which includes the study's design, data collection methods, and analysis is discussed in Chapter three. Chapters four details study findings while chapter five discusses the findings. Lastly, chapter six gives conclusions and recommendations about future research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter introduces the existing literature in order to clarify the subject of this study, the inclusion, and management of people with special needs in the hospitality sector and retail, mainly in Lebanese restaurants. There are few studies that illustrate the management practices about accommodating people with disabilities in the workplace. In fact, this section of the study is divided into six subsections: the first one introduces how people with special needs are managed in the workplace. The second subsection explains the effect of inclusion at work. Then, this chapter the barriers which face diverse people.

2.1. People with Special Needs in Organizations:

According to data from the World Bank and the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2011, over a billion people, or roughly 15% of the global population, suffer from some sort of impairment. In fact, people with special needs typically fight for opportunities to find a job. Furthermore, they constantly suffer from discrimination which restricts them from participating in political and social life (The WB and WHO, 2011).

According to the World Disability Report, the number of individuals with special needs is expanding all over the globe. Such an increase in their number is due to several reasons, such as the aging of the societies, an increase in chronic diseases, road traffic accidents, environmental changes, natural disasters, conflicts, diet, and substance abuse (The WB and WHO, 2011).

World Bank figures indicate that over 80% of people with disabilities live in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) and that their employment rate is around 50% to 75% lower than that of people without disabilities. The relationship between disabilities and low- and middle-income countries, job rates, school attendance rates, and ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) is depicted in Figure 2.1.



Figure 2.1. Association of disabilities in low- and middle-income countries, the employment rate, the school attendance rate, and the ratification of the CRPD, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Sullivan, J.P. et al., (2017).

A survey of major firms in the United States in 1991 revealed that there are more friendly and positive opinions toward people with special needs than current employment and census figures suggest (Census Data, 2000). An additional study in the literature supported the positive perception of disabled people at the workplace. Levy et al. (1995) compared smaller firms, which have few than 500 workers, to large companies, which possess more than 500 employees, to determine if there is a difference in views in both firms when it comes to hiring persons with special needs. Their findings indicated that small firms held considerably less favourable attitudes towards people with disabilities than large companies did.

2.2. Work for People with Disabilities:

Work is perceived as a very important element in human life. In fact, the professional activity enables the satisfaction of the main needs and ensures a feeling of security. Work is a source of finance. It is the basis for new social relationships, and it balances the time of day. It also can be a source of satisfaction and self-actualization (Jasiak and Królak, 2018).

Involving people with disabilities in professional life is a very essential element. Work enables people with disabilities to realize three major determinants of their lives: financial, rehabilitative, and social. Work plays a fundamental role in building their people's image, increasing acceptance, and giving meaning to their life (Jasiak and Królak, 2018).

People usually want to feel that others need them and that what they are doing makes sense for themselves and others. These aspects are even more important for people with disabilities, especially because they are increasingly being marginalized in today's working life with high demands on education, flexibility, and productivity (Dag, 2006).

Disability-related employment options include vocational training centers, unemployment, and open employment (Jasiak and Królak, 2018). People with disabilities have an unemployment rate of more than 80% in the Middle East (Combaz, 2018). Physical inaccessibility of the workplace, the unequal geographic distribution of services due to their concentration in large cities, the stigma associated with disability, and the low quality of professional training are all factors that contributed to this percentage.

Moreover, these stigmatized people are targets of prejudice and stereotypes (Crocker and Major, 1989). Fichten and Amsel, (1986) explained that disabled persons are portrayed as helpless, inferior, benevolent, and unattractive. Likewise, the employment rate of people with disabilities is lower than the employment rate of their peers without disabilities, regardless of their age and educational level (Houtenville et al., 2016). Salge (2018) finds that the unemployment rate for persons with disabilities is 11.3 percent, whereas the unemployment rate for people without disabilities is 5.1 %.

In addition, it is more probable that individuals with disabilities work part-work and work in service jobs compared to persons without disabilities that occupy full-time jobs management positions (Houtenville et al., 2016). Gunderson and Lee (2016) also found that workers with impairments receive 21% less than others and they are over-represented among the poor. Furthermore, disabled workers usually receive less positive feedback on job inquiries and have fewer career prospects than their colleagues (Louvet, 2007).

Previous research revealed that people perceived disabled employees as dependent, less productive incompetent, and helpless (Popovich et al., 2003). They are considered unable to compete against other workers and they are thought to be in need (Ville and Ravaud, 1998). They are considered to be less-desirable employees and have potentially higher accident rates, as well as a lower level of productivity (Hernandez et al., 2000).

On the other hand, some research found that people with disabilities are judged highly in conscientiousness and honesty (Louvet, 2007). In the same way, employers positively view disabled employees, but they are hesitant to hire them. (Hernandez et al., 2000). Different research papers found that employment provides disabled people with a positive life change: They gain self-esteem, self-confidence, and pride and their quality of life improves (Copeland et al., 2010).

2.3. Management of Disabled People in Lebanese Companies:

There is a scarcity of information in Lebanon about the hiring of disabled workers. In fact, data on the employment of persons with special needs are, even less (Jasiak and Królak, 2018). Persons with mental disorders (disabilities and diseases) have lower employment objectives than people with a variety of physical impairments. (Baldwin and Marcus, 2006). In fact, Lebanon is one of the ESCWA, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, region's eighteen Arab member countries (Jasiak and Królak, 2018). According to the Lebanese Civil Society's Coalition (2015), disabled people make up around 10% of the total Lebanese population. These are at the lowest poverty level, with 81.22% of people with disabilities neither in work nor in prior jobs whereas most of those were employed in areas that do not involve training, both technically and professionally (Jasiak and Królak, 2018). Disabled people's employment opportunities in Lebanon do not constantly provide them "a decent standard of living and career prospects" (CESCR, 2016, p. 5).

Furthermore, "80% of persons with disabilities are not or have never been employed" as reported by (CESCR, 2016, p. 4). The high number of handicapped people not employed is mainly due to three missing measures: laws about work facilities policy against discrimination; socialization, that meets the demands of the

labor market (Combaz, 2018). Even when disabled people are employed, there are problems with the quality of that work (Combaz, 2018).

During the civil war in Lebanon in the 1970s and 1980s, interest in disability developed significantly, and armed factions began to create rehabilitation clinics in order to meet the requirements of their injured soldiers. As a result, a genuine rehabilitation industry arose, aided by foreign investment from the United States and Europe, as well as several Arab countries (Jasiak and Królak, 2018).

All of these rehabilitation efforts were based on the medical concept of impairment, with the goal of altering the disability (Axelsson and Barrett, 2009). Non-governmental organizations and social activists in Lebanon were profoundly impacted by the shift from medical to social models of disability after the civil war ended in 1994 (Jasiak and Królak, 2018). Now there is more emphasis on breaking down social barriers, such as attitudes imparted by society that treat the deficits of people with disabilities as pathologies that prevent them from fully participating in social life (Jasiak and Królak, 2018). For the past 36 years, Sesobel, a non-governmental organization founded in 1976, has helped meet the needs of children with mental and physical impairments or autism through programs that take care of these children and their families (Wehbi and El-Lahib, 2007). Sesobel recently gave its first round of graduates, with mild psychological disabilities, after a program in hotel services performed by a group of professionals in collaboration with the Venezia Hotel (Wehbi and El-Lahib, 2007). In the last three years, only 8,558 children aged between 5 to 14 years old are registered as disabled in school. Moreover, just over 3,000 of these kids attend government-funded institutions, with the remainder enrolled in public and private schools (Koplewicz et al., 2018).

