

Issues and Challenges Faced by Persons with Disabilities in Basco, Batanes

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ABSTRACT

Persons with disabilities (PWDs) are one of the concerns of society. But due to prejudice, they are put in a disadvantageous position. Since then, there have always been issues in employment, social roles, and accessibility to education. These have led to self-doubt and inferiority, resulting in negative attitudes from non-PWDs. The study aimed to explore the issues and challenges faced by persons with disabilities in Basco, Batanes, Philippines. This study used a qualitative research design. The researchers used purposive sampling and gathered data from eight (8) qualified participants. The researchers determined the issues and challenges they faced across the four areas of their lives. First, they face difficulties at work and looking for work because of their condition and the prejudice they receive in the work environment. Second, they faced problems in school due to poverty and discrimination from classmates. Third, they receive discrimination and stereotyping from their community. Lastly, the majority of the participants receive support from their families. However, they also faced financial problems, especially with their medication.

Keywords — Social Science, Issues, challenges, persons with disabilities, qualitative research, Basco, Batanes, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

Amidst the pandemic, the most vulnerable people are those people with disabilities. Persons with disabilities are one of the concerns of society. Due to social exclusion, they are put in a disadvantageous position. According to Au & Man (2006), there have always been issues in employment, social roles, and accessibility to education. These then have led to feelings of self-doubt and inferiority, which suggests that these people receive negative attitudes from non-PWD individuals. According to the United Nations (2018) OHCHR and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, persons with disabilities have the same rights as the rest of the citizens. They have the right to vote, live independently in the community, and enjoy social protection, access to justice, and the educational system.

According to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2021), persons with disabilities (PWDs) are those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments that, when combined with other

barriers, prevent them from fully and effectively participating in society on an equal basis with others. Moreover, over 1 billion individuals, or roughly 15% of the world's population, suffer from some impairment. Around 110 to 190 million people, 15 years and up, are experiencing severe difficulties in their daily lives. Furthermore, the rapid expansion of chronic diseases and population aging contribute to the increasing disability rates. About 80% of the world's PWDs live in low-income countries, where most are poor and cannot access basic services. With their conditions, PWDs need greater attention and consideration in health needs without discrimination. However, reports show that PWDs have less access to health services and, therefore, greater unmet needs.

These prejudices among persons with disabilities can affect them in most areas of their lives. For example, chronic poverty in Ghana, combined with the large-scale prejudice and exclusion, results in very few career options, high unemployment, isolation from families, and a high rate of begging by disabled people (Grech, 2015). Opoku et al. (2019) study highlighted barriers in education, training, employment, and physical environment. The physical environment has many disabling barriers, such as steps, which impede the mobility of wheelchair users. Along these lines, Naami (2014) highlighted architectural, transportation, information, and medical barriers. People with disabilities are also denied access to social activities, decision-making, and leadership positions.

In a study conducted in Singapore, one of its key findings is that other than the physical disability, social and environmental factors also play a disabling role in the lives of PWDs. They have called for several sectors to collaborate towards a more holistic system of care where PWDs' rights as individuals are respected. Persons with disabilities in Singapore also highlighted the pressing need for greater public awareness (Raghunathan et al., 2015). Moreover, in a study conducted among Thai students, results showed that there seem to be ineffective policies and laws, poor management, and inequality of education resource allocation for people with disabilities (Cheausuwantavee & Cheausuwantavee, 2012).

There are various concerns encountered by PWDs regardless of their impairment type. The Republic Act 7277 of the Philippines, otherwise known as the Magna Carta for Disabled Persons, mentioned the seven types of disabilities: psychosocial disability, disability due to chronic illness, learning disability, mental disability, visual disability, orthopedic disability, and communication disability. The PWDs mentioned above faced prejudice and alienation in the community, job, or school. Out of 26.39 million households in the Philippines, 1.4 million have a disability (Velasco J. et al., 2020). The disability rights advocates urged the

government to get the utmost attention and fought to pass RA 7277. This aims to protect PWDs from discrimination, provide every right, and transform society into a safe place for persons with disabilities.

