



Perspective on Employment Opportunities of People with Disabilities in San Gabriel, La Union

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Abstract: For PWDs, employment is not only a way to gain income; it also gives a chance to showcase untapped skills, provide opportunities and allow social inclusion. However, PWDs still experience common patterns of discrimination and suffer high unemployment rates. In spite of several promotions worldwide, the employment rate is considerably lower for PWDs than for people without disabilities. This study sought to know the status of inclusion of PWDs in employment in San Gabriel, La Union, the opportunities present, and the interventions to address them. The descriptive qualitative design was utilized in this study. A semi-structured interview was conducted with the PWDs. Thematization was used to analyze the responses. Results revealed that the respondents face difficulties in finding a job before the pandemic because of the limited number of jobs available and became even more challenging during the pandemic due to imposed restrictions. Although they find it difficult because of limitations, results showed that they are not discriminated against in the workplace. Moreover, the available employment opportunities for PWDs are classified under blue-collar jobs. Additionally, respondents recommend giving attention to PWDs in order to address the employment opportunities through interventions. The researchers concluded that the status of inclusion of PWDs in employment is considerably low because of the limited jobs available. Similarly, work opportunities are also insufficient. Interventions to address the employment opportunities include facilitating programs and skills training for PWDs and opening simple job positions in the municipality or barangays.

Key Words: PWDs; employment; opportunities; interventions; difficulties

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

Just like everyone, PWDs also desire a steady and productive life. Employment not only provides an avenue to be productive and to showcase untapped skills and provides an income that can be used for daily needs, but it will also give opportunities and allow social inclusion, which is significantly important for PWDs. Despite this importance and the right of every person to have access to a job without being discriminated against, people with disabilities experience common patterns of discrimination. They suffer high unemployment rates, are confronted with prejudices regarding their productivity, and are often excluded from the labor market. They also face discrimination at the hiring stage (International Labor Organization, 2021).

The issue of disability and employment has taken center stage in the global arena because it spans several areas of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations Department of

Economic and Social Affairs, 2016). Literature on the employment of PWDs indicates that significant differences exist in the employment experiences between PWDs and persons without disabilities.

Governments worldwide are trying to promote the employment of PWDs by motivating workforce participation and reducing discriminatory tendencies. On the supply side, some governments have started welfare reform programs that encourage PWDs to participate in the workforce. However, in spite of several promotions worldwide, international data from the World Health Organization (WHO, 2020) reveals that the employment rate is considerably lower for women with disability at 20% and men with disability at 53% than that of women without disability at 30% and men without disability at 65%.

Of the 92.1 million households in the Philippines, 1.57% or 1.44 million people had a disability based on the most recent data on people with disabilities found on the 2010 Census of Population and Housing (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2013). Nevertheless, economic



participation is still hard to obtain for most PWDs. According to Schelzig (2005), out of more than 100,000 employable PWDs registered with the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), there are only less than 10% of them in wage employment.

A study by Mina (2017) in Cebu, Philippines, on factors that contribute to low employment of persons with disabilities include the lack of employment opportunities within the community of the PWDs. It is stated that the majority of the few formal establishments that hire PWDs are within urban places such as the city and are far from rural areas. In addition, some of the informal enterprises that employ PWDs are carinderias or small eateries that give lower wages and do not include benefits such as bonuses, health care, and leaves.

This study aimed to explore the perspectives on employment opportunities of persons with disabilities in San Gabriel, La Union. This is significant in order to see the point of view of PWDs on employment in their community. This study gives awareness on the current status of inclusion of PWDs in employment and the opportunities that are available for them in the field whether it be sufficient. This study sought to present interventions that could address the present employment opportunities in the said locale.

1.2. Statement of Objectives

This study aimed to investigate the perspective on employment opportunities of people with disabilities in San Gabriel, La Union. Specifically, it seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What is the current status of the inclusion of PWDs in employment in San Gabriel?
2. What opportunities are available for PWDs in San Gabriel, and are they sufficient?
3. What are the interventions to address the employment opportunities in San Gabriel?