Legal status and rights created for disabled people in terms of their integration into society is a tool for ensuring that people with disability have access to the same rights and opportunities as everybody else. Law 200 was implemented in Lebanon in 2000. Jasiak and Królak (2018) explained that Law 220/2000 is based on the United Nations Uniform Law on Equal Opportunities for People with Disabilities and the World Program of Action for People with Disabilities. This law protects the rights of individuals with disabilities in all sectors, including education, work, medical treatment, sport, recreation, and public transportation and other services. Although Law 200 was approved in Lebanon, disabled people do not have the same educational

opportunities as others (CESCR, 2016). The provisions of Law 220/2000 on training and job placement have also not been implemented. Lebanon, in fact, has made little progress in supporting the vocational training of disabled people (Combaz, 2018).

Since 1986, the Lebanese Physical Handicapped Union (LPHU) has been fighting for the rights of individuals with disabilities (Wehbi and El□Lahib, 2007). After the LPHU led a large-scale campaign for community organization in 2000, law 220 was adopted by the Lebanese legislature to protect the rights of those with disabilities. The LPHU has concentrated on community development/organization in order to remove barriers to integration in a number of crucial sectors, including employment (Wehbi and El□Lahib, 2007).

Management's role in ensuring a company's success is to motivate their staff to reach their full potential, keep them engaged, accept change, and make sound technical choices. In fact, in the hospitality business, leadership style is a complex construct that is linked to a variety of individual and organizational factors (Kara et al., 2013).

The literature revealed that there is a positive correlation between leadership style and “personality, commitment to the organization, emotional intelligence, organizational learning, and adaptation, job satisfaction, employee performance, employee motivation, and organizational culture” (Kara et al., 2013, p.9). Kuoppala et al. (2008) conducted research that found that leadership is linked to job satisfaction. Thus, good leadership appears to boost job happiness while lowering sick leave and disability benefits.

Regarding the employment of people with special needs, the previous literature found that most managers feel reluctant to hire them due to fear of the unknown. Indeed, leaders hesitate to employ people with special needs since they do not know how to communicate with and work with disabled employees. Marion (2008) also found that employees with disabilities require a managerial style unlike the standard bureaucratic or authoritarian techniques that prioritize employee interactions. Furthermore, Stone and Colella (1996) revealed that the personality of supervisors and their expectations of employees with disabilities strongly influence the reactions of employees. There are also a variety of managerial and recruitment policies and practices in some of the leading companies to ensure that people with disabilities are not discriminated against from employment opportunities (Bruyère, 2000). Employees

with disabilities often face obstacles related to employment, performance, wages, job stability, promotions, and training due to institutional, managerial, and employee attitudes (Schur et al., 2016).

Leaders who embrace disability inclusiveness, particularly in the hospitality industry, are concerned about the employees' willingness to contribute to the organization's aims (Luu, 2019). These leaders create "aesthetics" in their hospitality services with empathy and a message that hospitality comes from services, rather than physical attractiveness, and help employees with disabilities to overcome negative perceptions of their physical appearance in the hospitality workplace (Bengisu and Balta, 2011).

It was noted that there is little research on the management and human resource practices of the Lebanese hospitality industry (Yacoub et al., 2021). Previous literature little investigated the orientation of Lebanese restaurants regarding the incorporation of people with special needs during the crises taking place. As a result of the interaction of three crises in Lebanon, the country is facing an intensifying humanitarian crisis: the massive economic collapse, the ammonium nitrate blast at the port of Beirut in the August 4, and the Covid-19 pandemic (Abouzeid et al., 2021). According to the World Bank, the current economic and financial crisis is among the worst since the mid-nineteenth century (World Bank, 2021). It is widely believed that the current situation is worse than Lebanon's 15-year civil war. Pension fund losses, real estate asset value drops in, and corporate profitability is just a few of the negative outcomes of an economic downturn (Abouzeid et al., 2021). The restaurant business and the hospitality industry are heavily damaged because their reliance on tourism that degraded. Thus, the hospitality industry becomes more complex in post-conflict settings, and it can not be understood purely from an economic standpoint.

Cherri et al., (2016, P. 165) declared that: "considering the adversities Lebanon has endured for just over three decades, the fact that it simply survived is, at first glance, quite surprising". Every day, the deterioration and fall in the Lebanese quality of life raise the pressing question of what urgent actions must be made to avoid large-scale civil upheaval. According to a current statistical study conducted by Infopro-research on a representative sample of 500 businesses in Lebanon, Lebanon's total number of unemployed workers reached 550,000, or 30% of the working population

of 1.8 million people (Bizri et al., 2021). This indicated that managers in Lebanese industries are struggling to survive and turned to be profit-seekers (Zhang et al., 2021).

In accordance with previous studies, Parnell and Lester (2003) also found that restaurants are profit-generating businesses with a predictable life cycle. According to Healy and Iomaire (2019), 15 percent of new restaurants fail in their first year, 37.62 percent in their third year, and 53.06 percent in their fifth year, contradicting the widely held number of a 90 percent restaurant failure rate. Lee and Ha (2014) found that economic downturns serve as a motivator for diners to choose low-cost eateries, cutting income for high-end businesses. Jeon (2015) also analyzed the availability of Wi-Fi while selecting a restaurant for dining out, as well as demographic factors that are boosting the trend of eating out, particularly among working women. Furthermore, according to Nel et al. (2018), shifting customer expectations and diverse cultures, which are factors that force restaurants to exercise social responsibility.

Epidemics and monetary disasters induce health and economic crises that have varying effects on different segments of the population, potentially worsening disparities (Abouzeid et al., 2021). Individuals with chronic health problems and the elderly are prone to serious health problems, according to information available on the COVID-19 crisis. This explains the fear of employing people with special needs in work to prevent severe consequences that might affect them. Employees who are unprotected, such as the self-employed, precarious workers, and those with special needs, are at risk of being disproportionately affected by the virus. This is because they do not enjoy earned sick leave or vacation time. They are not protected by traditional social protection mechanisms and additional income stabilization arrangements (Abouzeid et al., 2021).

2.4. Barriers to Disabled Persons in Work-Life:

Barriers or impediments may include attitudes or a lack of information relating to the care of and access to people with disabilities, educational institutions, parents, and other groups (Vedeler, 2014). A US Department of Labor focus group survey asked 13 employers from different industries what they think are the top areas for minimal hiring among people with disabilities. Burke et al. (2013) explained that the commonest answer was that managers require extra practical and real-world information regarding the recruitment and retention of disabled people. Furthermore, according to Sellevoll (2016), there are four different barriers to persons with special

needs working, including discrimination, cost, productivity, and an information and attitude barriers.

The type and degree of disability, the reason for the disability, and the degree of influence on life are hugely different and cannot be generalized (Mcclain-Nhlapo et al., 2018). Shakespeare adopted the same perception regarding incorporating people with special needs at work and stated that: “we could argue strongly that disabled people can work, that employment barriers should be removed, and that disabled people can make a contribution in most sectors of the economy, whether or not they have a physical or mental impairment. Yet people with severe learning difficulties will be unable to do a job, and people with severe forms of mental illness will also find it difficult to do regular work. Think of having a sight or hearing impairment in a country where you could not get glasses or a hearing aid, or batteries for a hearing aid. You would find it very hard to learn at school, and you would be disadvantaged in the job market” (Shakespeare, 2017, p. 6-7).

As for employment, it is considered highly important in today's national and international society. At the international level, protection against workplace discrimination and the human rights of disabled persons receiving increasing attention (Halvorsen and Hvinden, 2011). In fact, The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) states that people with disabilities have a right to work on an equal footing with others, and the purpose of the Convention is to guarantee equality of opportunity for persons with disabilities, to ensure the realization of their human rights, and to remove barriers that hinder them.

