Employment Situation, Challenges and Opportunities: The Case of Persons with Disabilities

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Abstract

In 2010, it was estimated that some 3.1 percent of the Philippine population were persons with disabilities (PWDs). The Philippine government has pieces of legislation and programs that aim to improve the overall welfare of PWDs. These stipulate the rights and privileges of PWDs in terms of their health, education, and employment. However, despite the existence of such legislation and programs, PWDs continue to suffer. In particular, they struggle for work since discrimination is evident and access to suitable jobs is limited. Many employers still do not acknowledge the vast potential of PWDs despite studies showing how effective and productive they are as employees. Weak monitoring of and compliance with prevailing laws contribute to this struggle. This paper enumerates concrete actions that the critical actors—the PWDs, government, employers' groups, workers' associations, civil society, and the academe—could do in order to improve the situation.

Keywords: Persons with Disabilities (PWDs), Employees with Disabilities, PWD Policies, PWD Employment, PWD Programs, Philippines

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Introduction

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), 15 percent of the global population (over 1 billion individuals) are people with specific disabilities. A person belonging to this community is generally termed a "person with a disability" or PWD (Cuevas, 2014; D. Reyes, 2015). Disability results from the interaction of a PWD's unique bodily characteristics and society's traits where the PWD is in (Hedlund, 2000; Mori, 2015). To overcome their difficulties due to their disabilities, medical intervention and social and ecological intermediation are needed (Cuevas, 2014).

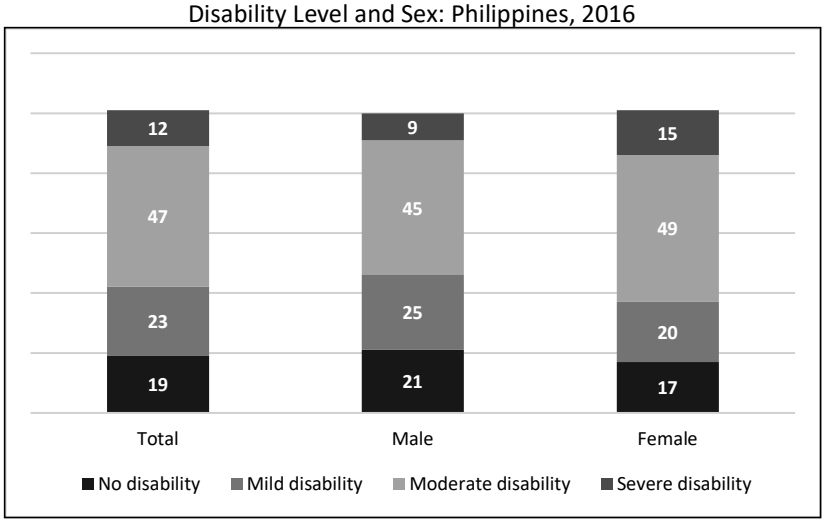
A primary concern facing PWDs is the search for a suitable livelihood. In many developing countries, PWDs do not have opportunities to find decent jobs to earn a living. Usually, options are limited to low-paying positions, or available jobs do not cater to their disabilities (Mori, 2015). This stems from employers having negative attitudes on their limitations and the PWDs having unfavorable views of themselves. Discrimination against them is still prevalent despite legislation, policies, and programs supposed to protect them. They face many challenges, such as poverty and lack of financial and environmental access to quality education. They have fewer socioeconomic opportunities due to social exclusion, negative family attitudes toward employment, and poor accessibility in the working environment (Gamez et al., 2018; Kono, n.d.; Marella et al., 2016; Santos, 2014).

Republic Act No. 7277 (Magna Carta for Persons with Disabilities) and Batas Pambansa No. 344 define PWDs as "those suffering from restriction or lack of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being as a result of a mental, physical, or sensory impairment" (Japan International Cooperation Agency - Planning and Evaluation Department [JICA-PED], 2002). The 2016 National Disability Prevalence Survey showed that about 82 percent of Filipinos 15 years and above have experienced mild to severe disability (Philippine Statistics Authority [PSA], 2019). Of that number, women have higher percentages of experiencing moderate to severe disabilities. The levels of disabilities, namely no disability, mild disability, moderate disability, and severe disability, are codes used by WHO based on scores measured by answering 17 functioning domains. These domains tackle the interaction between

the health conditions and impairments of the individual and the environment where he/she is from.

Figure 1 demonstrates the percentage distribution of the population aged 15 and up concerning their level of impairment and sex. The percentage distribution of the population aged 15 and older by disability level and age group is shown in Figure 2. Figure 3 shows the distribution of PWDs according to the type of disabilities.

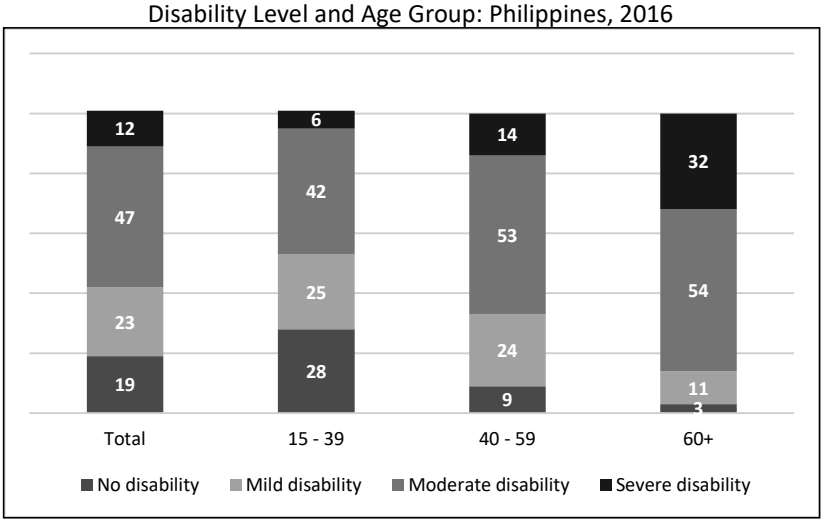
Figure 1. Percentage Distribution of Population Age 15 and Older by Disability Level and Sex: Philippines, 2016



Source: (PSA, 2019)

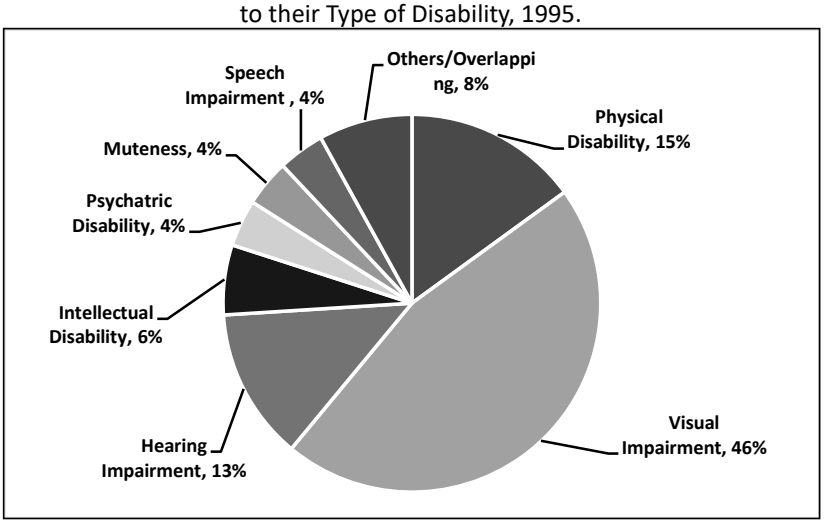
The National Statistics Office (the former name of PSA) adopted a system of grouping disabilities together. The groups are: total blindness, partial blindness, low vision, total deafness, partial deafness, poor hearing ability, muteness, speech impairment, paralysis of one or both arms, paralysis of all four limbs, loss of one or both arms/hands, loss of one or both legs/feet, paralysis of one or both legs, paralysis of one arm and one leg, mental retardation, mental illness and others (JICA-PED, 2002). These groups include those with other physical disabilities, cerebral palsy, and persons with autism, to name some (Rappler, 2016).

Figure 2. Percentage Distribution of Population Age 15 and Older by Disability Level and Age Group: Philippines, 2016



Source: (PSA, 2019)

Figure 3. Distribution of PWDs in the Philippines According to their Type of Disability, 1995.