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Research Design

Give the support for your main claim by This study utilized a descriptive qualitative research design to have an in-depth and comprehensive look at the specific events experienced by individuals or groups of individuals (Lambert & Lambert, 2012). This method underpins how the researchers came up with interventions to address the employment opportunities of PWDs in San Gabriel, La Union.

2.2. Participants and Locale of the Study

The respondents of the study were the PWDs residing at San Gabriel, La Union, who are legally considered adults. A total of 10 respondents were interviewed. The participants include PWDs who are

of the working-age from 18 years old and above who have tried applying for a job, regardless of their employment status at the present time. This also includes retired PWDs. Purposive sampling was used in this study.

2.3 Data Gathering Instrument

A semi-structured interview was conducted to allow the researchers to have a keen understanding of the topic of interest. The researchers utilized a list of paper-based interview guides that contained open-ended questions.

2.4 Data Gathering Procedures and Ethical Considerations

A letter of approval was sent to the principal of LORMA Colleges for the researchers to conduct this study, and a letter of consent was given to the respondents. Because of the current situation caused by the pandemic, social meetings are limited physically. Thus, the researchers conducted the interview with the respondents online.

2.5 Data Management

Thematization was used to analyze the data to be gathered in this study in order for the researchers to effectively organize and cluster specific key subjects from the answers of the respondents that are recurrent.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Current Status of Inclusion

3.1.1 Employment Accessibility

More than half of the respondents admitted that it is difficult for them to find a job in the locale. Participants said that they find it difficult because of their disability and because there are limited jobs available for PWDs in San Gabriel. On the other hand, one respondent, respondent B, said that it is easy to find a job because he became well known for what he does, and other shop owners even offer him a position in their establishments. It can be inferred that for the majority of PWDs in San Gabriel, it is difficult to acquire a job, especially since most of them do not have the privilege of being known, unlike respondent B.

3.1.1.1 Before the Pandemic

The majority of the respondents admitted that they consider finding a job pre-pandemic as challenging and difficult because of the lack of availability of employment in San Gabriel. Conversely, there are two (2) respondents who admitted that it is easy for them to look for jobs despite indifferent circumstances and personally believes that work before the pandemic is favorable.



3.1.1.2 During the Pandemic

All the respondents said that it is even more difficult to find a job during the pandemic. The respondents mentioned that because of the decline of businesses and the present situation, there are only a small number and certain types of job opportunities left for the PWDs in San Gabriel. Moreover, because mobility is restricted, it is more challenging for them to find jobs because they cannot go to other places. Furthermore, the devastating effect of the pandemic on employment is evident around the world, affecting people of different gender, race, ethnicity, education level, age, and occupations (Lee et al., 2021) and thus include PWDs.

3.1.2 Acceptance in the Employment Sector

According to all of the interviewed PWDs, there were no instances wherein they avoided applying to certain establishments because they knew that they would not be accepted because they are considered PWDs. Similarly, there were also no instances wherein they were rejected in an establishment just because they are PWDs. Thus, this implies that PWDs in San Gabriel are not discriminated against and are accepted in the workplace. This then eliminates discrimination as a factor for having difficulty in acquiring jobs. With this, when PWDs are not discriminated against and are accepted in the workplace, they perform better on their jobs, and they feel more supported. (Zhu et al., 2019)

3.2 Availability and Sufficiency of Work Opportunities

3.2.1 Common Work Avenues

The respondents have observed that the common jobs that PWDs have depend on their capability to do work. This is backed by Seva's (2020) study which says that when the right task or job is given to a PWD in consideration of their capabilities, their performance will be positive, thus allowing them to exhibit good work.

3.2.1.1 Cleaning Services and Waste Management

Among the ten (10) respondents interviewed, four (4) answered that one of the most common jobs of PWDs in San Gabriel falls in the cleaning services and waste management industry. This includes janitorial works like road sweeping and garbage collection.