Lama and Osimen (2019) conducted a study in order to assess the work inclusion of people with special needs. Throughout their study, they found that frequent training and workshops for such types of people help employers to easily manage and coordinate their jobs due to effective training. Thus, the authors found that respondents who were trained and received seminars were more informed and more receptive to the concept of employing disabled persons. Based on the International Labour Office (2010), the significance of the initial training conveys basic professional skills, general knowledge as well as professional and branch-related competencies that facilitate the transition from training to the world of work for both employers and disabled people.

Santilli et al., (2014) found that people with special needs are not considered socially or technically competent. In fact, several factors resulted in people with disabilities being viewed as incompetent. First, in terms of etiology and limitations, cognitive disabilities are less understood than physical disabilities (Miller et al., 2009, p. 213). Moreover, developmental disabilities are regularly associated with additional deficits in language, fine motor skills, and emotional behavioral states such as prominent levels of fear and insufficient anger control (Parmenter, 2011).

Persons with mental diseases (impairments and illnesses) are stigmatized in the job more than people with physical illnesses and disabilities (Baldwin and Marcus, 2006). They are also more likely to find them in sheltered workplaces. However, according to a survey done by Erickson et al. (2014) businesses are satisfied with their performance and are willing to hire persons with impairments; however, it is “complicated by negative stereotypes and fears of cost and litigation”.

Furthermore, a literature review comprising thirty-four studies was conducted by Burke et al. (2013). These studies have been divided into three dissimilar classifications considering: “hiring and accommodating employees with disabilities, work performance, and affective reactions and behavioral intentions of employers”. Outcomes of this review indicated that generally, employers have positive perceptions and attitudes towards employees with disabilities. However, “employer affective reactions and behavioral intentions of employers towards disability in the work setting were less positive and negatively impact hiring decisions, provision of accommodations and work performance appraisals” (2013, p. 21). Thus, employers fear it costs more to hire people with special needs.

The same score for job performance was found in Hernandez and McDonald (2010)'s study comparing people with and without disabilities, which is frequently cited as a concern or misunderstanding of people with disabilities. Mizunoya and Mitra (2013, P. 37) reported that “approximately, the employment rates of persons with disabilities are lower than those of persons without disabilities. People with disabilities have a higher tendency to list transportation difficulties, employer or co-worker attitudes, fear or lack of trust, as well as access and support difficulties as limitations, according to the Life Opportunities Survey (LOS) (Coleman et al., 2013).

Fevre et al., (2009) reported also that 19 percent of people with disabilities reported being treated unfairly, 12 percent discriminating, 2 percent gender harassment, and 14 percent other intimidation or harassment. Moreover, more than half of people with disabilities (around 53%) reported negative experiences working with colleagues and customers which could constitute harassment or bullying compared to less than two-fifths (38%) of normal respondents (Coleman et al., 2013). The unfair treatment and discrimination of people with disabilities at the workplace take several forms, the most common: the type of work people with disabilities get, the fact that they are ignored, work hours, evaluation of professional performance or rating, and workload (Coleman et al., 2013). Furthermore, based on the British Social Attitudes Survey conducted in 2006, the vast majority of the workforce have accepted that “the main problem faced by disabled people at work is other people’s prejudice, not their lack of ability” (Coleman et al., 2013, p. 14).

Over the years, the LPHU's and its partner organizations' practical knowledge in Lebanon has revealed several fundamental hurdles, including social misconceptions about persons with disabilities as being unable to work and inaccurate internalization of these beliefs by certain people with disabilities. The exploitation of disabled people by employers, fear of handicapped people by families, isolation of disabled people in workshops for the disabled, and lack of workplace accessibility were all mentioned as additional barriers (Wehbi and El-Lahib, 2007).

2.5. Disabled People in Restaurants:

The hotel sector is naturally dynamic and labor-intensive, and it is commonly stated to have extremely high turnover rates (Donnelly and Joseph, 2012). In response to downsizing in the hotel industry, many scholars have advocated that disability inclusion could be a beneficial employment approach.

People with impairments, according to Chomka (2004), tend to stay in the same employment for longer, have better attendance rates, and have lower turnover rates than their non-disabled counterparts. Hence, people with disabilities’ loyalty and longevity can lead to higher profitability and sustainable competitive advantage in food retail industries, mainly restaurants (Kalargyrou, 2014). Hernández and McDonald (2010) did not find significant differences in performance values, the amount of supervision, term of office, absenteeism, and compensation claims among workers with and without disabilities. Furthermore, from a customer perspective, some

studies have suggested that customers have more positive attitudes towards restaurants that employ people with disabilities and prefer to choose disability-friendly restaurants and hotels (Groschl, 2013).

However, different concerns exist toward disabled people working in restaurants. Groschl (2007) examined 42 Canadian hotels and restaurants and recognized extra concerns such as the high labor costs for the disabled in terms of staff, training, and ongoing monitoring. Furthermore, Employers are concerned about adjusting to the special needs of people with disabilities, restricted interaction between workers with and without impairments, lack of disability knowledge, and discrimination based on disabilities, according to Groschl (2007). Thus, managers are concerned about the pay and allocation of this source of human resources since they are confused how to discipline, evaluate, and lead workers with impairments.

In the Lebanese context, one of the main segments of the service sector is the restaurant industry. Generally, there are two major classifications of restaurants: chain restaurants and independent restaurants. In addition, there are many types of restaurants, including casual restaurants, quick-service restaurants, and fine dining restaurants (DeMicco et al., 2015). Even the diversity of restaurants in Lebanon, most of them are completely inaccessible to people in wheelchairs and people with disabilities. Thus, very few restaurants have involved people with disabilities in their work teams. “Agonist Coffee Shop”, located in Beirut, is one of the few restaurants which only employs people with special needs as a way to raise awareness concerning the struggle of those with special needs and to encourage the government to support more such types of business.

3. MATERIAL AND METHODS

This thesis is a qualitative research intended to assess the managerial practices of incorporating people with special needs in Lebanese restaurants. This chapter aims to explain and validate the approach implemented in this study. This section explains the study's time horizon and enlightens data collection methods, sources, and applied sampling strategies, taking into account ethical implications.

Table 3.1. Methodology Implemented

Research Philosophy	Interpretivism
Research Reasoning	Inductive
Research Design	Exploratory
Research Methodology and Strategy	Mono-qualitative using Interviews
Data Collection Method	Interview
Sampling Techniques	Purposive Sampling
Data Analysis	Thematic Analysis
Time Horizon	Cross-Sectional
Ethical Considerations	

3.1. Research Philosophy

Research relies heavily on selecting a research philosophy since it guides how the research will be conducted (Collis and Hussey, 2021). There are several philosophical perspectives on social science issues. According to Saunders et al.,

(2019), research philosophy is primarily concerned with the ontological and epistemological growth of knowledge.

Epistemology is concerned with knowledge about what constitutes acceptable knowledge, whereas ontology is concerned with knowledge about realities or beings. Thus, implementing interpretivism would mean figuring out knowledge epistemologically and ontologically based on target-group perceptions (Creswell and Creswell, 2017). Interpretivists, claim that reality is subjective and socially constructed because everyone has their own perception of reality (Collis and Hussey, 2009).

In this thesis, interpretivism emerged as a more suitable research philosophy since findings will be analyzed mainly using thematic analysis. In fact, interpretivism is more concerned with empathic understanding of human activity than with forces that combat it. Indeed, since this thesis focuses on assessing the managerial practices toward the inclusion of people with special needs at Lebanese restaurants, interpretivism is the ultimate philosophy to be adopted. Using this type, Alharahsheh and Pius (2020) believed that interpretivism takes into account variables such as cultures, conditions, and times that lead to the emergence of various social realities.