Source: (JICA-PED, 2002).

However, in Philippine PWD ID cards, disabilities are unique and do not follow the WHO categories. Seven categories are used, namely

(1) visual impairment, (2) hearing loss, (3) orthopedic disability, (4) learning disability, (5) psychosocial disability, (6) chronic illness, and (7) mental disability (Organization for Pinoy with Disabilities, Inc., 2017)). For visual impairment, unless a person is discernably blind, no absolute eye grade is set to distinguish a person with a visual disability from those who do not. The Department of Health (DOH) has not established an eye grade threshold. Nonetheless, if the individual has a visual impairment that cannot be corrected, he/she can apply for the PWD ID (Zoleta, 2020). The Persons with Disabilities Affairs Office (PDAO) in every city has a protocol set to identify PWDs under this category. National Educational Association of Disabled Students (n.d.) shows that only five percent of visually impaired people cannot see anything. Thus, there is a difference between the needs of the visually impaired and the blind. For hearing loss, there are various degrees of hearing impairment. Some can hear sounds but don't understand what they hear and so they are considered PWDs. Nonetheless, an individual who cannot hear but can understand (i.e., through lip-reading) or another who cannot hear and cannot understand are both regarded as PWDs. Orthopedic disability includes all amputations on a person's extremities and stunted growth as dwarfism.

A person having difficulty learning fundamental concepts in math and science is said to have a learning disability. In contrast, a person who suffers from social and psychological problems that hinder accomplishing simple daily chores is considered to have a psychosocial disability. Chronic illness, which becomes a severe disability when complication sets in, can also be considered a disability. An example is diabetes, which can lead to diabetic retinopathy that causes blindness and leg amputations. The last category is mental disability, which includes down syndrome, bipolar disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, and schizophrenia. People with mental disabilities are usually automatically considered PWDs. These disabilities may have been caused by circumstances such as a disease, an accident, or complications from birth (National Educational Association of Disabled Students, n.d.; Organization for Pinoy with Disabilities, Inc., 2017).

Laws, policies, and programs are explicitly crafted to uplift the status of the lives of PWDs relative to their health, education, and employment, to name some (Reyes et al., 2011). These interventions aim to integrate the lives of PWDs into society by giving them more opportunities for

necessary rehabilitation, greater productivity, self-development, and self-reliance. Lately, there is a burning controversy on the irresponsible issuances of PWD IDs to non-qualified persons who are shamelessly availing of the benefits that are not due to them. This issue is yet to be resolved (CNN Philippines, 2020).

In addition to the National Council on Disability Affairs (NCDA), there are several implementing government agencies for PWD concerns, such as the Departments of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), DOH, Trade and Industry (DTI), and Education (DepEd) (Yap et al., 2009). However, the primary agency for the employment of PWDs is the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), which is also mandated to formulate policies, standards, and procedures for disadvantaged groups and communities, including the PWDs. As such, DOLE disseminates information on possible jobs available for trained and qualified PWDs, among others (JICA-PED, 2002; Yap et al., 2009).

Related laws, Policies, and Programs

Republic Act No. 7277 (Magna Carta for Persons with Disabilities), the primary legislation for PWDs, was enacted in 1992 and amended in 2007 under Republic Act. No. 9442 (Aragon Jr, 2017; Yap et al., 2009). The revised version widens the privileges that PWDs are entitled to, one of which is a discount of at least 20 percent on various products and services (Reyes et al., 2011). The law acknowledges that PWDs have the same rights as people without disabilities; therefore, the state supports initiatives to erase any prejudicial barriers against them.

Consequently, the state adopts policies that will make PWDs productive and self-reliant citizens. Additionally, the law aims to protect and promote the welfare of PWDs to further their rehabilitation and self-development. The ultimate goal is to integrate them into mainstream society and make them more engaged and valuable as a community (Aragon Jr, 2017; Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific [ESCAP], 1997; Tabuga, 2010). PWDs are afforded exclusive rights and privileges in employment, education, health, auxiliary social services, telecommunications, accessibility, political rights, and civil rights (ESCAP, 1997).

PWDs have the right not to be denied access to opportunities for suitable employment. A qualified employee with a disability should be entitled to the same terms and conditions of work, compensation, privileges, benefits, incentives, and allowances as non-disabled coworkers (Mina, 2017; Yap et al., 2009). The law also mandates the state to ensure PWDs' adequate access to quality education. PWDs must be given opportunities to hone and develop their skills by prohibiting learning institutions from denying them access to these rights due to their disabilities. Accessibility to special education also entails scholarships and educational assistance (Castillo, 2017; ESCAP, 1997; Santos, 2014) and establishments offering vocational courses to enhance their employability. The state is mandated to ensure that marginalized PWDs receive the necessary auxiliary services to restore their social functioning and community affairs participation. This task is the DSWD's concern.

To bolster the accessibility aspect of the Magna Carta of Persons with Disabilities, requirements that are meant to ensure a barrier-free environment for PWDs are included in Batas Pambansa 344, otherwise known as the "Accessibility Law." For example, national and local governments shall allocate funds for architectural facilities or structural features to provide easy access for PWDs. PWDs are also given the right to form groups and organizations for their benefit (ESCAP, 1997). Most importantly, the law also ensures that the rights of PWDs are protected through the prohibition of discrimination against them (Yap et al., 2009).

In a nutshell, Table 1 lists down the legal instruments aimed at protecting PWDs in the Philippines.

These legal instruments are intended to identify and provide alternatives for PWDs to overcome existing and potential problems and concerns they experience (Aragon Jr, 2017). However, the impacts of legal instruments and non-government assistance programs are ineffective for several reasons. Moreover, PWDs continue to encounter discrimination in different aspects of their lives, especially in employment.

As a result, the purpose of this conceptual paper is to investigate the difficulties of being a PWD, particularly in their search for a job. It digs

Table 1. Essential Laws for Persons with Disabilities in the Philippines (Yap et al., 2009).

Law	Title	Date Approved
Republic Act No. 9442	An Act Amending Republic Act No. 7277, otherwise known as the "Magna Carta for Disabled Persons, and For Other Purposes."	April 30, 2007
Executive Order No. 437	Encouraging the Implementation of Community-Based Rehabilitation (for Persons with Disabilities in the Philippines)	June 21, 2005
Executive Order No. 417	Directing the Implementation of the Economic Independence Program for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs)	March 22, 2005
Executive Order No. 385	Creating a Task Force to Address the Concerns of Persons with Disabilities	December 9, 1996
Republic Act No. 7277	An Act Providing for the Rehabilitation, Self-Development, and Self-Reliance of Disabled Persons and their Integration into the Mainstream of Society and for Other Purposes	March 24, 1992
Republic Act No. 6759	An Act Declaring August 1 of Each Year as White Cane Safety Day in the Philippines and for Other Purposes	September 18, 1989
Batas Pambansa Bilang 344	An Act to Enhance the Mobility of Disabled Persons by Requiring Certain Buildings, Institutions, Establishments, and Public Utilities to Install Facilities and Other Devices	February 25, 1983
Republic Act No. 4564	An Act Authorizing the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office to Hold Annually Special Sweepstakes Race for the Exclusive Use of the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, Social Welfare Administration, in its Development and Expansion Program for the Physically Disabled Throughout the Philippines	June 19, 1965
Republic Act No. 3562	An Act to Promote the Education of the Blind in the Philippines	June 21, 1963
Republic Act No. 1373	An Act Authorizing the Philippine Sportswriters Association to Hold One Benefit Boxing Show Every Year, the Net Proceeds of which Shall Constitute a Trust Fund for the Benefit of Disabled Filipino-Boxers	June 21, 1963
Republic Act No. 1179	An Act to Provide for the Promotion of Vocational Rehabilitation of the Blind and Other Handicapped Persons and their Return to Civil Employment	June 9, 1954

into how well they are accepted and welcomed at work. This study was created in response to what appears to be a lack of a more complete and integrated approach on the subject. Following the literature examination, data were aggregated and processed to generate themes and patterns reflecting the phenomena under inquiry.