3.2.1.2 Farming/Agriculture

Farming or agricultural work is also common for PWDs as the locale has the highest percentage of agricultural land in the whole province (La Union

Tayo!, 2021). However, the respondents mentioned that farm work is intermittent; thus when farming season ends, work also ends.

3.2.1.3 Beauty and Health

According to the respondents, jobs in the beauty and health industry are also common employment for PWDs in San Gabriel. Specifically, these jobs are hairdressers, hair cutters, barbers, and masseurs.

3.2.1.4 Construction, Repair, and Maintenance

Work as an electronic repairman, maintenance, and carpenter are also common for PWDs in San Gabriel. According to respondent A, although he did not study electronics, he was fond of it, which allowed him to use it for a living by repairing electronics such as electric fans.

3.2.2 Adequateness of Work Opportunities

The majority of the respondents are fully aware of the employment opportunities for them as PWDs in San Gabriel. Nevertheless, results reveal that even though the majority are aware of their employment opportunities, the majority still believes that these are not enough for the PWDs in San Gabriel because they find it significantly difficult to find a stable job in order for them to make a living due to the scanty amount of jobs that they can be hired in. This is backed up by the study of Othman & Jani (2017), which revealed that the employment opportunities of PWDs are limited because of their impairment.

3.3 Interventions to Address the Employment Opportunities

3.3.1 Facilitation of Programs and Training

Among the ten (10) respondents, four (4) of them suggested the conduct of programs and training for PWDs who aspire to learn about different skills that could help them in their livelihood and for them to be employed easier. Specifically, the respondents were pertaining to the free skills training for PWDs by the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) and the National Council on Disability Affairs (NCDA) so that they could receive the National Certificate (NC) which is necessary for job application. The respondents also recommended the provision of basic equipment for their corresponding skill paths, such as screwdrivers and the like, which could be a big help that they could use for daily income. A study by Majid and Razzak (2015) revealed that vocational training and programs are helpful in the rehabilitation of PWDs. This is because vocational training allows PWDs to acquire an



appropriate job that suits them and moreover in congruence to their vocational potential and thus enables them to advance in it and be successful.

3.3.2 *Employment Offers for PWDs*

Because most of the PWDs settle on jobs that are intermittent, income is also discontinuous. Hence, the respondents recommend opening simple job positions for PWDs such as those whose duties can be considered doable for them, including jobs of the same kind as janitorial positions in the municipality or the barangay in order for them to have a continuous and stable income. A study by Marcella & Nalumen (2020) says that the provision of an adequate standard of living that includes a basic level of security of income helps reduce the levels of vulnerability and poverty of PWDs.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were derived:

First, the status of inclusion of PWDs in employment in San Gabriel is explained through two (2) themes, namely Employment Accessibility and Acceptance in the Employment Sector. The majority of the respondents face difficulties in accessing employment. It was difficult for PWDs before the pandemic and became even more difficult during the pandemic because of restrictions. On the other hand, PWDs in San Gabriel are accepted in the employment sector as they are not discriminated against when applying for a job. Nevertheless, the current status of inclusion of PWDs in San Gabriel is considerably low, even though they are not discriminated against in the employment sector, given that the majority still faces difficulties in employment accessibility because of the limited jobs available for them.

Second, salient findings of the study revealed that the most common types of jobs of PWDs in San Gabriel are classified under blue collar jobs. Specifically, these include haircutter or barber, hairdresser, masseur, carpenter, agricultural work, janitorial work, and electronics repairman. However, the work opportunities in San Gabriel for PWDs are still not sufficient because of the limited number of jobs that PWDs can get hired for.

Lastly, based on the findings of the study, two interventions were proposed to address the employment opportunities in San Gabriel, La Union. First, programs and training for PWDs should be conducted. Specifically, this pertains to the free skills training for PWDs by TESDA and NCDA. In addition, basic equipment for their corresponding skill paths should also be provided. Secondly, opening simple job positions for PWDs such as janitorial positions in the municipality or the barangay is also proposed in order for them to have a continuous and stable income.

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