Regarding infrastructures, the design of buildings in the Philippines has a severe usability problem for the PWDS. This includes self-closing doors with heavy springs, uneven surfaces, and a lack of ramps (Dianito et al., 2021). However, modern societies are not generally unsympathetic to PWDs. More than 180 million people with disabilities live worldwide, and 150 million PWDs live in developing countries. For example, in Japan, most buildings have automated doors, and voice instructions are available on walkaways and escalators. They will always be moved to the head of the queue without being asked. If there is a lack of accessibility in the area for whatever reason, officials are exceedingly apologetic if something is not functioning for them and are inconvenient. Some PWD-friendly facilities have emerged throughout time, although they are exclusive and unevenly distributed around the city.

With the issues and challenges faced by PWDs, it is important to note that people's thoughts about disability may lead to stigma, prejudice, and discrimination in society. People may regard disability as a personal tragedy, something that has to be treated or prevented, a punishment for a crime, or a sign of a lack of capacity to behave as expected in society. Furthermore, from the perspective of a legislator, our comparatively contemporary society is not entirely indifferent to the situation of PWDs. The well-being of PWDs is addressed in many Republic Acts, Batas Pambansa, Presidential Decrees, Administrative Orders, proclamations, ordinances, circulars, and memoranda. These regulations aim to improve the welfare of people with disabilities and integrate accessibility into public settings. However, a plethora of regulations does not inherently imply an all-access paradise.

Therefore, this study aims to raise awareness about the issues and challenges faced by persons with disabilities within the community of Basco, Batanes. Moreover, this study explores the issues and concerns faced by PWDs in Basco, Batanes in different areas of their lives and how people support or treat them. The results of this study also aim to help the professionals and the government implement various programs or projects that will benefit PWDs. Generally, this study seeks to discover and understand the challenges and difficulties that PWDs encounter in their day-to-day lives.

FRAMEWORK

The social model recognizes that disability affects every aspect of our lives. It shows the need for disability to be addressed at every level: social, economic, and political. It now becomes the first consideration when crafting plans and making decisions. Everyday things should not be a barrier or even a special accommodation. PWDs have the right to enjoy the same life as their non-disabled siblings and friends. They have the right to attend the local mainstream school, use public services such as transport, and take advantage of the same employment opportunities as everyone else (UNION et al., 1975).

This model also focuses on people's attitudes towards disability and recognizes that attitudes towards disability can create barriers for PWDs in the same way the physical environment can. Such attitudes can range from prejudice and stereotyping to unnecessary inflexible organizational practices and procedures and seeing disabled people as objects of pity/charity. The social model aims to remove unnecessary barriers that prevent disabled people from participating in society, accessing work, and living independently. It seeks ways to remove barriers to inclusion. It also recognizes that attitudes towards disabled people make unnecessary barriers to inclusion and requires people to take proactive action to remove these barriers. The social model identifies the problems faced by disabled people as a consequence of external factors (Retief & Letšosa, 2018).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study used a qualitative research design. The researchers used purposive sampling. The researchers purposively selected participants that were qualified for the criteria. The criteria entailed that: (1) the participant is a person with a disability, (2) lived in the province of Batanes, and (3) were in the age group of 25-60 years old. The researchers were able to gather data from eight (8) qualified participants through the interview method.

The researchers used the interview method to explore and understand the issues and challenges faced by PWDs. It offers a descriptive, reflective, interpretive, and engaged mode of inquiry that seeks to understand and describe the essence of experiences and enables underlying structures/themes and commonalities in meanings to be understood.

Research Site

The study was conducted in Basco, Batanes.

Participants

The researchers gathered data from eight (8) people with disabilities from Basco, Batanes.

Instrumentation

Interview Guide. This was utilized to gather important information from the participants. The questions in the interview guide were related to the participants' issues and challenges regarding jobs, academics, relationships, and public places.