Challenges of PWDs in the World of Work

Participation of PWDs in the labor force alleviates their economic challenges and allows them equitable participation in society. PWDs see their involvement as confirmation of their overall worth and abilities (Müller, 2013). PWDs, on the other hand, encounter a variety of hurdles while attempting to participate in various job programs. Poverty, a lack of financial and environmental access to excellent education, less socioeconomic possibilities owing to social exclusion, unfavorable family attitudes about employment, and limited access to working settings are some of these (Gamez et al., 2018; Kono, n.d.; Marella et al., 2016; Mina, 2017; Santos, 2014; Van Niekerk & Van der Merwe, 2013). These barriers result in lower labor-force participation, higher unemployment rates, and, if employed, lower pay than non-disabled employees (Narayanan, 2018). The International Disability Rights Monitor discovered that just 57.12 percent of PWDs are employed, compared to 82.3 percent of the general population, demonstrating the employment issue of PWDs in the country.

According to the Philippine National Statistics Office and the Asian Development Bank (ADB), in 2005, only one to three out of 10 employable PWDs in the Philippines had regular paid work, despite numerous local and international movements to include them in mainstream employment (Cortes, 2013; Thomson, 2010). The discussion below explores some of the challenges PWDs face in the world of work.

Poverty and lack of societal inclusion

Many PWDs in the Philippines are born into low-income homes. They have less in life, whether physical disability, social environment, or resources (Aragon Jr, 2017). According to Ufitinema and Mulyungi

(2018), 89 percent of those questioned by the National Council of Persons with Disabilities had no access to financial services. As a result, the battle of PWDs in the labor market begins early in life, as they confront significant obstacles in obtaining a proper education. PWDs have difficulty pursuing and finishing education due to their limited reach, despite different government and non-government aid. The policy implementation is unsuccessful for numerous reasons (Aragon Jr, 2017), including that PWDs continue to suffer prejudice in many aspects of their lives, including schooling.

Poor access to quality education

Traditional schools are not prepared to serve kids with impairments, and instructors are not adequately educated to handle pupils with disabilities (Possi, 1997, as cited by Uromi & Mazagwa, 2014). There are few special education schools for people with disabilities in the Philippines and many other nations (Goyal, 2017). In the Philippines, less than three percent of disabled children and teenagers access elementary education (ADB, 2002). Those who did have access face discouraging elements that function as additional impediments to obtaining a decent education (American India Foundation, 2014). Bullying by peers, being refused school entrance, and bus drivers failing to offer much-needed access and help are just a few examples. Poor access to excellent education reduces a PWD's chances of landing a high-paying job. Many organizations are choosy because they demand well-trained and highly competent employees, putting PWD applicants at a disadvantage (Marella et al., 2016). Their lower education levels limit work opportunities since many positions need a higher degree of formal education and qualifications (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2014). According to a study by Mohamed Osman and Mohamad Diah (2017), PWDs would have improved their market worth if they possessed information and communication technology (ICT) skills that were in high demand in the digital era. Similarly, Uromi and Mazagwa (2014) discovered that 47.6 percent, or nearly half of PWDs in Tanzania had not attended school, indicating a massive disparity in PWD literacy compared to the country's illiteracy rate in people without disabilities, which is just 25.3 percent. Women with impairments were less likely to attend school than males because they were kept at home to do domestic duties (Uromi & Mazagwa, 2014).

As mentioned, in the Philippines, RA 7277– An Act Providing For The Rehabilitation, Self-Development, And Self-Reliance Of Disabled Person And Their Integration Into The Mainstream Of Society And For Other Purposes, mandates the state to ensure that PWDs have adequate access to quality education (Magna Carta for Disabled Persons,1991). As part of this, there are vocational training courses for PWDs. A study by Majid and Razzak (2015) found that vocational-technical training for PWDs is helpful in their rehabilitation and is a way to uplift their socioeconomic status. Sadly, only the more educated are more likely to be aware of their legal rights and privileges; thus, they are more likely to participate in job-seeking activities (Aragon Jr, 2017; Tabuga, 2010). Mori (2015) reiterated that PWDs should have quality education for more job opportunities.

Caregivers' attitudes

Another hurdle is the mentality of the family. Many family members or caretakers do not allow PWD relatives to work for a living (Reyes et al., 2011; Tabuga, 2010). They are too guarded and do not allow PWDs to expose themselves to the public. They are accustomed to considering the PWD as a "special case" (Goyal, 2017). Similarly, religious beliefs in specific communities see impairments as the result of a family member's wrongdoing. Thus, the assumption is that the PWD should become a beggar and people who offer alms can avoid retribution in the afterlife (Tabuga, 2010).

Some families and caregivers have a negative attitude toward government and non-government assistance for PWDs and find them procedurally cumbersome to avail of. This external help is short-lived; thus, they carry the rest of the 'burden' eventually. Still, some families believe they can support their PWD relatives, and there is no need for them to work and be self-sufficient (Reyes et al., 2011).

PWDs' lack of awareness of their rights and privileges

Only three out of 10 PWDs are aware of their legal rights and privileges, as well as job prospects (Aragon Jr, 2017; Himor, 2018). Top-down communication is inadequate and urgently needs to be improved. Government entities responsible for informing and delivering these services to people with disabilities cannot carry out their duty (ABS-

CBN News, 2019). Participation in initiatives to improve their well-being is low, particularly among the poor who require assistance with mobility (Tabuga, 2010).

For instance, it is challenging for them to attend job fairs if the location is far. The venue cannot accommodate wheelchairs and other aids for people with mobility limitations (Thomson, 2010). This dilemma is made worse because many PWDs do not live close to government social welfare offices. In some cases though, PWDs usually apply for jobs not independently but through disability service offices (Owen, 2012).

As a result, job possibilities for PWDs are more limited since they have a smaller social resource circle than non-disabled people (Aragon Jr, 2017). The social isolation caused by people's general prejudice against PWDs has an impact on their employment. Thus, individuals become less knowledgeable, and their morale and drive to look for work suffers (Palabrica, 2018). This social barrier generates a circle of quiet struggle, reducing the willingness of PWDs to engage in societal activities in general (Guanzon, 2018). Furthermore, because of their lack of experience and abilities, many PWDs are frightened and lack confidence in applying for jobs. Many people have given up seeking work (Thomson, 2010).

Many people who get a job are unaware of their rights as employees. PWDs frequently do not realize that they are entitled to the same work terms and circumstances and equal remuneration, privileges, perks, incentives, or allowances as their non-disabled colleagues. Likewise, they are entitled to all of the rights and services outlined in the Labor Code of the Philippines (Himor, 2018; Kash, 2019).

Sadly, those employed only occupy low-level positions as they often lack the educational preparation and competency requirements for higher work opportunities. They usually grab the immediate employment opportunity even if it entails less pay and poor working conditions. Some companies lack the initiative to provide PWDs with information relevant to their work. At worse, they are denied access to work-related information, compounding the ignorance of their rights and privileges.

Incidentally, active disabled job seekers are twice as likely to be unemployed than non-disabled job seekers (Himor, 2018; Kash, 2019). Schelzig (2005) showed that only about 10 percent of the more than 100,000 employable PWDs registered with DOLE are employed. The International Disability Rights Monitor claims that 57.1 percent of the Philippines' PWDs work as farmers, forestry workers, or fishers (30.9%). In comparison, the other PWDs are working as laborers or unskilled workers in some establishments (10.8%) (Mina, 2013).

Employers' negative stereotypes against PWDs

Employers' unfavorable preconceptions exacerbate the problems that PWDs encounter in the workplace, even though they lack sufficient foundation and experience to back their assertions (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2014). Some prevalent misconceptions about PWDs include low productivity, frequent absence from work, and a high turnover rate (Cortes, 2013; Guimares et al., 2018). Another negative attitude that most companies have is treating people with disabilities as "others." They regard people with disabilities as inferior, favoring non-disabled job applicants. This concept of "othering" leads to prejudice and institutionalized exclusion of PWDs (Procknow et al., 2017). Many PWD employees, including professionals, observe and lament the fact that they are continually reminded that they are "different." Persons are quick to point out, examine, and even fear the obvious distinctions that people with disabilities have (Mack, 2019).