Interpretivism also focuses on disparities in people's perceptions and behavior, how cultural settings impact these, and how they influence people's behaviors (Creswell and Creswell, 2017). Thus, to gain an understanding of the reality of workforce within Lebanon's restaurants, the researcher will interact with restaurant management. Analyzing the incorporation is critical for evaluating the benefits of implementing new tactics which facilitate the work of people with disabilities. This research philosophy has contributed to the building of research capable of delivering significant information that has clear gaps in the available literature

3.2. Research Approach:

It is essential to draw congruence between the research philosophy, phenomenology, and the logic that dictates the research premises (Creswell and Creswell, 2017). The approach on which the study is based is an inductive approach that corresponds to the interpretivism philosophy adopted by the study.

Dubois et al. (2002) described inductive reasoning as a shift from the specific to the general, in which data is systematically used to develop theory. In fact, analyses inductively draw conclusions from readings of raw data, which are then interpreted by an evaluator or researcher to develop concepts, themes, or models (Thomas, 2006). The inductive approach's main goal is to let research conclusions arise from the raw data's common, prevalent, or noteworthy themes.

This research starts with a group of observations and then moves on to a bigger set of propositions based on those observations. In other words, this study began with particular and restricted findings at Lebanese restaurants, then expanded into a broader conclusion that described the impact of persons with special needs on organizational performance, much like an inverted funnel. This thesis drew on information gained from interviews to develop concepts about the relationship between the inclusion of persons with disabilities and beneficial organizational results.

Different studies have already examined the importance of incorporating people with special needs in the workplace; Subsequently, this thesis applies inductive reasoning, since this problem has received little attention in Lebanese hospitality sector. Few studies tackled the correlation between proper management of disabled people in restaurants and its positive impact on organizational performance. Therefore, the inductive approach is the best choice for this research paper since it is more efficient in terms of time.

3.3. Research Strategy

The orientation is essential for the design of each study, and the proposed strategy must be appropriate for the study to be carried out successfully. This thesis actually utilized exploratory research strategy to collect and analyze data. Exploratory research is described as research conducted to learn more about a problem that is not well defined. These tests are conducted in order to gain a better understanding of the current problem, but they are not definitive.

Britten (2005) declared that interviews are one of the most used methods for gathering qualitative data. The findings of this study, based on the adopted research philosophy, show the value of subjective experiences with inductive reasoning orientation for producing new understandings rather than testing existing theories, indicating that the research method used is qualitative. The strategy implemented is of high significance since it helps in the explanation, comprehension, and exploration of research subjects' experiences, thoughts, and performance.

Table 3.1. Research Strategy Overview

Research Strategy	Data Collection and Analysis Methods	Sampling Technique	Sample Characteristics
Qualitative Research	Qualitative semi-structured Interview Thematic Analysis	Purposive Sampling	First-line and Second-line managers in restaurants.

3.4. Research Design

Throughout the literature, several designs have emerged, such as longitudinal, experimental, cross-sectional, comparative, and case study (Bryman and Bell, 2015). Throughout this thesis, the ultimate design to be implemented is a case study. Yin et al., (2003, p.13) defines a case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident”.

The emphasis on a confined situation or system, an entity with a defined purpose and functional portion as claimed, distinguishes a case study from other research methodologies. Creswell (2002, p. 61) articulated that a case study is useful since through this study design is “problem to be studied, which will reveal an in-depth understanding of a case or bounded system, which involves understanding an event, activity, process, or one or more individuals”. A case study is the main choice for this thesis since this design help to find answers for the questions the researcher is unable to regulate the conduct of study participants and wishes to account for contextual factors. Furthermore, although there were fewer unit studies in this case study as compared to surveys, the amount of information provided for each instance was more extensive.

3.5. Research Sampling

The selection of the research sample is important so that the results are relevant to the research objective. In fact, a sampling technique needs to be established to generate data that can respond to the research questions. To determine the sample size from a specific population, different sampling techniques, such as probability and non-probability sampling, are used.

In qualitative research, sampling strategies are generally focused on achieving saturation, or obtaining a complete understanding by sampling until no substantial knowledge or information is collected (Palinkas, et al., 2015). In this thesis, the sampling method used was purposive sampling techniques. This type targets specific people throughout the populations based on established inclusion criteria for eligibility (Saunders et al., 2016). Etikan, Musa, and Alkassim (2016) explained that purposive sampling, also known as judgment sampling, is a non-random sampling method that does not require any underlying theory or a set number of participants.

Purposive sampling is the best choice furthermore since this sampling technique entails identifying and selecting groups or individuals who are knowledgeable about or have experience with the topic of interest (Cresswell and Plano Clark, 2011). Thus, taking advantage of this sampling method allows the study to target relevant people to the objectives of the study. Additionally, it allows the results to be specific in what they reveal. As compared to random and probability sampling methods purposive sampling assures that persons with specified traits who will be able to assist with the associated research are targeted.

Thus, in this paper, several Lebanese restaurants managers in different location districts will be asked to be interviewed. This is because, the study is aimed to facilitate understanding about how disabled people can be incorporated in the workplace, strategies adopted to manage their work, struggles that they may face while working, and the benefits which may arise after the merge of people with special needs in the work field. The consent was sent as a message to every restaurant's manager and after their confirmation, interviews were conducted. Five restaurants were also selected to conduct this study located in several Lebanese districts. The availability of the manager and willingness to participate in the study were the most important factors in selecting the restaurant. As a result, the study comprised a total of 9 managers who were questioned until saturation in answers was attained from each restaurant.

3.6. Time Horizon

The time frame within which the study is expected to be completed is called the time horizon (Saunders et al., 2016). It is a period of time during which the researcher plans investment for well-defined objectives. In the study onion, Bryman and Bell (2015) identified two basic types of time horizons: cross-sectional and longitudinal.

The cross-sectional time horizon is mainly used when evaluation is paramount in the study of a particular phenomenon at a particular point in time. The cross-sectional method is known as the 'snapshot' timestamp, in which data is acquired at a particular time (Flick, 2011).

This study follows the cross-sectional type as it is an academic thesis and is limited to a period of time. This type was chosen since it refers to the subject at a precise moment, the moment the data collection tools are implemented. Many researchers including Saunders et al. (2016) affirmed the significance of this type. Unlike a longitudinal study, this study is intended to assess the survey sample based on when it received the link and does not aim to reassess its opinions over a prolonged different period.

3.7. Data Collection Method:

Depending on the study strategy and objectives chosen, the data collection tool on which this research depends is a semi-structured interview. Using this data collection method, the researcher asked a series of questions linked to the case study's areas of interest. Semi-structured interviews, according to Bryman and Bell (2015), allow for flexibility and enable researchers to move away from planned questions depending on the path the interview takes. In other words, the questions were scheduled ahead of time, but they were not always asked in the sequence that they were written.

To ensure that all issues were covered throughout this thesis, an interview guide was created in accordance with the literature review and theoretical framework. Before beginning data collection, an ethical committee permission from the Republic of Turkey Halic University's business faculty introducing the researcher's study was taken. The committee approved that the research followed ethical procedures. After the approval, the researcher sent the consent to the restaurant's managers chosen to participate in the study. Then, interview meetings with the managers were planned in coordination with the restaurant managers once they agreed to participate in the study.

The goal and nature of the study were communicated to each interviewee prior to starting the interview, emphasizing the confidentiality of the data collection and the participants' rights. Each participant had signed a consent format (Appendix 1). After obtaining consent, all participants were asked a pre-set semi-structured list of questions

in order to ensure that responses were standardised and comparable (Appendix 2). To guarantee informed consent, each manager was informed about the whole interview procedure, including the recording of the meeting. Interviewees were also informed that they might end the interview at any point and choose not to address a certain issue.

