

The Lived Experiences of the Persons with Disabilities(PWDs) in the Workplace: A Phenomenological Study



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ABSTRACT: This study explored the lived experiences of the PWDs in the workplace. This research employed the phenomenological approach. Necessary data were obtained through semi-structured interview and observations. Two participants who are persons with disabilities (PWDs) and work in a public and a private sector were selected based on the criteria set in identifying participants. Through Colaizzi's method, participants' responses were transcribed and coded for deeper analysis. Three emerging themes reflect the lived experiences of the participants: *work gives them a feeling of fulfillment; inclusion in the workplace and freedom to enjoy all the rights and benefits of a regular employee significantly boost their morale and independence in the performance of assignments.* Generally, their acceptance in the workplace keeps them going and inspires them to keep thinking on how to better their job performance under an environment where people do not see them as different individuals. They allow themselves to be productive just as anyone else in the workplace. They perform their work independently and they don't see any reason to rely on others. They claim that the quality of work they render reflect their true capabilities.

KEYWORDS: Inclusion, PWDs, workplace, employee, fulfillment

INTRODUCTION

It is vital for every human to respect other human rights and forms. Respecting the nature and differences of PWDs must be viewed as an integral and inalienable component of human dignity. Their right includes the ability to work, which enables them to live modestly. Understand that their right to work helps them to survive, both for themselves and their families. The recognition of their innate capabilities relative to work shall be appreciated within the community.

The Philippine constitution mandates that PWDs shall be empowered through Republic Act No. 7277 or known as the Magna Carta for Disabled Persons which took effect in 1992. Section 32 of this act stipulates the prohibition of any entity, public or private, discriminate a qualified disabled person by reason of disability in regard to job application procedures, the hiring, promotion, or discharge of employees, employee compensation, job training, and other terms, conditions, and privileges of employment.

Gatchalian et al. (2014) showed that some companies in the Philippines are willing to hire PWDs to help improve their lives, which is the same in Canada (Annett, 2017). Employment of PWDs increase the talent pool of companies and allow them to receive incentives from the government (Henry, Petkauskos, Stanislawzyk, & Vogt, 2014; Pillas, 2017).

However, the positive attitude of employers is contingent on previous good experience in employing PWDs (Pañares, 2018). In the absence of previous experience, companies require more information about the condition of their disability (Shankar et al., 2014). The study of Palad et al., (2021) indicates a positive a positive attitudes towards physical ability by the persons with disabilities and the general adult population in this study. This results are comparable to the findings of the study by Zheng et al., (2016) which also reveal a positive positive attitudes towards disability by their respondents who were identified as Chinese persons with disabilities, caregivers, and members of the public

Data on employment provide that in the United States (US), only one in three (34.9%) individuals with disabilities are employed compared to 76% of their counterparts without disabilities, and this disparity appears to be increasing over time (Houtenville & Ruiz, 2012; Kraus, 2017; Lauer & Houtenville, 2017). At European Union (EU) level, only 50.6% of persons with disabilities are employed, compared with 74.8% of persons without disabilities (Nancy, 2017). Adding to this, the Academic Network of European Disability experts reveals that women with disabilities, young disabled persons, and persons with high support needs are more likely to be discriminated against and excluded from the labor market (Grammenos, 2017). A disparity of employment rate gap is also revealed among working-age Canadians living with a disability is 49%, while it is 79% for those without a disability (Turcotte, 2014). These statistics manifest that employment of persons of disabilities around the world are lower in quantity compared to the employment rate of persons without disability.

The Lived Experiences of the Persons with Disabilities(PWDs) in the Workplace: A Phenomenological Study

Further studies showed that persons with disabilities are less likely to be employed than non-disabled peers (Barnes, 1991; Furrer and Coombs, 1990; Haveman et al, 1984; United Nations, 1990). One report (Neufeldt, Stoelting and Fraser, 1991) indicates a similar pattern occurs for self employment. Restrictions are seen in hiring of PWD's particularly walking disability, amputated limbs and with visual impairment or Partial Blindness are considered for employable(Alson, Espela, and Urbina,2019).