People's stigma and prejudice against PWDs' limitations, including employers and PWDs themselves, are huge impediments to their full and equal involvement in the world of work (Gamez et al., 2018). Their lack of knowledge of impairments exacerbates these barriers since they tend to assess PWDs based only on their disability (Ang, 2014; Hashim et al., 2018). They mistakenly associate impairments with a lack of skills, which should not be the case in the first place. One can be a PWD and be competent and possess the necessary knowledge, skills, and talents.

Many employers find PWDs expensive for the business (Aragon Jr, 2017). They are perceived as a liability rather than an asset (Ang, 2014; Aragon Jr, 2017). Unfortunately, Philippine legislation does not even have a provision that mandates private companies to dedicate a

portion of their workforce to PWDs (Aragon Jr, 2017). This prejudice against PWDs is pervasive in the Philippines and many other countries (Ang, 2014; Guimarães et al., 2018; Hashim et al., 2018).

Although some companies take in a few PWDs, those usually hired only have slight to moderate disabilities. Those with a limp or use cranes or crutches but are confident enough to try something new have higher chances of getting hired. Some companies hold job fairs for PWDs but most of the time, they only consider about 15 percent of the applicants, and only 10 percent eventually make it. These numbers show how extra-picky employers are when hiring PWDs. Sadly, those employed were most likely hired on a contractual basis only. When their contracts cease, only a few are renewed or, in rarer cases, absorbed as regular employees (Kono, n.d.)

Some employers believe that the office's physical structure and finances are constrained with the hiring PWDs, thus offseting the positive outcomes garnered from employing them (Palabrica, 2018). For instance, PWDs with wheelchairs require access to ramps and modified office corridors, work stations, and even restrooms (Empian, 2016; Palabrica, 2018). Modifying facilities and the installation of additional establishment features to provide PWDs better mobility do not come cheap. Notably, even government agencies do not entirely comply with these architectural requirements. It has been observed that many government buildings still lack the necessary improvements in workspaces and facilities meant for PWDs (Civil Service Commission, 2019).

Moreover, employers often feel uncertain as to whether or not the PWDs will live up to their expectations (International Labour Organization, 2016) believing that hiring them is risky as they are prone to accidents. Therefore, they are denied jobs, even if they are qualified (Ang, 2014). They feel hiring PWDs would entail more costs than gains (Lengnick-Hall, 2007; Palabrica, 2018). They claim that even if the legislation gives rewards (e.g., tax deduction), if they recruit PWDs, the cost of planning and sending paperwork to receive the award, as well as the inefficiencies and uncertainties generated by government departments engaged in the process of releasing the prize cancel out the advantages (Kono, n.d.).

Some disabilities are not readily discernable and are deemed "invisible" except to the affected persons themselves (Bonaccio et al., 2020). They experience the stigma of having a disability, so they hide their disabilities from their employers, fearing the resulting unfair treatment. Disclosing the "invisible" disability is risky as it increases people's chances of getting adverse reactions. A mild to moderate visual or auditory defect that does not require wearing glasses or a hearing aid are among the most common examples of invisible disability. Likewise, included in this category are people with mild to moderate intellectual and mental health issues and people with physical disabilities that are not apparent (i.e., people with brittle bone disease, backbone defects, lupus, etc.) (Mack, 2019; McNabb, 2019; Thomson, 2010). The latter types of disabilities are often more frowned upon by other people as they are harder to deal with (Imperial, 2017; Thomson, 2010).

On the contrary, employers often show more positive attitudes toward PWDs with physical and sensory disabilities than those with intellectual or psychiatric disabilities (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2014). People with a psychological or learning disability are more at risk of discrimination and bullying (Milne, 2013). Mack (2019) found that PWDs with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) experience unfair employment treatment. Some of those with ASD have difficulty passing job interviews because they tend to talk fast and use many hand gestures (Mack, 2019). It was found that one out of three employees avoid PWD coworkers after knowing about their disabilities. This reaction may come from the fear of saying something wrong or offensive to the PWD or avoiding awkwardness (McNabb, 2019). Likewise, not all PWDs even want to be identified as PWD, especially those with hidden disabilities. It was discovered that 38 percent of people with invisible disabilities hide their disabilities (McNabb, 2019). In sum, PWDs shun their coworkers to avoid awkwardness and poor attitudes towards them (McNabb, 2019).

Lack of PWD-friendly facilities

Narayanan (2018) found that two of the most common forms of discrimination against PWDs in organizations are the lack of an accessible physical environment and the limited or lack of relevant assistive technology. These exclusive amenities and aids are to be provided by employers (Reddy, n.d.). But again, the adjustments (i.e.,

in the infrastructure) to accommodate PWDs are considered as costs by the employers; some even believe that PWDs are highly dependent on the people around them while at work (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2014).

Unlike other countries, there is an utter lack of PWD-friendly transport facilities in the Philippines. The PWDs who have mobility impairments are at a disadvantage, especially since most also lack money for taxi (their usual vehicle) fares (ABS-CBN News, 2019; Tabuga, 2010). On top of that, scheduling or booking a car is often complicated, and some drivers deliberately choose not to take them in. Besides, there is a dearth of available people who can aid wheelchair users using public transportation facilities (Almada & Renner, 2015). PWDs with mobility issues are, unfortunately, left out when they are on business trips (Mack, 2019). Further, some transport service providers are not too accommodating to PWDs (Lee et al., 2015; Tabuga, 2010)

Many public buildings remain inaccessible to PWDs, especially those with mobility issues (Thomson, 2010). Despite the law requiring them, many establishments still do not have wheelchair ramps, sidewalks, properly functioning elevators, handrails, PWD comfort rooms, and other necessary facilities (ABS-CBN News, 2019; Santos, 2014). A study by Destin et al. (2016) highlighted that PWDs need a conducive sound and visual environment to move from one place to another. As mentioned earlier, Batas Pambansa Bilang 344, otherwise known as the Accessibility Law, requires buildings, institutions, establishments, and public utilities to install facilities and other devices to promote and enhance the mobility of PWDs. However, compliance with this law and its implementation is in dire need of improvement (Global Accessibility News, 2011; Charfavis, 2018). This situation affects not only PWD job applicants but also the already employed PWDs. A survey by Leber et al. (2018) found that the productivity level of employed PWDs is greatly affected by their satisfaction with the conditions in their work premises.

Discrimination from leaders and coworkers

The commodification of labor in the work setting is another huge problem, mainly when corporate norms include long working hours, work overload, late work shift, and stressful task assignments. These are detrimental to workers' well-being, especially for those with

disabilities (Narayanan, 2018). Among these norms, employees with disabilities must continuously prove themselves to people around them (Mack, 2019) to gain greater acceptance.

Likewise, social issues get in the way of a PWD's work, as some supervisors and coworkers do not accommodate employees' disabilities (Mack, 2019; Thomson, 2010). For example, believing that a PWD coworker will not perform or finish the tasks efficiently (Goyal, 2017; Thomson, 2010), non-disabled employees think they have to pick up the PWD's "slack." A sample situation is when supervisors and coworkers still insist on a group communication model that excludes the deaf PWD with residual hearing but with some speaking ability and can communicate in a one-on-one setting with relative ease. Employees with disabilities need specific aids and assistance, depending on the situation or environment. In this case, it is essential to emphasize that not all deaf people need the same thing and can perform equally in different settings. Hence, individual accommodation is imperative (Mack, 2019). A study by Jain and Sharma (2018) found that to carry out their tasks, visually impaired bank employees require social support from their superiors, peers, subordinates, and customers.

However, some coworkers dislike it when PWDs are afforded support and accommodation. Some even consider these as preferential treatment and become jealous (Mack, 2019). They believe supporting and enabling PWD employees are forms of special treatment and find it unfair for the non-disabled. For them, if those with disabilities are to be given the aids, then the non-disabled should also receive some form of accommodation to foster "fairness." The employers consequently find themselves balancing the interests of the non-disabled, which often results in PWDs still not being given aids and being left to figure things out on their own (Mack, 2019). These scenarios are usually caused by coworkers' lack of understanding and empathy for PWD employees' needs. This ignorance causes some coworkers to deliberately refuse to work with PWDs (Narayanan, 2018).