Interviews lasted about 15-25 minutes on average. They were semi-structured and consisted of asking some crucial questions about their attitudes toward the inclusion of people with special needs in the workplace, the hurdles to such inclusion, and the impact on restaurant performance. The interview took place in Arabic and was later translated and transcribed into English.

3.8. Data Analysis

Maguire and Delahunt (2017) argue that the practice of identifying themes within qualitative data is known as thematic analysis (TA). Thematic analysis is a flexible method that allows researchers to select the most appropriate theoretical framework for a rich, extensive, and complicated description of data acquired. Thematic analysis also entails applying systematic coding and analysis of qualitative data, which can then be linked to bigger theoretical or conceptual concerns.

Within case analysis was then carried out after topic analysis. Mills et al. (2010) argued that within-case analysis is an in-depth examination of a particular case as a separate entity in case study research. Following the within-case analysis, an across-case analysis was carried out. It is a process that entails a thorough examination of case similarities and differences in order to back up some theoretical predictions. Khan and VanWynsberghe (2008, p. 42) articulated that the "comparison of commonalities and differences in the events, activities, and processes that are the units of analyses in case studies" is made easier with this type. Thus, from each case study, the data for each theme was gathered. The final categories representing emergent themes from the data were then used to start looking for patterns and linkages.

3.9. Ethical Considerations:

Since qualitative research relies on semi-structured interviews for data collection, respondents are personally approached. This facilitates accessibility and better understanding of the interviewee point of views. The interviews included an opening piece (consent) that informed participants about the objective and type of research without going into depth about how to avoid prejudice formation. The

anonymity of the participants was also confirmed, and no personal data was collected. In other words, respondents were informed that their contribution is voluntary and most importantly anonymous. Thus, their personal information, such as their names, emails, phone numbers, place of work/education, etc., will not be mentioned anywhere throughout the whole interview. Consequently, all data collected is strictly confidential. The interviewees were also confirmed that they have the right at any time to decline or not complete the interview without giving a reason. No schedules and time limit were set for the interview. Interviewees were also informed that their interviews would be taped on a mobile phone. Participants were allowed to ask questions before, during, or after the interview. Any participant could even withdraw without offering a reason by simply informing the interviewer.

4. FINDINGS

This chapter contains the results gathered from the semi-structured interview analysis. It was observed whether Lebanese restaurants employ workers with disabilities and what practices were being adopted by their managers. Several quotes from the participants were used to exemplify the themes that emerged with the thematic analysis. The interviews were recorded, translated, and transcribed.

Findings proved that interviewees varied in the number of experiences in each restaurant. In fact, some had been working in the hospitality sector ranging from two to five years. The first part of the interviews indicated that people with low experience had less knowledge regarding people with employment. They also raised excuses for not hiring people with disabilities. However, others have a considerable understanding of this topic.

It was also obvious that none of their teamwork consisted of a workforce with disabled. They only focused on providing the quickest services to their customers. Another emphasis of work teams was to guarantee customer satisfaction.

Theme1:

Recruitment and Retention Issues

Most of the interviewees showed their interest in employing employees with special needs in their restaurants; however, varied factors prohibited them from recruiting a disabled person.

“We have a big tendency to employ disabled people to help them overcome their employment problems; However, till now we did not receive any job requests” (Interviewee #1). Despite multi-faceted perceptions about integrating people with special needs into restaurants, some interviewees were reluctant to hire them. They stated that the current situation in Lebanon prevents them from thinking about anything costly or requires additional charges.

“ Engaging more diverse people whether normal or not is a good idea; but as a restaurant, we are not ready for accepting any employee who costs us more. We might

think about it later with better circumstances (better economic, social, political, and environmental circumstances). Now it is quite impossible.” (Interviewee #2)

Others were somehow very offensive and declared that they are not interested in hiring someone with special needs. The reasons they argued were competency-related issues. Those managers believed that restaurants as a workplace require quick services. Employees with a disability cannot cope-with this stress and type of work.

They think that it is hard to afford care and support in their job. They mainly focus on customer satisfaction and loyalty rather than their workforce diversity. Thus, a discussion can be made about the workforce with disabilities that they do not have the same access to employment possibilities as regular workers in the Lebanese hospitality sector.

“Employing people with special needs is not important that urgent right now. In our restaurant, we are not involved in hiring them. yet, we respect them and their disability.” (Interviewee #3)

“ To be honest, it is hard to include people with special needs in our work since this job requires quick and accurate services. I am not totally against hiring disabled people. However, the manager should be wise when selecting them to be part of the teamwork. I believe that such people need constant care and help.” (Interviewee #6)

On the other hand, when it comes to attracting employees with special needs, the results of some interviews indicate that many respondents feel hiring disabled people is crucial for the success of their restaurants. In fact, respondents stated that they recognize the benefits of the inclusion of people with special needs.

“I think disability is actually not an inability. Hiring disabled persons to communicate and foster an inclusive work atmosphere. This promotes empathy in the workplace among employees and can boost the company's consumer reputation.” (Interviewee #7).

Even though managers thought that businesses should employ people with disabilities, a large and underrepresented market group; they believed that working in the restaurant industry is, predictably, mentally, and physically demanding. For example, they declared that employees with special needs might find it hard to work in a restaurant due to the heavy work. Managers look for those who can think critically and work hard. They refer to persons who can work in a fast-paced atmosphere that asks them to stay up late and provide excellent customer service.

“Don't be surprised if you read about folks working 12-hour shifts seven days a week and being on their feet the entire time. You're on your feet all night, carrying heavy plates and zipping between tables, or crouched over in a sweltering kitchen with hardly enough time for a restroom break, no matter where you are in the restaurant.” (Interviewee #8).

Managers also declared that every manager realizes that hiring individuals with disabilities has ethical implications. But the real question that troubles the managers of these restaurants is whether it makes financial sense.

Furthermore, In Lebanon, laws do not put pressure on firms to employ such people.

“Restaurants are not obliged to hire people with disabilities. They must hire someone who has the necessary talents to do the job. If that person happens to have a disability, so be it; the purpose is not the disability.” (Interviewee #8).

Thus, findings suggests that managers believe hiring such a person will place additional demands on managers, supervisors, and human resource personnel. These concerns include learning about the employer's legal obligations, researching relevant accommodations, weighing the costs and benefits, and dealing with unforeseen complications.

The majority of interviewees positively perceive the employment of people with needs in their restaurant. The current crises taking places known as the Covid-19 pandemic as well as-the economic crisis that is also related with the pandemic, highly impacted the lives of Lebanese people.

“Currently, the covid-19 pandemic obliged us to minimize employee numbers and implement prevention measures with all the pressure we are working in, we do not have time to focus on people who need more assistance and care.” (Interviewee #6) Most restaurants are currently working to survive. They are trying to minimize everything that challenges them financially. Managers are frequently unaware of the way to accommodate disabled employees in such context.

Theme 2:

Benefits Perceived

According to employers, reasonable accommodation for individuals with disabilities are not typically costly. Instead, employing and accommodating them could be beneficial in terms of retaining skilled workers, increasing productivity, and improving organizational culture and climate. Interviews revealed that there are social

pressures on managers to hire them. These social pressures are values and beliefs, as well as their own desires to help someone in need.

Employees with disabilities provide tangible benefits to their employers, such as improved innovation, increased productivity, and a more pleasant working environment.

“Hiring somebody with impairments does not have to be more expensive than hiring someone without one. As a result, the closer the match (between manager and employee values), the more likely the person will succeed, and the less training required to become self-sufficient.” (Interviewee #3).