The United Nation Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities(UNCRPD) which was held in 2003 fully recognizes the right of persons with disabilities to work. The provisions further state the prohibition of discrimination to work, employment in the public sector and the promotion of employment of the persons of disabilities in private sector observing appropriate policies and measures to protect their vulnerabilities. Further the Sustainable Development Goals(SDGs) adopted by all UN Members Sates include goals which explicitly mention persons with disabilities. SDG Goals which particularly emphasize protection of their kind indicate equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities; full and productive employment and decent work for all which includes achieving full and productive employment and decent work for women and men with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value; and the reduction of inequality within and among countries by promoting the social, economic and political inclusion of persons with disabilities(Promoting Employment Opportunities for People with Disabilities,2019).

The participation of the persons with disabilities in the workplace as revealed in the study of Bonaccio et al(2019) provides evidence-based responses to 11 specific concerns that employers have about people with disabilities, from pre-employment and entry experiences to the final dissolution of the employment relationship. Each stage of the employment cycle was summarized and evaluated the relevant empirical evidence. The result provides recommendations for organizations committed to creating more effective, equitable, and inclusive workplaces for all individuals. Fantinelli et al.' (2022) investigated the self-perceived employability in a sample of workers with disability, hypothesizing to find a good level of self-determination and positive meaning of work. Results affirmed results of study similar to this topic where it indicates the need for job inclusiveness for persons with disability and also underlined a profound sense of satisfaction related to the job, strong identity, and empowerment derived from the job involvement.

The present study is an exploration of the lived experiences of the persons with disabilities in the workplace. As a member of the community, a deeper understanding of the situations of the persons with disabilities(PWDs) should be given considerable attention. Understanding their plight will lead people realize that these people are no different from any other employees.

PROBLEM

A commonly observed, discrimination among persons with disabilities has become a common sight. The recognition of their capacities has long been ignored by the employment sector. The laws that have been formulated to address this concern do not guarantee full implementation of their acceptance. Its implementation still raises issue data of employment among persons with disabilities project.

Humans have become a favorite subject. People's plights, misfortunes and even physical deficiencies are subjects of criticism. People tend to see beauty in its highest form that they dislike imperfections. Although there are some who see beauty in imperfections.

The way society judge people contributes great effect into the lives of certain individuals. Undeniably. Person with disability(PWD) has his/her own struggles in his/her community. Michailakis(2003)statement affirms that the traditional view of disability focuses on the individual, which is thought being incapable to perform certain activities due to one or more functional impairments. Disability is thus an individual incapacity of medically verified facts. Disability implies incapacities or failings, a defect or impairment.

As an individual who believes that every one's rights should be respected regardless of the physical and financial status, exposing their lived experiences could be a means of sharing their voices and desires so that the community will understand them better.

FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

The following theory and concepts are believed to be of great material in structuring of the research plan and helps the researcher formulate relevant research questions raised in this study.

Social Theory of Disability

Oliver (1990) called for a "social theory of disability" to challenge the medical and psychological dominance of theories about disability. "Such a theory cannot be produced until the various academic disciplines begin to take both the issue of disability and the experiences of disabled people seriously." Oliver put forth that disablement is not a problem located in the individual, but an institutional problem, shaped by economic, political, and ideological forces. In 1990, Oliver was optimistic that the movement would continue to improve conditions for people with disabilities.

The Lived Experiences of the Persons with Disabilities(PWDs) in the Workplace: A Phenomenological Study

Further explanation of the social model of disability according to Thomas et al.(2012) presents that it is based on a distinction between the terms *impairment* and *disability*. In this model, the word *impairment* is used to refer to the actual attributes (or lack of attributes) that affect a person, such as the inability to walk or breathe independently. The word *disability* is used to refer to the restrictions caused by society when it does not give equivalent attention and accommodation to the needs of individuals with impairments.