Non-disabled employees may also fear an increase in their workload if they work with coworkers with disabilities (Lengnick-Hall, 2007; Lengnick-Hall et al., 2014). Since PWDs are slow in accomplishing their work, they fear losing rewards, primarily if their performance

negatively affects their team's overall outputs. Having employees with disabilities is also thought to negatively affect the interpersonal outcomes of non-disabled employees as the latter becomes awkward and uncomfortable. Some even go so far as to feel guilty when associating with the PWD employees (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2014).

Many working PWDs do not experience upward mobility in the company. Often, they are boxed in to fill low-level jobs (Thomson, 2010). They are usually exposed to routine and repetitive tasks with inadequate training and zero career advancement (Van Niekerk & Van der Merwe, 2013). Improving PWD employees' skills is seldom done by employers due to perceived financial concerns (Narayanan, 2018). The lack of retraining, retooling, and upskilling diminishes the chances of a PWDs' career growth and development (International Labour Organization, 2016).

Lundberg (2006) found that 21 percent of employees with disabilities have been discriminated against at least once in the workplace. In contrast, only five percent of non-disabled employees were victimized at least once. Bullying is a typical form of harassment and discrimination. A UK study discovered that bullying PWDs is unfortunately commonly done by both supervisors and coworkers (Milne, 2013) who perceive them as "helpless" (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2014; Mack, 2019). As cited earlier, some coworkers assume that employees with disabilities cannot do the same tasks, so they consider the latter the last resort when seeking assistance. Typical bullying examples include "teasing" and talking ill of them behind their backs. Severe forms of bullying and discrimination can be considered "power tripping" or unfair manipulation resulting in power imbalance, such as giving PWDs tasks that are difficult and not within their scope of work. In this case, PWDs cannot refuse the order (Narayanan, 2018). "Ableist language" in the workplace is a dominant form of discrimination and social prejudice against PWDs. Examples of this hurtful language are phrases like "you did a lame job" or "you're like a blind leading another blind" (McNabb, 2019). Joking about a coworker's disability verbally or through actions (i.e., hiding or misplacing their stuff deliberately) is another example of bullying classified as "pranks" (Ball, 2015). Name-calling is also prevalent. Instead of their names, they are hurtfully teased by their disabilities. In the Philippines, for instance,

they are called duling (crossed-eyed), bulag (blind), pilay (lame), pipi (mute), bingi (deaf), and taba (obese), to cite a few. Still, another manifestation of bullying is isolating the victim through snubbing and deliberate avoidance, including withholding information. The former scenario of name-calling is an example of a form of social bullying. On the other hand, snubbing and deliberate avoidance are forms of "sabotage" (Ball, 2015).

Gender-bias

Gender bias is also commonplace. Mina's (2013) study shows that only 36 percent of women with disabilities were employed in surveyed selected cities in Metro Manila and Rosario, Batangas. Between male and female PWDs, employers are more likely to hire male applicants. Employed female PWDs hold low positions under poor working conditions and reduced prospects of promotion. They also earn less compared to their male counterparts. This gender imbalance showcases the double jeopardy that women with disabilities face in the world of employment (International Labour Organization, 2016). It implies that female PWDs suffer from double discrimination – their gender and disabilities (Cortes, 2013; Lee et al., 2015; Tabuga, 2010). A much sadder note is that women with disabilities are prone to physical and sexual abuse, both in and outside the workplace (Uromi & Mazagwa, 2014).

Indeed, women with disabilities face unique cultural or personal challenges brought about by their disabilities and gender (Dean, 2019). Dick-Mosher (2015) found that disability type and gender can influence discrimination and employee experiences in the workplace. For example, women with disabilities who request reasonable disability accommodations in the company are more likely to be denied than fired (Dick-Mosher, 2015; Harlan & Robert, 1998).

On the other hand, for men with disabilities working in low grade or low paid jobs, work limitations and restrictions set by their disabilities tend to be confronted with termination or being eventually laid off rather than being denied their work accommodation requests (Dick-Mosher, 2015).

Customers' negative attitudes toward PWDs

There are also instances when company customers are rude to employees with disabilities. Although these adverse reactions should be met with patience, there should always be a limitation to such tolerance, especially when the "abuse line" is crossed (Toporek, 2012). A UK study states that 28 percent of bullying against employed PWDs in the UK is from company customers (Milne, 2013). The untoward attitude of customers against PWDs stems from their perception that PWDs are second-class citizens who cannot do their jobs well. They quickly become upset if the service or product they receive is not as good as those coming from non-disabled workers (Customer Service Zone, n.d.; Cortes, 2013; Lengnick-Hall et al., 2014).

Some customers are uneasy when dealing with service providers with disabilities. They show awkwardness, discomfort, and ambivalence; they even feel guilty (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2014). Some customers bully and harass employees with disabilities when they do not get what they want, sometimes despite not being entitled to their demands. Verbal abuse and aggressive behaviors are typical scenarios (Customer Service Zone, n.d.). Some even mock PWDs while they are performing their tasks (American India Foundation, 2014). There are also instances when customers avoid PWDs because they fear the possibility of contagion of "disabilities" or "disease" (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2014). Meanwhile, some customers who are not aware of the disability of the service provider (i.e., employees with "invisible disabilities") act rudely and scold them for not performing "normally" (i.e., strolling, talking slowly, etc.). Because of the "invisibility of the disability," the customers could not easily empathize with the PWD employee (McNabb, 2019).

Lack of policies meant for PWDs

It is a given that both employment and income of PWDs are affected proportionately by the severity of their disabilities (American India Foundation, 2014; United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2018). According to the Disability and Development Report: Realizing the Sustainable Development Goals by, for, and with persons with disabilities (2018), unfair compensation and benefits of employed PWDs are ordinary because of their non-regular nature. Many are

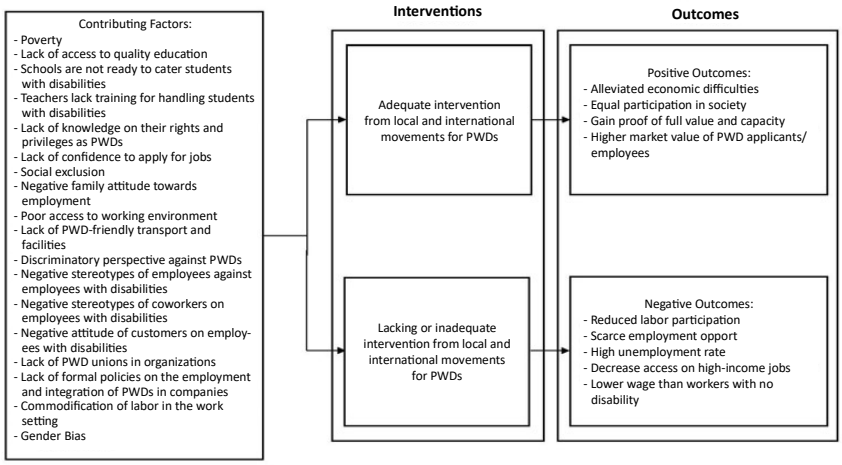
hired as temporary workers, as seasonal workers, or on a day-to-day basis only. This situation connotes that many are devoid of formal employment contracts and lack benefits and social protection (Mina, 2013). Even the wage-employed still receive less than the mean wage of a full-time non-disabled employee. The Disability and Development Report (2018) further noted that the self-employed PWDs earn much less and security of tenure is elusive. Kaye et al. (2011) found that many employers do not intend to keep employees with disabilities for an extended period. In times of downsizing, the PWDs are ordinarily the ones to go first.

The inclusion of PWDs in the workplace is elusive, as it was found that most organizations do not have a formal policy on the employment and integration of PWDs (American India Foundation, 2014). For those that do have it, their corporate culture is far away from embracing diversity and inclusiveness. There is a disconnect between their pronouncements and actions. Simple strategies for embracing diversity are deemed ineffective, as the top management's commitment to embracing diversity and inclusiveness is vital. Once top management commitment is achieved, anti-discriminatory policies can be strengthened and fully implemented (Chow, 2019).