Furthermore, interviewees believed that restaurants integrate disabled people to create a more inclusive workplace. In fact, work is a way for people with disabilities to demonstrate their worth in a society that places barriers in their path, both in terms of education and job opportunities.

“We hire for principles and attitudes over skills every time. We engage in deep and meaningful dialogues with our employees, and we are open and honest about our commitment to diversity and the hiring of persons with disabilities.” (Interviewee #1)

“We wanted to make sure that our restaurant is chosen by employees of all ages and cultures. We are passionate about social connection and inclusion.” (Interviewee #5). Restaurant culture is also one factor that encourages the employment of individuals with disabilities. One of the key reasons that motivate businesses and employees to hire persons with special needs is their attitude. Thus, employers believed that they should incorporate disabled workers to improve accessibility and workplace design.

“Improving accessibility enhances one's quality of life by allowing them to be more independent and socially integrated. It also leads to greater health and can save money in a variety of ways.” (Interviewee #4).

“I believe that such employees might help in minimizing turnover rate and absenteeism levels. So, the main factor is their dedication to provide their best.” (Interviewee #6).

“Hiring people with special needs can boost the company's consumer reputation. The action of hiring and promoting people with disabilities can demonstrate

a positive attitude towards the firm and encourage customers to become loyal.” (Interviewee #7). Increasing competitive advantage has been also perceived as one of the reasons to hire disabled employees. Hiring people with special needs is argued to boost the restaurant image.

“When employees willingly give you discretionary effort, they become a competitive advantage. Hiring disabled employees is a new innovative idea.” (Interviewee #1). Managers believe that restaurant's image among its employees, in the community, and among customers can be enhanced. Managers discussed that hiring people with disabilities contributes to diversity, creativity, and workplace morale.

“One of the major benefits my restaurant would earn from the inclusion of people with special needs is the positive feedback of customers and the good reputation we got. As part of this process, we establish some restaurant positions dedicated to improving the diversity of the staff.” (Interviewee #5)

“Customers always tend to support businesses defending human rights and fairness in treatment among their employees. Thus, to merge disabled people in the restaurant would definitely attract and serve a more diverse customer base.” (Interviewee #2)

“The inclusion of people with special needs in the workplace is seriously important and provides several benefits. One of the key impacts is increasing workforce diversity which leads to four times more positive reputation.” (Interviewee #1)

Furthermore, interviewees found that incorporating people with special needs in the restaurant might contribute to higher customer loyalty and decrease turnover rates.

“Employees with special needs are trustworthy and hardworking. Hiring people with special needs has been highly linked to higher loyalty among customers. In the restaurant, employing such employees would reduce the turnover rates among the workforce since they are unemployed at more than twice the rate of normal personnel.” (Interviewee #3).

“People with disabilities also take fewer vacation days, take fewer sick days, and work longer than regular workers.” (Interviewee #8). Most of managers declared that they refer to employ people with special needs since customers usually favors restaurants which respect and employ them. Even manager think that hiring disabled people is not only the right thing to do, but also the wise thing to do.

“Consumers are more likely to favour restaurants that hire people with impairments.” (Interviewee #8). Diversity management is also among the main factors which affect hiring practices. Several interviews stressed on that the positive culture

at work which motivate diversity encourages employers to add disabled people to the teamwork. This is boosted when reasonable accommodations are made.

“The majority of the accommodations have to be basic and inexpensive, such as labelling items in a stockroom using tactile materials, which helps employees who have difficulty reading.” (Interviewee #9). Managers attitude is perceived as a factor that impact the hiring of people with special needs. The employee’s personality, communication skills, work experience, and talent plays a role in employing them.

Theme 3:

Hiring Practices and Inclusion

Hiring people with disabilities can also help the restaurant avoid legal problems. Hiring persons with disabilities indicates that the restaurant is abiding by the laws prohibiting discrimination against disabled people. Hiring people with special needs also leads to increase workplace diversity in the workplace. Employees with impairments were said to also have a strong work ethic and a disciplined approach to their businesses' rules and regulations.

Several strategies exist to attract people with disabilities to work in a restaurant. Based on the interviews conducted, restaurants refer to adding promotional messages and inclusive language to hiring advertisements.

“ In case our restaurants need additional employees, we took into consideration the one with special needs. So, we add some motivational messages and a welcoming language to encourage them to apply” (Interviewee #1). They also consider contacting with college and university career centers to promote the integration of disabled people in their restaurants.

“Part of our recruitment strategies is to call university careers centers and recruitment agencies to ask them for helpful employees. We urge people with disabilities and people from all walks of life to apply. We do not discriminate against those with disabilities” (Interviewee #5). Interviews’ results also showed that employers tend to support the employment of people with special needs by encouraging them to be productive and to grow in their careers.

“We make reasonable adjustments for people with special needs as needed. Most important thing is that we support them physically and morally, we encourage them to grow and progress in their careers, and we train them to provide their best at

the workplace.” (Interviewee #1). Managers also promote inclusion as an organizational value. They believed that they could acquire access to a previously untapped labour pool. They think that it is critical to understand how to respectfully refer to these individuals. They also consider collaborating with organizations that will assist candidates with disabilities in finding the job.

“Job postings should be shared with local nonprofits, agencies, and organizations that assist people with disabilities. Job openings should be advertised on social media, online, and in blogs .” (Interviewee #9).

“We might use social media platforms to recruit hiring people with special needs. We can post some stories and posts on Instagram or Facebook to announce the need of our restaurants for employees and our willingness to accept workers with impairments” (Interviewee#6). Employers aim to recruit people with special needs via different marketing strategies, such as word of mouth, posting on social media platforms, using career services and job recruitment agencies, using images on restaurant’s websites, and encouraging people to apply by including some encouraging remarks and inviting language.

“We might use social media platforms to recruit hiring people with special needs. We can post some stories and posts on Instagram or Facebook to announce the need of our restaurants for employees and our willingness to accept workers with impairments.” (Interviewee#6).

Theme 4:

Managerial Practices

Several managerial strategies might be adopted to accommodate disabled people working in Lebanese restaurants. In order to motivate such people, some employers declared the application of brochures and images to remind disabled workers of work principles.

“ To guarantee the appropriate and successful workflow of disabled people, we frequently do training to help them and we use booklets and pictures to remind impaired employees of workplace rules. We also ensure that all employees and volunteers in an organization are aware of disability-inclusive policies.” (Interviewee #4).

Employers also declared the implementation of frequent training and career development for disabled people and focus on employees' health and well-being. Furthermore, they make use of assistive technology and implement compensation and benefits to award them.

“ Our goal is to keep our employees safe and well-being. We do not differentiate between normal and disabled. However, we insist on encouraging them to provide their best at work. We ensure a healthy work environment parallelly by applying modern assistive technology we assume having lower financial costs and better organizational performance.” (Interviewee #5).

“We implement a work-life balance approach at restaurants. In other words, we provide all employees with the needed incentives, awards, and total rights. We compensate them to encourage them show more effort.” (Interviewee #3). The discussion towards the management of disabled showed sometimes there is no difference in managing the disabled than the managing of the normal. They respect them as they respect any employee.

“Respecting and supporting the autonomy of an individual is critical. It represents the right of an individual to make his or her own decisions without being manipulated by others.” (Interviewee #1).

“ In our restaurants, we treat employees, whether normal or with special needs, as they are the owners. In this way, we rise the sense of responsibility and trust in employees. We also educate them about the importance of respecting each one weakness.” (Interviewee #4). In case of employing people with special needs, managers declared that they treat them equally and they do not discriminate them. They always train them to perform their job. They think it is necessary to remind more often the restaurant's rules and regulations. They also appreciate their commitment and dedication in work.