In the Philippines, Republic Act 7277 Section 5 of the said law or the “Equal Opportunity for Employment” states that no disabled person shall be denied to have access to opportunities for suitable employment. As required by law, a qualified disabled employee shall be subject to the same terms and conditions of employment and the same compensation, privileges, benefits, fringe benefits, incentives or allowances as a qualified able-bodied person. Five percent (5%) of all casual emergency and contractual positions in the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), Department of Health (DOH), Department of Education (DepEd), Department of Culture and Sports (DCS) and other government agencies, offices or corporations engaged in social development shall be reserved for disabled persons.

Asia Community Service(ACS,2011) mentioned that the creation of job opportunities for the person with disabilities is one of the important and rather complicated issues in labour market. Moreover, employment and constant source of income could be a fundamental element in ensuring that people with disabilities are able to lead an independent and self-reliant life without over dependence to other people’s help.

This world has become very competitive and it has become a survival arena. Everyone has to be equipped with necessary skills to be able to find a relative job in order to survive. Job employment in the Philippines has preference on those applicants who are physically well. This statement is obviously manifested in all workplaces. There are only a few number of person with disability who are considered to work equally and fairly. Employment is one of the most important yet difficult part that every individual goes through in life. This is due to the fact that first, in order to be hired for a job that you want, you have to be a graduate of at least secondary education. Second, the course you have taken in your college should be aligned with the job that you want to take. Third, the competition for employment is strong that people who do not have a good educational background or those who did not come from a prestigious school has little chance of getting hired compared to those who received a good education in a renowned school. If employment for regular people is difficult to obtain, it is relative that employment of people with disabilities is even more difficult to obtain. This study aimed to describe the lived experiences of the PWDs in their respective workplaces. Specifically, it aimed to seek answers to this general question:

RESEARCH QUESTION

What are the lived experiences of the Person With Disability in the workplace?

Sub-questions:

1. How do you regard your work?
2. How do people treat you in the workplace?
3. How do people in the workplace value your work?

Scope and Limitations

This research is limited to the exploration of the lived experiences of the PWDs in the workplace.

This study determined the lived experiences of the Person with Disabilities(PWDs) in their workplaces. Two employee participants submitted themselves for interview and observation.

The researcher intended to examine the data for patterns and themes across the participants of the study. The results of the analysis included the voices of the PWDs as they shared their experiences.

Specific limitations inherent in this research study included 1) sensitivity to the topic; 2) participant limitations (reluctance, anxiety, time constraints); 3) the researchers’ relationships with the participants, and 4) the methods used within the study (semi-structured interview and observation). These limitations might have had an impact on the trustworthiness of these findings.

IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

This study will be of enormous benefit to the following:

ISPSC Employee. Findings of this study will help them understand the feelings of the PWDS they work with.

Administrators. Results will provide them insights as to how they will improve their services to the PWDs employees.

Person With Disability(PWD). This study provides them the chance to voice out their feelings towards their work and the people in the workplace.

Researcher. Undertaking this kind of research gives her more knowledge in understanding people with handicap in the workplace and in the community.

Future Researchers. They may consider looking into other aspects to help more the people with handicap boost their confidence and relationship with the people around them.

The Lived Experiences of the Persons with Disabilities(PWDs) in the Workplace: A Phenomenological Study

LITERATURE

The following literature provided the researcher ample material to enrich the present study.

The employment of disabled persons is regarded as a crucial issue of the “equal employment opportunities”. In many countries, two principles -- equality of opportunity and equality of treatment -- became the legal foundations for various laws and regulation concerning equal employment opportunities for everyone. There has been an increasing awareness on the global scale of the “equity issue”. The International Labour Organisation (ILO), which has introduced a number of initiatives to highlight this issue, argues that “there is a pressing need to improve employment and training services for people with disabilities... who face disadvantages in the labour market”. The ILO relies on “knowledge-building, advocacy and technical cooperation activities” to address the equity issues and “seeks to promote innovative approach to address them” (ILO, 2005).

The study of Seva(2020) assessed and compared the work capability of persons with disabilities (PWDs) and their able counterparts considering three aspects(that covered the time on task, work attitude, and task compatibility. Productivity comparison was made using time study and work sampling over two days. Results indicate a comparable productivity between PWDs and other employees.