Data Gathering Procedure

Permission was asked from the respondents, and the objective of the research was explained to them. When consent was granted, the interview was administered by the researchers. Respondents were guaranteed confidentiality of information. All audiotapes and field notes were transcribed. The researchers went back to the respondents to verify the transcriptions of their interviews and to ensure that the English translations of their statements were correct.

The researchers then analyzed the data by beginning with repetitive listening of the audiotapes and readings of the interview transcriptions and field notes and then isolating and extracting significant statements from the data. These statements were used to create meaning units, which were clustered into common themes. The clustering process was completed before final themes were established.

Ethical Considerations

To observe the proper protocols for conducting this study, prior written permissions were sought from respondents. The written permissions were also explained to them. The respondents were assured that anonymity, confidentiality, and neutrality would be kept. Proper citations were done for all the information and previous researches used in this study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The presentation of data gathered and analysis are provided below.

Four topical areas emerged from the study based on the issues and challenges faced by PWDs in the following areas: (1) employment and unemployment, (2) schooling/education, (3) community, and (4) family.

Employment and Unemployment

Employed persons with disabilities (PWDs) face challenges in their workplace due to their disability. One of the obstacles they encounter is the requirement for specific features at their workplace or place of employment. Over half of people with disabilities who are employed have some difficulty executing their work tasks due to their handicap. However, due to their sympathetic employer, some employed people with disabilities have fewer difficulties at work.

The following selected responses of the participants will show some of the issues and challenges they encountered in their workplace.

“Aru challenges du trabahu akma su kakey mu pa mayparu su mapanmu kumapet du trabahu, makey ka mangawang a mangay du seminar am mapanmu mu ava an sinu anti u sumidung dimu du syudad. Mayanung u kapirmi machiruaru piyan karapan u mapanmu kumapet du trabahu as kanu ipaypipiya nu karakuban kanu iyangay mu.”

(There are many challenges in the workplace, such as the desire to learn more about your job, the need to travel and attend seminars, the uncertainty of who will assist or support you in the city, and the need to socialize in order to exchange ideas that will benefit your work and well-being.)

“Taytu aku nakasdep du barangay ta inahap da yaken a mayvuyvuyas du rarahan. An kaduan am maynien padang ku an mayengdes aku mayvuyas. Mapanmu ku ava an makayamut du kaparin ku anmana nu vanah ku.”

(The barangay hired me as a street sweeper. When I sweep for too long, my feet hurt. I’m unsure if it is because of my condition or exhaustion or fatigue.)

“Nagtatrabaho ako ngayon sa barangay. Nagwawalis sa daan. Hindi naman ako nahihirapan kasi sabi ng mga taga-barangay, sa tapat na lang namin yung wawalisan ko dahil na rin siguro sa kalagayan ko.”

(I now work at the barangay as a street sweeper. I’m not experiencing any difficulties because the barangay councilors stated that the only place where I will sweep is the front of our house, possibly due to my condition.)

The responses are largely about their difficulties at work, and the main cause of these challenges is their condition of being physically disabled. Despite being disabled, they manage to find work with the government to meet their needs, and they are fortunate that they do not face discrimination at work. However, they still receive prejudice from other people in the work environment.

On the other hand, many employers or businesses overlook the skills and abilities of competent individuals with disabilities simply because they believe that accommodating them is a hassle for reasons that are not true. Because of this, some people with disabilities have found other ways to supplement their income due to unemployment. Despite their life struggles, they manage to survive and meet their basic necessities by doing something.

The responses of the selected participants will be displayed in the following paragraphs.

“Wala akong naging trabaho sa gobyerno. Ang pinagkakakitaan ko ay ang pagaayos ng bike at minsan mga payong. Hindi naman ako nahihiya kasi hindi rin naman ganun kalala yung kalagayan ko. Nakakapagtrabaho naman ako ng legal.”

(I’ve never worked for the government. Repairing bicycles and umbrellas are my sources of income. I’m not ashamed because my condition is not that bad. Despite my disability, I am able to work.)

“Kaychuwa am naytrabahu aku du BISUMI, amna niumbes aku makayamut du pandemya. Sichanguriaw am maydakaw aku sa su tumaydedekey a maparin a idakaw.”