Managers believed that effective communication skills will always help both parties reach a consensus. Thus, when working with a disabled co-worker, employees should speak directly to the person in their normal tone rather than through a job coach or a sign-language translator. Some managers also believed that disability is not incapacity, and everyone should be aware that they are all disabled candidates in some circumstances. Consequently, some managers are ready to help if a person with a disability looks to require it.

“As teamwork, we never make our own judgment; instead, politely inquire if he or she requires assistance. In fact, employees are provided with basic information on how to assist disabled co-workers in an emergency. We know how to communicate with them.” (Interviewee #9).

“A golden rule is to always inquire whether he wants help first.”(Interviewee #8).

Theme 5:

Hospitality Practices

Several restaurants have ADA-compliant menus available including ones that are in braille, photo-only, and colorblind-friendly. They provide accessible seating while they make wide walkways. Therefore, their primary goal is to make their restaurant as welcoming as possible to customers, guests, and workers with disabilities.

“Easy to read, large print, and braille menus make it easier for visually impaired people to order. The menu's font, text size, and contrasting colors are very important. If you have a website, put your menu online for people to read beforehand, or on their mobile devices at the restaurant.” (Interviewee #9).

“ Restaurants should always have multiple accessible dining locations around the facility, especially for wheelchair or scooter users. For example, tables should not be taller than 34 inches, with at least 27 inches of clear space beneath them to accommodate wheelchairs and scooters. Also, if necessary, we ensure that a member of staff can assist a person with a physical disability.” (Interviewee #6).

“We impose accessible services for employees with special needs. For example, those with low vision can read braille using raised dots with a touch system. We post anywhere helpful: on bathroom signs, pickup windows, and wheelchair-accessible tables” (Interviewee #2). On the other hand, some interviewees mentioned that they try to offer services that do not cost them high. However, when it comes to the restaurant's structure, they do not change the overall architecture of the place. They just implement accessible technologies, which help employees overcome their disabilities and work fairly.

“We cannot provide much more than we can as accommodations and recent technology for our disabled employees. We cannot restructure the restaurant's architecture since it is costly. We can make aisles wider.” (Interviewee #3).

“Disabled employees and patrons should expect additional assistance from our team, such as arranging seats, offering additional table service, holding open doors, and so on. It's critical to make everyone in the restaurant feel welcome and well-served.” (Interviewee #1).

Theme 6:

Other Issues

Even though all interviewees provided supportive managerial strategies to hire employees with special needs, most of them declared that they do not have any disabled personnel working with them. They attributed this to the lack of people that apply in the restaurants and fear of discrimination.

“Currently, we do not have any employees with special needs joining our team. The fear of being discriminated against and their ignorance of having the right to work are among the main reasons for the reduced rate of disabled employees working in our restaurant” (Interviewee #3). Work is essential to people with disabilities' well-being. However, they have challenges in finding and keeping jobs. People with disabilities have difficulty accessing employment-related services and opportunities because of social, economic, cultural, and political barriers.

“Poverty is both a cause and a result of disability. It is a cause since it can result in job loss and lower earnings, as well as hurdles to education and skill development, major additional expenses, and a slew of other issues that can contribute to financial distress” (Interviewee #3). Organizational or systemic obstacles, architectural or physical barriers, information or communications hurdles, and technological barriers are all examples of barriers. Participants, who reported not integrating people with special needs in their restaurants, provided different barriers that prevent them from employing disabled individuals in their restaurants. In accordance with the data collected, interviewees believed that disabled people may lack the necessary knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics required for the available job.

“The main impediments highlighted were a general lack of employment opportunities for both disabled and non-disabled people; poor access to physical structures and recruitment information; disability prejudice; bad perceptions of disabled people's skills; and a lack of job training.” (Interviewee #6).

“We do not hire disabled people since we believe that they lack the appropriate knowledge and skills needed for any position in our team” (Interviewee #4).

“People with special needs do not have the suitable abilities to perform the tasks required in our restaurant” (Interviewee #1). The current challenging situation in Lebanon also minimizes the chance of people with special needs at restaurants. In fact, Lebanon is in turmoil. Most industries are struggling to survive and maintain their jobs. Everything turns out to be expensive with the economic crisis taking place. Covid-19 pandemic also imposed additional challenges on restaurants' managers and forced them to apply more secure measures to prevent the infection of their employees. Thus, managers turned to focus on normal people in such circumstances to minimize additional financial and health-related costs.

“To be honest, we cannot employ people with special needs in the turbulent environment we are working in. We are always at risk of shut down. So, we focus on

healthy workforces who are able to help us during the two crises taking place.” (Interviewee #4).

“We are not hiring anyone with disability since we are not able to afford additional cost with the corona threat and the harsh economic crisis occurring” (Interviewee #1). Current context would necessitate additional training and compensation to encourage good behavior. Furthermore, interviewees believed that people with special needs entail higher labor costs, such as insurance costs.

“We should always think twice before hiring them since it requires effort time and expenses.” (Interviewee #7).

“Employees with special needs may be less productive and have greater labour expenditures than non-disabled people” (Interviewee #5). Disabled employees also confront several challenges in Lebanese restaurants. They think that poor communication with disabled employees and senior management is a major challenge. Interviewees believe that anxiety or lack of confidence is another barrier that lower the chance of integrating people with special needs at work.

“One of the major struggles which an employee with a disability might face is poor communication between them and staff members as well as with customers.” (Interviewee #1).

“Another roadblock to integrating people with special needs at work is fear or a lack of confidence” (Interviewee #3). Findings also showed that difficulties with transport are among the main challenges to disabled people’s employment in restaurants.

“People with disabilities have limited access, and even if they do, they encounter challenges such as reasonable accommodations at work, accessible public transportation to travel to and from work.” (Interviewee #9).

5. DISCUSSION

In spite of anti-discrimination legislation introduced decades ago, people with disabilities remain underrepresented in the workplace. An investigation of manager practices towards accommodating people with disabilities was investigated in this qualitative research. As literature indicated people with special needs are highly dependent on employers' perception of their employability (Clarke et al., 2016). Indeed, lack of employment is largely attributed to employer attitudes (Jackson, et al., 2000).

This study observed manager practices of Lebanese restaurants. Despite the fact that disabled individuals are rarely employed in Lebanese restaurants, managers argued about the factors that hindered employment of the disabled workforce. This thesis supported the arguments in previous studies that employers take into account a variety of factors when making hiring decisions, including legal obligations (Ju et al., Lengnick-Hall et al., 2008; 2013).

Prior to 1990, most disability legislation was focused on protecting workers with disabilities who couldn't work, but the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) strengthened worker protections. Indeed, as a significant civil right, discrimination against disabled employees, ex-employees, and individuals hired for economic advancement was prohibited by the ADA. Furthermore, ADA protects people with disabilities from being withdrawn from their jobs. As a result, businesses with fifteen or more employees are required to provide the reasonable accommodations that disabled employees need, including flexible work hours, equipment, assistants, and other adjustments that aren't excessively burdensome (Baldwin and Schumacher, 2002).

There are many companies, however, that may not be able to provide every type of accommodation requested by disabled employees, and many more may fail to create a friendly environment for disabled employees (Whalen, 2010). Certain health issues may also make it impossible for an individual to complete needed professional om

In addition to these studies, this thesis also shows that several benefits, hiring, management, and hospitality sector practices that might increase disabled people's employment in Lebanese restaurants. However, most of Lebanese restaurants do not employ any employees with a disability. In fact, the reasons, which encourage restaurants to hire a person with a disability, are profitability, and competitive advantage. Studies reported an increase in profitability after hiring a disabled employee (Buc, 2010; Buciuniene and Kazlauskaite, 2010). Moreover, Hartnett et al., and Scharzt et al. (2006;2011) found that the perceived benefits of workplace accommodations for people with various kinds of disabilities contributed to improved profits, particularly through reducing costs associated with rehiring and retraining.