Lack of PWD unions

Given the many hurdles, PWDs at work essentially need a union comprised of people of their kind. Their concerns and issues gain less traction since they do not have solidarity forged by a trade union. In general, the primary role of trade unions is to promote the rights of the workers. The association is vital for PWDs as a collective voice that resonates with concrete action taken by the government and employer sector. From organizing to collective bargaining and grievance handling to lobbying at the Congress, the association can spell a big difference in raising society's awareness in general. The union can be an excellent platform to represent the PWDs, ensure that they have available and decent work and pay, and provide them with training and career opportunities (Fremlin, n.d.). The union can help transform PWDs' contractual status into regular employment. Their contractual employment situation is a significant stumbling block that hinders them from exercising their rights to form alliances (Philippine Workers' and Trade Union Report on the SDGs, 2019).

Figure 4: Integrative framework on the challenges of the PWDs in the world of work



Trailblazing Organizations

Despite the obstacles, some domestic and foreign firms accept and employ PWDs. Organizations that often hire PWDs have distinct HR programs that cater to PWD recruiting, training, and career possibilities. Some of these groups use ads to encourage other firms to hire people with disabilities (Mokhtar & Hussain, 2019).

There are just a few contact center businesses in the Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) sector that are notable for recruiting people with disabilities. Accenture, for example, embraces people with disabilities while also creating a workplace that meets their requirements. They provide facilities, equipment, and gadgets tailored to certain impairments. Employees with hearing problems, for example, are outfitted with special headphones that connect sound directly to their ear bones, allowing them to hear the discussion. A Braille keyboard is available for those with vision difficulties (Israel, 2019; Montemayor et al., 2018).

In the manufacturing sector, a local company called Lamoiyan Corporation aligned its employment practices with PWD laws. This organization, which produces health products, employs the hearing impaired in its assembly line and other operations (Palabrica, 2018).

Other local companies that employ PWDs include the House With No Steps – an organization that hires wheelchair users, and Goodwill Industries, which employs persons with a wide range of disabilities, including those with hearing impairment (Kono, n.d.).

Moreover, Fruitas, De Original Jamaican Pattie Shop, and Juice Bar are local companies that offer front liner jobs to qualified deaf employees. Another dynamic organization that employs PWDs is The Happy Project. This company started as a project creating a lighthearted and functional travel pouch, but its mission includes integrating PWDs into society by welcoming them into their company.

Farrom Café and Dunamai Café carry the advocacy of having PWDs employees. The former also employs out-of-school youths, while the second company trains PWD baristas (Himor, 2018). Other well-known local companies that welcome PWDs are the fast-food chain Mang Inasal Philippines, Inc., and the pharmaceutical firm Unilab (Montemayor et al., 2018).

On the other hand, international companies that hire PWDs include Proctor and Gamble, Ernst and Young, Cisco Systems, S.C. Johnson, Sodexo, and Apple (Haven, 2016; Mokhtar & Hussain, 2019). Proctor and Gamble Company manufactures household products, i.e., laundry soaps, dishwashing liquids, etc. They encourage an inclusive workplace by offering PWD Employee Groups to nurture and welcome PWDs in the organization (Haven, 2016; Procter and Gamble, n.d.) Ernst and Young is a global professional services firm that advocates for equality in the Workplace of PWDs. They offer disability awareness training for all their employees. They also provide PWDs training sessions for career development and telecommuting (EY Americas, 2019). Cisco Systems is another multinational technology company involved in designing, manufacturing, and selling networking equipment. They advocate for an inclusive digital revolution by training PWDs with the skills needed to fill in jobs at their organization (Yoo, 2017). S.C. Johnson is a well-known family company responsible for many leading global household brands. Aside from hiring PWDs, they also promote PWD inclusion through programs to recruit, hire, and train employees with a disability (Haven, 2016).

On the other hand, Sodexo is a global food services and facilities management corporation well-recognized for furthering PWD rights in the workplace. They provide training programs for disability awareness and hiring and fostering retention programs for PWDs (Gerber, 2020; Haven, 2016). Lastly, Apple, an internationally known brand that manufactures technological devices, also embraces PWDs in the workplace. They provide PWDs with a platform for expression and dignify them through their advertisements. Their campaign is a very effective way of influencing the worldview of PWDs since the media can reach a wider variety of audiences. As a result, people develop compassion for PWDs, and they are pushed to innovate ways to improve the quality of life of PWDs (Mokhtar & Hussain, 2019).

Benefits of Employing PWDs

Hiring PWDs is beneficial in many ways.

Overview of the benefits for employers

According to Lengnick-Hall et al. (2014), when employers have previous positive interactions with PWDs, their employability rises. Many of them testified that these people are brimming with qualities that may contribute to organizational success. Despite their limits in doing specific jobs, individuals are nonetheless capable of bringing their entire abilities to the table (Shawy, n.d.). That is why despite the obstacles and discrimination faced by PWDs, some businesses continue to recognize the benefits of hiring them. Organizations that employ PWDs daily have the hearts and minds to improve their well-being (Kono, n.d.).

Although keeping employees with impairments is costly and may present some problems, the long-term benefits are well worth it if well planned and executed (Goyal, 2017; Imperial, 2017). The average expense for assistance and accommodations is, in essence, outweighed by the benefits of recruiting PWDs (Owen, 2012). Although some concessions, such as aiding PWDs in sitting or standing while doing their task and adjusting their work schedule flexibility may not convert into monetary costs, they can lower the cost of recruiting through higher retention rates. These sorts of assistance save expenses

associated with replacement recruiting and training (International Labour Organization, 2016). The necessity for additional expenditures for accident-prone PWDs is likewise unwarranted since PWDs have better safety records at work than non-disabled counterparts (International Labour Organization, 2016).

Companies can benefit from the government's incentives

Government rules and regulations give certain advantages to businesses that recruit people with disabilities (Palabrica, 2018; Reddy, n.d.). The state provides certain incentives to private companies that hire qualified people with disabilities as regular workers, apprentices, or learners (Reyes et al., 2011). They benefit from a tax break, a deduction in their gross income equal to 25 percentof the amount paid as salaries and wages for PWDs (ESCAP, 1997). Private entities that alter their physical facilities to accommodate employees with disabilities are eligible for an extra deduction from their net taxable income equal to half of the direct expenses of the upgrades or changes made.

As previously said, a workplace structure that caters to the demands of PWD workers enhances their level of happiness. As a result, increased satisfaction increases productivity and engagement with coworkers (Leber et al., 2018). Private businesses with at least one percent of their workforce comprising PWDs are allowed a year-long "immunity from inspection" by the DOLE (Palabrica, 2018), provided that particular paperwork and PWD employment verification is presented and certified by the latter. Furthermore, the DOH (Reyes et al., 2011) accredits the disability, skills, and credentials to ensure that they are fit for employment. Local governments are advocating for the employment of people with disabilities in the private sector. For instance, since 2015, Quezon City has recommended 314 PWDs for jobs, with around 21 percent being hired (Montemayor et al., 2018). Ideally, employment recommendations for people with disabilities are developed after extensive consultation with vocational specialists. Professionals in such sectors, however, are still few. Thus, job counselors fill the void by investigating the possibilities of using more scientific and quantitative approaches to vocational counseling to guarantee that employment suggestions are matched with the PWDs' life objectives, abilities, and traits (Ho et al., 2013).

Enhancing the company and employer brand

The inclusion of PWDs in the business supply chain is beneficial in creating a positive employer brand. First, it can attract and retain valuable customers who prefer companies that abide by national policies and legislation requiring diversity and inclusion (International Labour Organization, 2016). Second, those who hire PWDs gain recognition from the national and international conventions for PWDs such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol and International Labor Organization Convention (National Federation of the Disabled, 2016; Reddy, n.d.). With disability issues being one of the focal points in the UN's international human rights agenda, it is a big boost for these organizations' reputations. Lastly, the recognition serves as a push to raise PWD awareness (American India Foundation, 2014), which enhances their corporate image (National Federation of the Disabled, 2016). Firms that gained an excellent corporate image or reputation by employing PWDs have an edge in lawsuits relative to discrimination (Reddy, n.d.)