(I used to work at BISUMI, but because of the pandemic, I stopped, and my source of income now is selling.)

“Wala siyang trabaho sa gobyerno, nagwawalis lang siya sa daan, mga job order or hurnal. Dalawang beses na siya naghurnal. Hindi siya makalakad ng maayos, hindi rin siya makapagsalita ng maayos.”

(He is not working in the government, he sweeps in the street and joined hurnal twice. He cannot walk properly, and he cannot talk or speak clearly.)

“Hindi ako nagtatrabaho. Nastroke ako nung 2012. Highblood ako kaya nastroke ako. Hindi naman kasi ako makapasok sa TUPAD. Sa mga office hindi din ayaw nila ako at nilalait din ako.”

(I do not work. I got stroked last 2012 due to high blood. I cannot get into TUPAD. I have also tried in offices, but they are not fond of me. They insulted and made fun of me.)

Most of the participants are having difficulties because some do not have a stable source of income and must rely on what is given to them. One participant does not have any work to support his needs. As a result of his impairment, some people make fun of him, and he also faces difficulties in applying for jobs.

For many people with disabilities, finding and sustaining work is a challenge. In a study by Kraus (2017), only one in three (34.9%) individuals with disabilities are employed in the US compared to 76% of their counterparts who are nondisabled. These employment gaps have also been observed in other industrialized countries where the employment rate with a disability is 49%, while 79% for those without a disability (Turcotte, 2014).

Analysis of the Office for Disability Issues (2011) shows that about one-third of employed people with disabilities and two-thirds of unemployed PWDs say that a limitation in the amount or type of work they do or could do is their disability. Health or disability is a frequently reported limitation in work, but other factors are also important.

Studies also show that employers' stigmatizing views and low expectations toward PWDs affect employment opportunities and their productivity. This creates unemployment or underemployment opportunities (Critten, 2016). Another study by Ferrie et al. (2006) addressed relational issues with supervisors and fairness in the workplace. The results of the study show a limited viewpoint regarding job accommodation. The reason behind this is stigmatization,

prejudice, and discrimination which can affect reasonable job accommodation for persons with disabilities to fully participate in their respective work settings (Yigit & Tatch, 2017).

Moreover, employers often feel that people with disabilities do not have the skills or capacity to work when, these individuals do not work because of environmental and attitudinal barriers within their workplaces, such as discrimination and poor working conditions (Fevre et al., 2013).

While the World Health Organization (2011) shows that employment rates vary across countries, the bottom line is that, all over the world, a person with a disability is less likely to be employed than a person without a disability.

Schooling/Education

Barriers to learning are anything that stops a student from fully participating in the learning process, and various factors can cause them. Every individual has the right to a high-quality education. However, some of them work hard to receive the education they are entitled to. People with impairments are included in our society's group of marginalized people. They face much more challenges in learning compared to able people.

The following paragraphs are the selected responses,

“Hindi ko natapos yung high school ko kasi tinamad ako dagdag mo pa na wala kaming pera.”

(I did not finish high school because I was lazy and we did not have enough money.)

“Tumigil ako sa pag-aaral noon kase nahihiya ako. Lagi nila akong binubully dahil sa kalagayan.”

(I stopped studying back then because I was embarrassed and was bullied because of my condition.)

“Chinasaditan aku ava du kapachinanawu ku ta niktuktu ku am taywaran marahet. Ravaw mavuya ku a akmay kapachiterek ku dira, ari kami malit.”

(I did not have any difficulties in school because I did not believe I had flaws. I also did not see much difference between my classmates and me.)

“Namanda aku du high school ta masadit ka naw u viyay namen, nipiya ku na u kapaytrabahu ku.”

(I only graduated high school because of life’s difficulties, so I chose to work instead.)

The participants had varying responses on the topic. Others faced hardships and were even forced to drop out of high school due to poverty and discrimination and decided to work instead. Others did not have any difficulties because they believed in themselves and did not let their impairment hold them back. One participant was unable to participate in school due to his illness.