Qing Chi & Qu(2003) examined the attitudes of foodservice employers toward hiring persons with disabilities and determined the effects of these attitudes on employers' hiring practice. Results indicated a favorable attitude towards workers with disabilities among Oklahoma foodservice employers and concluded that the more positive employers' attitude towards persons with disabilities employees, the more likely they are going to hire or continue to hire persons with disability. The study of Furuoka(2011) on the other hand ,determined the employment situation of people with disabilities (PWDs) and examined its issues through three case studies (i.e., United States, Japan and Malaysia). The first case study examined the United States regulation for promotion of disabled persons' employment - Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990. The second case study analyzed Japan's quota system for employment of disabled persons. Result verified that the employment of disabled persons, especially people with intellectual disabilities, in Japan has gradually increased. The third case study examined a Malaysian welfare non-governmental organization (NGO) named the “Asia Community Service (ACS)” and its effort to promote the disabled persons' employment. In 2000, the ACS established a workplace named the “Stepping Stone Work Centre” in order to provide job opportunities to people with intellectual disabilities.

The worldwide problems of disability, poverty, and unemployment stem out of the interaction of multiple factors including social stigma, stereotypes, lack of access to physical infrastructure, information, and enabling environments(Abidi & Sharma 2014.)Persons with physical disabilities are among some of the most vulnerable people in our society due to their dependence on others for care and support or because of social isolation, their place of residence, or the nature of their disability. A PWD is expected to be bullied primarily by friends and relatives within the family circle. They are observed to suffer physically, psychologically, emotionally, mentally, and other forms of deprivation of human rights(Imbong & Pelagio,2021,p.215).

Advocating the hiring of the persons with disability, Araten-Bergman (2016) conducted the first longitudinal study on the exploration of the relation between managers' attitudes, intentions, and the actual hiring of PWD by testing a model integrating demand-side factors and the components of the theory of planned behavior (TPB). Results indicates that TPB successfully predicted intentions to hire PWD, but failed to predict actual hiring. Instead, concrete indicators of diversity climate (formal disability hiring policy and disability training) emerged as significant predictors of hiring. A number of factors influence employment opportunities for people with disabilities and they can be structural factors that include labour market structure and legislation(Boman, Kjellberg, Danermark, & Boman,2015 p.118).

According to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), persons with disabilities have the right to work on an equal basis with others. This includes the right to the opportunity to gain a living by work freely chosen or accepted in a labour market and work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities.

However, empirical evidences seem to confirm the proposition that better arrangement for disabled person can be beneficial for the organisation. Meager et al. (1998) argued that empirical evidence show that there is a wide variation in the treatment of disabled workers and its organisations' profitability. Bonaccio et al.(2019) provided evidence-based responses to 11 specific concerns that employers have about people with disabilities, from pre-employment and entry experiences to the final dissolution of the employment relationship. At each stage of the employment cycle, they summarized and evaluated the relevant empirical evidence and provide recommendations for organizations committed to creating more effective, equitable, and inclusive workplaces for all individuals.

People with intellectual disabilities too can assume a leadership role when properly train. They exert their power when necessary. Occasionally the employees also show signs of stress at work. Sometimes they feel bored at work. Other times they have small conflicts with fellow co-worker. But rather than being over protective, the staff at Stepping Stone let the ‘workers’ handle and manage their stress on their own. Overtime the ‘workers’ behave like a normal employee. Through this process the workers learn to express their feelings, communicate with others, respect others and assume responsibility in the society (Asia Community Service, 2011).Relative to this perception, Dibben *et al.* (2002) argued that adaptation of better arrangement relating to employment of disabled person has beneficial to the organisation. In the same vein, Liff (2006) pointed out that enhanced profitability can arise as

The Lived Experiences of the Persons with Disabilities(PWDs) in the Workplace: A Phenomenological Study

a result of employers adopting a non-discriminatory approach to recruitment practice including the employment of disabled persons. However, empirical evidences seem to confirm the proposition that better arrangement for disabled person can be beneficial for the organization. Meager *et al.* (1998) argued that empirical evidence show that there is a wide variation in the treatment of disabled workers and its disorganization's profitability.