PWDs as role models at work

Contrary to what was mentioned earlier, the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (2015) discovered that PWDs could work excellently with the non-disabled. Many employers observed that employees with disabilities are hardworking, dedicated, and loyal (Goyal, 2017; Reddy, n.d.; Thomson, 2010). These observations are the opposite of the stereotype of PWDs at work. When provided with available tasks and an inclusive environment, PWDs can work to their full potential (Müller, 2013). Since most PWDs find it challenging to find jobs, they decide to stay when they do find one (Imperial, 2017). They have a smaller chance of willingly leaving the organization, making them a real asset in hospitality sectors that experience high employee attrition (American India Foundation, 2014; Goyal, 2017). They show great appreciation for having jobs such that they try hard to compensate for their deficits by exerting more effort in their tasks (National Federation of the Disabled, 2016; Müller, 2013). Employees with disabilities are also less likely to take advantage of compensated sick and vacation breaks, saving the organization money (Reddy, n.d.).Some of the many positive attributes of PWDs are:

being task-focused and less distracted when working, having lower absenteeism records, and spending longer tenure in the company if given the opportunity (Goyal, 2017; Owen, 2012; International Labour Organization, 2016). While overcoming their limitations, their capabilities cannot be discounted by employers. They perform at par or even better than their non-disabled counterparts (Reddy, n.d.; International Labour Organization, 2016).

Zhu et al. (2019) show that PWD employees thrive much better in their workplaces when provided with conducive work facilities and a team-learning climate. When embedded in the organization's culture, these two significantly contribute to the self-efficacy of the PWDs (Hashim et al., 2018; Zhu et al., 2019). Workplace inclusion buffers the potential adverse effects of disability significantly if it is strengthened by a high team-learning climate (Zhu et al., 2019).

At work, PWDs are very observant and innovative. They aim to learn continuously; so, they study the world (Guanzon, 2018; Himor, 2018). Research by Bengisu and Balta (2011) reports that most experts agree that PWD employees in the hospitality industry can fulfill tasks as much as employees with no disabilities. They emphasized that as long as PWDs are professionally knowledgeable and skillfully fit for their functions, they can do what the non-disabled can (Bengisu & Balta, 2011). Further, an inquiry by Guimarães et al. (2018) on workers in the construction industry reveals that PWD employees have a lower absenteeism record than the non-disabled. This finding is contrary to the prevailing prejudice and stereotype against PWDs. As cited earlier, employed PWDs tend to stay with organizations that hire them (Lengnick-Hall, 2007). Some critical factors that make them stay include a person-organization link, job fit, and the sacrifices they may have made while working in the company. Researchers also found no significant correlation between the type of disability and the factors that influence them to stay in a company (Hashim et al., 2018).

PWDs have different unique abilities that can be useful to the organization. For example, a company experiencing inconsistencies in two coworkers' time records benefitted from an employee with autism who had a fixation on time. The autistic attested who was telling the truth. The autistic was keeping an unofficial log of tardy employees.

Autistic people, incidentally, have a low propensity for lying, so the dispute was solved relatively easily (Imperial, 2017). Some PWDs are very observant and meticulous, such that they pay much attention to the details of their work. They are also highly devoted to their tasks, even working longer hours per week than non-disabled employees (Goyal, 2017) without complaining.

PWDs add to the company's diversity of thought by bringing innovations and fresh perspectives to benefit the Workplace (National Federation of the Disabled, Nepal, 2016; Thomson, 2010). A case that serves as an excellent example is when some PWD employees shared their life experiences to help the physical medicine and rehabilitation residents learn to value and understand the PWDs.

PWDs help their colleagues relate to them better, especially those who understand their struggles (Montemayor et al., 2018). Since they are used to life challenges, they are molded to become flexible, creative, and open-minded (Müller, 2013). These characteristics or competencies are essential for success in the world of work.

Goya (2017) mentioned that hiring employees with disabilities in food chains in India helped non-disabled coworkers understand their customers better, particularly PWDs. The inclusion of PWDs in the workforce ensures that customer service quality is perfect for many consumers, including people with different abilities (National Federation of the Disabled, Nepal, 2016). Additionally, the inclusion of PWDs also contributes to attaining sales targets and attracting new and loyal customers sympathetic to PWDs' situation (Miethlich & Oldenburg, 2019; National Federation of the Disabled, 2016).

When PWDs are placed in a leadership position, they are likely to embrace an inclusive work environment that negates the notion of "otherness" of PWDs outside society (Procknow et al., 2017). PWDs in leadership positions are highly respected, regarded, recognized, and accepted in the organization. This scenario significantly reduces the stigma against PWDs (Okech & Kabagombe, 2010).

Indeed, many studies have proven that a lot of PWDs are friendly, productive workers. This becomes truer if the social context is

conducive and harmonious (Yan et al., 1993). With a work environment that enables inclusion and acceptance, PWDs can excel in their fields, even for high-level and leadership positions (Davis, n.d.; Himor, 2018; Reyes et al., 2011). PWDs positively impact the working environment (Imperial, 2017; Owen, 2012), as studies have shown that many non-disabled employees learn to be more understanding and compassionate. The employees' bond is strengthened, primarily when they work together to foster a welcoming environment for their coworkers with disabilities (Imperial, 2017). They are also found to promote the retention of valuable employees (including themselves), increase productivity, and improve workplace morale (Owen, 2012; International Labour Organization, 2016).

Corporate social responsibility

The movement for equal opportunity and inclusion of PWDs is vital for developing a country's social and economic facets. The ILO noted that the exclusion of PWDs in the mainstream workforce has costs for society, including the waste of the productive potential of PWDs, the cost of disability benefits and pensions, and the negative implications on their families. An estimated 1-7 percent decrease in a country's GDP may result from the exclusion of PWDs (International Labour Organization, 2016). This is why in recent years, organizations started to include the PWD in their corporate social responsibilities (CSR) initiatives.

Having CSR initiatives that focus on PWDs leads to companies carrying out more actions favoring the PWDs (Segovia-San-Juan et al., 2017). Hiring PWDs also forms CSR that enhances their image to the external public (Müller, 2013; Segovia-San-Juan et al., 2017). This improvement of the corporate image is the primary motivator for Filipino employers in hiring PWDs, which they consider as "added value" (Cortes, 2013; Reddy, n.d.; International Labour Organization, 2016).). Their gesture generates goodwill to consumers and advocates equal employment opportunity (American India Foundation, 2014). It also resonates well with the consumers union that supports good corporate governance. The positive image affects its people, strengthening their pride, identity, and commitment to the organization (Imperial, 2017; Reddy, n.d.). Public-driven motivation benefits both the organization and the PWD employees themselves. A study by Miethlich and Oldenburg

(2019) found that the successful inclusion of PWDs is a competitive advantage for companies. It is difficult for others to follow those who do not have the luxury of having enough resources to do the same act (Miethlich & Oldenburg, 2019).

Potential workforce supply and new markets

Hiring highly skilled people who are picky about their employers is a complex undertaking. If given the opportunity, however, people with disabilities may effectively offset skill shortages in the war for qualified individuals; after all, PWD represent a primarily untapped pool of potential employees (Miethlich & Oldenburg, 2019). PWDs can also help open new markets and customer segments (Miethlich & Oldenburg, 2019; International Labour Organization, 2016); Thomson, 2010). By hiring PWDs, a company's brands can resonate with the consumers (Goyal, 2017). Studies have suggested that some consumers are willing to shift brands to manifest their support to organizations that hire PWDs (International Labour Organization, 2016).

The average cost of aids and accommodations is, in essence, overshadowed by the benefits brought by hiring PWDs (Owen, 2012). Although some concessions, such as assisting PWDs in sitting or standing while performing their work and fixing their work schedule flexibility do not translate to monetary expenses, they can reduce hiring costs through better retention rates. These kinds of aids save expenses related to recruitment and training of replacements (International Labour Organization, 2016). The need for additional funds for accident-prone PWDs is also an unfounded belief as PWDs have better safety records than their non-disabled counterparts at work (International Labour Organization, 2016).

Summary

PWDs account for around 15 percent of the global population. This category includes approximately 3.1 percent of the Filipino people. The fundamental law for PWDs in the Philippines was adopted in 1992 under Republic Act No. 7277, or the Magna Carta for Persons with Disabilities, and was modified in 2007 with Republic Act No.

9442. The purpose of the instrument is to safeguard and promote the welfare of PWDs and advance their rehabilitation, self-development, and self-reliance as they integrate into society and become productive and valued members of the country. Another regulation for PWDs is the Accessibility Law, or Batas Pambansa 344, which assures that a barrier-free environment allows PWDs to enter public and private buildings and businesses.