In the study of Black et al. (2015), students with disabilities face positive and negative treatment from teachers, administrators, or peers. Instructional methods such as class discussion, classroom arrangement, and instructor’s approaches sometimes go against students with disabilities. On the other hand, Liasidou (2014) found existing methodologies are unfriendly to students with disabilities.

Currently, The Asia Pacific Regional Bureau of Education mentioned that PWDs face barriers to education through remote-learning practices brought about by the pandemic. In health crises such as COVID-19, students with disabilities receive less help and inadequately trained teachers. They face difficulty participating actively due to a lack of equipment, internet access, and especially designed materials and support (Dianito et al., 2021).

Moreover, researchers identified the recurring presence of stigmatization of students with disabilities across countries (Maranzan, 2016; Sachs & Schreuer, 2011). They encounter a large stigma because students without disabilities treat them harshly on campus (Trammell, 2009). The negative misconceptions about disability affect students with disability outcomes, motivation, success, and career aspiration (Akin & Huang, 2019).

Community

When it comes to public spaces, people with disabilities face a variety of challenges. They face various obstacles, including a lack of access, transportation, hostile attitudes from others, a lack of PWD-friendly facilities, and a lack of social confidence. For disabled people, these barriers have an impact on their daily

existence. Even though they may not have to face all these, they still encounter challenges in the community and during social gatherings.

The proofs mentioned by participants during the interview are listed below,

“Masnek aku makayamut ava du kaPWD ku, ta sivug u kasnesneken ku aya. Mawayid aku machichasa dira du kaduan, aran du Batanes Day. Pidien ku sa u tawu a pachichasan ku ta nu kasnesneken ku.”

(Almost as if shyness is my nature. I rarely attend social gatherings such as Batanes Day. I also choose who will accompany me because I am shy.)

“Minsan nahihiya ako sa daan kasi makikita mo naman yung mga mapangbusgang tingin ng mga tao. Pag may ganap sa family namin o kapitbahay hindi ako sumasama kase alam ko naman na huhusgahan lang nila ako.”

(When walking on the street, I'm embarrassed because I can see people's critical gazes. I avoid gatherings with family and neighbors because I know they will only judge me.)

“Nasnek aku pava du kumavabayan aya, ta nu vatahen da nu inapuan ku am rava u marahet diyaken. An itek da yaken am sira u makagatus. An machikpekpeh aku am normal uri. Malkem aku na as rapava u taywara a umtek niyaken.”

(I never feel ashamed of others because my parents once told me that there is nothing wrong with me. If they make fun of me, then they are the ones who are wrong. When I socialize, it's normal. I'm old, so no one can make fun of me that much.)

“Pag nakikihalubilo ako, hindi naman ako nahihiya, nakikipagbiruan pa nga ako sakanila. Hindi naman ako nahibirapan sa mga lugar dito kasi nakakalakad pa naman ako ng maayos. Minsan nga lang sumasakit yung paa ko pag matagal akong magbike o maglakad.”

(“When I socialize, I’m not embarrassed or feel shy. I even joke with them. I don’t find it difficult since I can still walk properly. My feet only hurt when I walk or ride a bike for a long time.)

“Sabi nila, ‘tiya dana u akmay nihwa nu buday.’ Nilalait nila ako kaya ayaw ko na sa mga social gatherings na yan. Lalo lang nila akong nilalait kaya gusto ko na magpakamatay.”

(Some would say, ‘this is the one who spat out by the snake.’ They make fun of me; that is why I do not go to social gatherings anymore. They insult me even more; that is why I want to commit suicide.)

The majority of them face discrimination from others. The insults cause them to lose confidence. One participant develops suicidal thoughts as a result of this discrimination. One of the main reasons they don’t attend such social gatherings is because they receive discrimination. Others, on the other hand, are at ease and do not encounter such attitudes from others because some understand their predicament.

Across the world, people with disabilities face various attitudinal barriers such as prejudice, stereotypes, and low expectation from the community (DSDP, 2016). These inaccurate beliefs about disability can result in stigma or discrimination. It arises when elements of labeling, stereotyping, and prejudice combine that most often lead to status loss and discrimination for PWDs (Scior, 2016).