Existing literature also emphasized these factors to promote disabled people's work integration. For example, according to McLaughline et al. (2004), acceptance is measured through manager attitudes about hiring, promoting, and retaining an employee with a disability. Further studies showed that managers usually employ people with special needs in order to strengthen the company's image. The various research papers also indicated that positive effects on cost-effectiveness, staff turnover, and retention, as well as reliability, employee loyalty, motivation, and firm image, have been observed with the incorporation procedure of people with special needs in the workplace (Miethlich and Oldenburg, 2019). According to Kalargyrou (2014), employees with disabilities helped enhance workplace efficiency and image in the hotel and retail industries. Moreover, Seino et al. (2017) found that employing people with special needs or investing in vocational rehabilitation can help a company gain a full awareness of the requirements and concerns of disabled clients.

This thesis also revealed that hiring disabled people has several other impacts on a restaurant's performance and operations. Indeed, the integration of people with disabilities leads to a decrease in turnover rate, an enhancement in workforce diversity, an increase in customer loyalty, an improvement in restaurants' vision, a decrease in financial costs, and an adjustment in mindset and workplace culture. This confirms previous studies which indicated that the employment of people with special needs contributes to different consumers, customer loyalty and happiness, creativity, productivity, work ethic, work safety, inclusive work culture, and ability awareness which can all provide benefits (Lindsay et al., 2018). Furthermore, Insights (2011) proved that CEOs frequently highlight disability as an aspect where they can

strengthen their diversity and inclusion initiatives. In addition, earlier studies mentioned that hiring persons with disabilities also resulted in a more inclusive and varied working atmosphere (Miethlich and Oldenburg, 2019). Buciuinene and Kazlauskaite (2010) stated that training co-workers of disabilities can reinforce a more inclusive workplace culture and make a company more competitive.

Based on findings the main strategies to attract disabled people to work in a restaurant, are adding promotional messages and inclusive language in the restaurant, promoting inclusion as an organizational value, posting open positions at job service and workforce employment centers, contacting college and university career centers, partnership with disability-related advocacy organizations and developing recruitment goals. Thus, managers are required to manage awareness and perception of rights of persons with disability, make use of assistive technology, focus on employees' health and well-being, frequent training, and career development for disabled people, apply brochures and images to remind disabled workers of work principles, and implement compensation and benefits to award them.

This thesis further showed that disabled people might face different challenges and barriers. Employers might not be motivated to employ a worker with a specific disability several participants argued that people with disabilities lack the necessary knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics required for the available job. Furthermore, managers also think that people with special needs may be less productive than others and may entail higher labor costs, such as insurance costs. Ramachandra et al. (2017) also indicated in their study that lack of education and training, a lack of financial resources, the nature of the profession, and employer attitudes are only a few of the major challenges which confront people with special needs in the marketplace. Achterberg et al., (2009) also found that the main determinant of disabled workers' employment is employers' attitude. Thus, even in high-income countries, evidence shows that employers remain sceptical about people with special. This thesis further found that difficulties with transport, difficulties in career growth, poor communication, anxiety or lack of confidence, and issues relating to access and support became barriers. Consequently, to better engage disabled individuals in restaurants, they should provide accessible seating, include wide walkways, include an automatic option for doors, and have ADA-compliant menus available including ones that are in braille, photo-only, and colorblind-friendly.

To sum up, Lebanese employers positively perceive the integration of disabled people in their restaurants. However, they are not prepared to employ them. Frequent trainings regarding services to provide, availability of career development as well as incorporation of advanced technology as automated menu and wider walkways might help people with special need to progress in their work. Positive leaders' attitude toward employee with special needs and their respect toward them also motivate disabled individual to work.



6. CONCLUSION

Work is one of the most significant aspects of most people's lives. Besides earning a living, work fulfills a number of other basic human needs, including those for time structure, for a group purpose, for social contact, for a sense of identity, and for a sense of purpose which help to maintain mental health and well-being. Work is viewed as an important desire as well as a source of major rewards in terms of material, financial, and general well-being (Kirsh, 2000). Disabled people are substantially less likely to be employed or rise to higher-paying positions. In Lebanese restaurants, employing people with impairments remains a struggle. The empowerment and transformative change of people with disabilities require the involvement of leaders and managers. This thesis aimed to explain the managerial practices of Lebanese restaurants toward people with special needs.

This thesis argued that people with special needs are still vulnerable to prejudice and stereotypes, familial rejection, health concerns, accessibility, and communication barriers. Restaurant managers appear hesitant to hire disabled workers because they view these people incompetent and lacking in vocational skills. Furthermore, employers perceive that disabled people incur additional costs and they require employment accommodations to make them accessible.

Even though employers of restaurants feel demotivated to hire people with special needs, they have an interest to integrate them in workplace. Because the study revealed that managers also recognize that persons with disabilities reduces turnover, improves workforce diversity, increases customer loyalty, improves restaurant vision and image, and changes mindset and workplace culture.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Like any other research paper, this thesis had some limitations. First, due to budget and time constraints, only a small number of interviewee were able to participate in this study. In other words, the study's findings were limited because it was conducted over such a brief period of time. There were limitations to the study, as it was not able to fully cover the selected topic and collect broader industry knowledge. After the corona pandemic and lockdowns, restaurants were overwhelmed with the high workload of people who miss social life and going out. As a result, persuading restaurants employees, managers, and CEOs to accept being interviewed proved to be a challenge. Some interviews were cancelled due to interviewees' unwillingness to reschedule. However, data saturation was achieved.

Researchers might use this study document as a roadmap to conduct additional studies about the inclusion practices into the hospitality business in Lebanon.

While this thesis aimed to cover gaps in the existing literature, much more research might be done in the future to increase the scope of the current study.

Future research would be preferable to include customers and regular employees in the study and analyse their perceptions of disabled persons working in the workplace. Additional interviews with skilled professionals should be added to gather feedback from employees' viewpoint. Another suggestion is to concentrate on the impact of national and organizational culture toward the implementation of disabled individuals in the Lebanese hospitality sector.

Policymakers should also investigate how they might better regulate to guarantee that persons with special needs work in better conditions.

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APPENDICES

APPX. A: Interview Questions Guide

- To what extent do you think the employment of disabled people is important to your restaurant?
- What are the factors which increase disabled people's employment in your restaurant?
- What is the effect of the employment of disabled people on restaurants' performance?
- How do you attract people with disabilities to work in your restaurant?
- Does your management style give disabled people a sense of accomplishment?
- How do you treat people with disabilities in the workplace?
- How do you manage disabled people working in your restaurant?
- How do you make your restaurant accessible for disabled employees?
- Do you have currently any disabled employees working in your restaurant? If yes, how engaged and satisfied are your disabled employees in their job now? If No, what barriers prevent managers from employing disabled individuals in your restaurant?
- What barriers or challenges are disabled employees facing in your restaurant?

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PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCES AND AWARDS:

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 - Delivering business change.
- **Al Najah Services Firm, Head of Management.**
Main Duties:
 - Ensuring excellent customer service delivery at all times.
 - Working within a team to manage the budget and achieve targets and incentives.
- **AL Reda for Orphans, Social Worker.**
Main Duties:
 - Conducting workshops.
 - Shaping initiatives through idea generation and also developing proposals.

SKILLS AND EXPERTISE:

- Management Consulting.
- Problem Solving.
- Team player,
- Marketing and Public Relations.
- Analytical Thinking.
- Problem Solver.
- Drive for Results.
- Great Communication Skills.
- Adaptability.
- Structure Relationships.

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- English: Fluent.
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