PWDs are constantly faced with the problem of obtaining suitable employment. As a result, the government delegated the authority to develop and implement policies and programs for their benefit to several agencies. DOLE, in particular, is the principal agency concerned with the employment of people with disabilities. Nonetheless, despite the aforementioned legislative instruments and services in place, DOLE's poor and inadequate execution has left many PWDs in a horrible condition. Both PWDs and non-PWDs are unaware of government initiatives and assistance. In addition to a lack of understanding, many individuals have unfavorable views and prejudices regarding persons with disabilities.

Discrimination remains, and work for those with disabilities is difficult to come by. Many companies do not consider hiring people with disabilities because of the anticipated additional costs of modifying their facilities and workstations to accommodate them. Despite several studies demonstrating that people with disabilities are active, productive, and valued employees, some companies remain skeptical of their skills. This employer mentality contributes to the enormous barrier that PWDs confront in the labor market.

Their difficulty in finding work derives from poverty, which prevents many of them from receiving a good education. Because of social isolation, they have less socioeconomic prospects, and their family's negative sentiments discourage them from working. Those who do find work typically wind up in low-level occupations in a low-wage setting.

On the positive side, a few local and overseas businesses hire PWDs for a variety of reasons. Some companies just wish to take advantage of government subsidies. Others regard PWDs as significant assets to their businesses, while others seek to improve their internal and

external image. These benefits contribute to a positive employer brand that attracts and keeps consumers, boosting their market share. Some are intrinsically motivated, which means they are only motivated by a desire to assist people with disabilities.

Conclusion and Recommendations

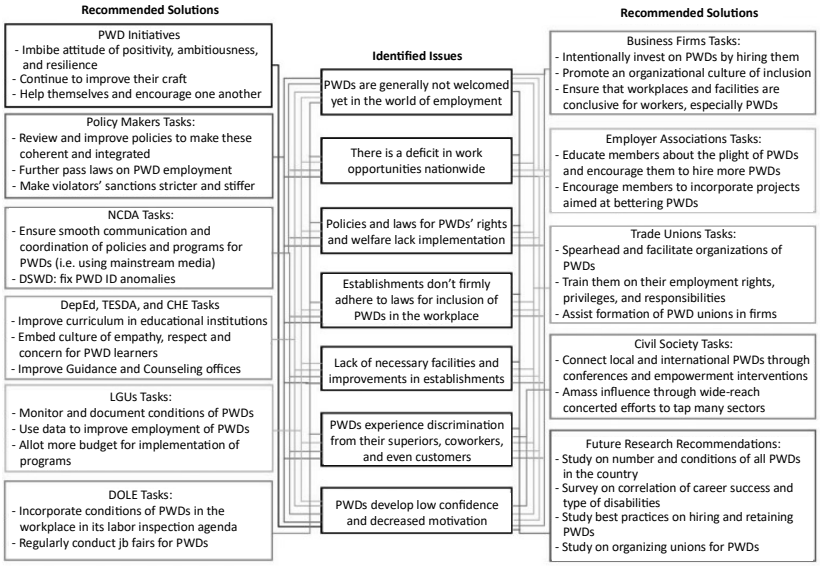
In conclusion, although many are willing and capable, PWDs are still not widely accepted in the labor market. Disability hiring discrimination makes it exceedingly difficult for PWDs to find work. Unfortunately, rules and regulations governing the rights and welfare of people with disabilities are not being implemented. For example, information on the rights and advantages of people with disabilities is insufficiently disseminated.

Many private firms still see hiring people with disabilities as a cost rather than a benefit. Notably, even government institutions do not strictly adhere to the rules governing the inclusion of PWDs in the workplace. This is obvious in several government buildings, where there is an apparent absence of required facilities and upgrades to allow PWDs access to the premises. Employees with impairments face prejudice from their bosses, coworkers, and even customers. The combination of the aforementioned factors leads to a low employment rate for PWDs, despite demonstrating their ability to do occupations efficiently.

PWDs should constantly be optimistic, and they should be ambitious and resilient to keep moving forward despite the odds. They should emphasize education and constant learning to better their present craft, and they should always strive to learn something new. They should stay informed, especially about possibilities, and make the most of available tools. They should assist and support one another. They should put forth more effort to get along with their bosses, coworkers, and customers and strive to win their trust and respect.

Thus, this study recommends the following actions for consideration by the specified actors:

Figure 5: Integrative model on the solutions to the plights of the PWDs



The government should examine all policies about people with disabilities to create a more coherent and integrated framework. It should also enact legislation to improve the welfare of people with disabilities, notably in the area of employment. The government, for example, can enforce a quota of PWDs in the private sector employment. Only applicants who can demonstrate that their infrastructure and facilities can handle the demands of PWDs should be granted business licenses. The enforcement of the laws should have more incredible teeth, implying that violations should be harsher and more severe penalties. The government should have the most effective compliance with PWD regulations and serve as a private sector model. Companies' advantages for employing and keeping people with disabilities should be increased to attract other firms to do the same. Government agencies entrusted with promoting the welfare of PWDs, led by the NCDA, should maintain seamless communication and coordination among themselves to implement policies and programs properly. They should be more inventive in using various communication channels to keep beneficiaries informed of their rights and privileges. They should direct their messaging to traditional media

such as television, radio, newspapers, and emerging forms such as social media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Instagram), email blasts, text blasts, YouTube, blogs, podcasts, and government agency websites. The DSWD should also rectify the irregularities in PWD IDs as quickly as feasible and punish the scalawags. To avoid future manipulation, it should evaluate the gaps in the issuing policy.

The DepEd, TESDA, and the Commission on Higher Education should develop broad policies and initiatives to enhance curricula and instruction in educational institutions. They must work hard to instill a culture of understanding, respect, and care for PWD students. The DepEd's guidance and counseling departments should be reinforced to review PWD students' occupational choices thoroughly.

The LGUs, through the PDAO, shall regularly monitor and document the situation of PWDs in their communities. The data should be used as a baseline for developing action plans and strategies at local and national levels. In terms of employment and entrepreneurial endeavors, the PDAO should collaborate closely with TESDA, DTI, and the employment sector to train PWDs. In line with this, the PDAO should properly determine the PWDs' learning needs. The information obtained can be used by TESDA and DTI to decide the next steps. The government should increase funding for existing and new initiatives for people with disabilities at the national and local levels.

The DOLE should include the working conditions of PWDs in its labor inspection agenda. Similarly, it should hold employment fairs for people with disabilities regularly.

When investing in PWDs, businesses should look beyond financial motivation. They should strive to hire people with disabilities who are competent and qualified for the job. They should provide quality jobs for PWDs and see hiring PWDs as an additional contribution to its growth. They should not confine PWDs to stereotypical positions but rather give them possibilities for advancement in their careers. They must foster a company culture that really supports diversity and inclusion by incorporating these principles into its policies, strategies, training programs, and tangible actions. They must guarantee that their workplaces and facilities are accessible to workers, including those with impairments.

Employer organizations such as the Employers Confederation of the Philippines, the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and the People Management Association of the Philippines, to name a few, should do their part. They should educate their members about PWDs and encourage them to recruit more people with disabilities in their various companies. Similarly, they should urge their members to integrate projects to better the PWD sector's lot within their CSR.

Trade unions should drive and support the spatial organization of PWDs and teach them about their work rights, perks, and duties. They should assist in forming PWD unions at the business level to improve their working conditions.

Through conferences and empowerment programs, civil society could connect local PWDs with PWDs worldwide. PWDs' voices are more likely to be heard if they are united across boundaries in voicing their concerns and issues. As a result, they should acquire influence by a broad and concentrated effort to reach out to various sections of society.

A comprehensive analysis can be undertaken for future studies to include the number of PWDs and their different regional situations. A survey linking job performance with the kind of impairment is worth investigating since the results may provide vocational counseling. Another study that academics and trade unionists might undertake is one that tries to examine establishing unions for PWDs. Other intriguing themes include best policies and business practices for employing and retaining PWDs.

The recommendations above are offered to integrate the PWD sector into mainstream society to encourage increased involvement. They will have total access to their rights, freedoms and earning respectable employment in this manner.

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