According to the study by Bond (2017), organizations working with people with disabilities have found that stigma often lies at the root of discrimination, exclusion, and low status. These are faced by people with disabilities and their families in all aspects of their lives in low and middle-income countries. Another study by Inguanzo (2017) reported that poverty and other barriers such as stigma and discrimination from the community put people with disabilities rights’ at risk. At the individual level, stigma and discrimination can result in internalized oppression and feelings of shame as PWDs face great challenges overcoming the negative views or perspectives of their community or the society around them. They now have difficulty achieving self-acceptance and a sense of pride in their lives.

Family

Disabled or abled, every one of us faces personal challenges to survive and achieve our goals. Throughout the difficulties that PWDs encountered, their

family and friends supported and guided them. Their family provides them hope and motivation that they need.

“Kametdeh ku am pinachunungan da yaken su mapiya. An miyan kartus da nu inapuan ku am ituruh da u kailangan ku, asna pirmi ava ta masadit u viyay namen ka naw.”

(When I was young, they took good care of me. They give me what I need when they have money, but only once because our lives were not stable back then.)

“Hindi masyadong nabibigay ng mga magulang ko yung mga gamot ko minsan kasi mahirap kami. Yung sweldo ko sa pagwawalis yun na din panggastos namin dito sa bahay at kung may natira yun na lang yung mapupunta sa panggamot ko.”

(My parents sometimes cannot provide my medication because we are poor. My sweeping pay is also what we use to buy for our needs at home. If there's anything left, it will be saved for my medication.)

“Hindi. Wala silang nabibigay sakin. Yung galing sa DSWD lang natatangap ko simula nung mastroke ako wala nang sustento. Ako lang nakatira dito.”

(No. They don't give me anything. Those from the DSWD are the only ones who are providing for my needs. Since I got a stroke, my family stopped sustaining my needs.)

The majority of the participants receive support from their families. However, they also face financial problems, especially about to their medication. One participant also struggled because his family stopped sustaining his necessities ever since he was stroked.

Families are an important source of support for people with disabilities. Family members absorb the added demands on time, emotional resources, and financial resources associated with having a family member with a disability (Baker-Ericzén et al., 2005).

A family member with certain functional limitations or a disability alters the quality of family life. It requires greater adaptation to the needs of all the members. Family organization and routines change and even on an employment level. Having a family member with a disability requires a more exclusive character for these families as they lack knowledge that must be resolved. They need to seek information about each of the different characteristics of their family members and the risk involved. It generates weariness that may alter the quality of family life, as it requires a greater dedication of time, effort, and resources to address the needs of the PWD (Benito Lara & Carpio, 2017).

Moreover, a study by Juhásová (2015) reports that disability affects the whole family. Practitioners are only present in certain moments of the life of a disabled person, but the family undertakes the role of caring for and providing for a PWD. Families may be exhausted by the disability, physically, emotionally, and financially. However, with or without help, they can often renew their resources and continue to function just to provide for the needs of their family member with a disability.

CONCLUSIONS

The researchers determined the issues and challenges faced by persons with disabilities across the four areas of their lives. First, they encounter difficulties at work and looking for work because of their condition and the prejudice they receive in the work environment. Second, they faced problems in school due to poverty and discrimination from classmates. Third, they receive discrimination and stereotyping from their community. Lastly, the majority of the participants receive support from their families. However, they also encounter financial problems, especially with their medication.

TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH

The schools and the local government can use this research to evaluate the issue and concerns of PWDs in Basco, Batanes. It can give the government awareness on how to enhance the different systems (transportation, education, infrastructure, etc.) in the province for people with disabilities, ensuring that these areas accommodate PWDs. It can also help them provide medical healthcare for every person with a disability. Furthermore, as locals have low awareness of PWDs, LGUs' efforts should be doubled in disseminating information and

educating the transport groups, medical establishments, educational system, and other facilities about the needs of PWDs.

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