A United Nation officer, Yukiko Oka, observes that in the developed countries in Asia Pacific, including Malaysia, disabled persons have become more aware of their rights. This increasing awareness fuels the transformation of the existing welfare policies as well as welfare organisations (Oka, 1988).

The study of Mina(2013) revealed that the proportion of employed PWDs in the urban area is relatively higher among those who are members of at least one Disabled People's Organization (DPO) compared to those who are not. Most of these respondents belong to the visually-impaired group and are working as masseurs. On the other hand, very few of the respondents in the rural area are members of the only PWD group in the area, which is the Municipal Federation of PWDs. Among those who are members, more than half have no job/business. One of the reasons behind this is that the organization does not have regular activities for its members, particularly on employment or livelihood assistance.

Furthermore, Mina (2013) looked into the interrelationships among different levels of education and major occupational classifications of PWDs and see if there is a mismatch between their education level and type of work. His study revealed that in the rural area, graduates of vocational courses are more closely related to being officers/managers/supervisors and service workers and shop/market sales workers. PWDs who reached college but did not finish tend to work as clerks. Those whose educational attainment is either college graduate or high school undergraduate usually work as trades, production and related workers. Elementary undergraduates seem to end up with occupations classified under plant and machine operators and assemblers as well as farmers, forestry workers and fishermen. High school graduates tend to assume jobs classified under professionals and technicians/associate professionals. Meanwhile, laborers and unskilled workers are more closely associated with those who have finished elementary as well as those who did not go to formal schooling.

In recent years, two series of studies have focused respectively on employment trends of people with disabilities and evaluations of the ADA. In both cases, the studies concluded that a downward trend in employment for people with disabilities began in the 1990s and has continued on to the present, with some researchers attributing at least part of the trend to the ADA. Critics of these studies generally have argued that the findings are spurious and are due to the researchers using the wrong definition of disability or the wrong subset of the disabled population in their analysis (Barnow, 2008).

Priebe, Warner, Hubschmid and Eckle (Huang, Hsu, Chen, Fried, Ososkie, & Bezyak, 2014) found that employment has significant advantages for people with schizophrenia in terms of their quality of life including their ability to earn a living and their satisfaction with work and leisure. In addition, researchers recognized that employment not only helps PWDs to improve their skills in the areas of communication and socialization but also allows them to gain financial independence, enhanced self-esteem, and be included in their communities according to Wehman, Brooke, & Revell, (Huang, Hsu, Chen, Fried, Ososkie, & Bezyak, 2014).

Regardless of the disability (may it be mental, physical or behavioral in nature) as long as the person is capable of getting the job done, an employer has no right to deny a Person with Disability a job if the person given the accommodation can get the job done. As one of the categories of disabilities, mental illness has significant devastating effects on individuals and society in terms of prevalence and magnitude of "disease burden" (World Health Organization, 2008). The employment rate of individuals diagnosed with serious mental illnesses who received publicly funded mental health services is typically reported as being around 15% (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2011; Milner et al., 2015).

PURPOSE STATEMENTS

Little is known how people with disabilities cope up with their day to day experience as they go on living a normal life. But least is known what are the struggles of the PWDs in their workplaces. How they are treated by their peers, by their boss and by everyone else whom they come in contact with as they perform their tasks assigned to them.

The focus of this study is to understand the PWDs unique experiences in their workplace. It seeks description of their feelings towards others and how others regard them in their workplace. And also, this study will look into what kind of job is given to them.

The Magna Carta for the Disabled might have given PWDs a chance for equal employment just like any abled individual but the implementation of the law does not necessarily mean that there would be a mass hiring of persons with disabilities. For PWDs to be employed for a suitable job according to their abilities (persons with special needs) just like non-disabled person, they should be able to have the right credentials, education and skills to perform the task needed for the job.

The Lived Experiences of the Persons with Disabilities(PWDs) in the Workplace: A Phenomenological Study

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study is a Hermeneutical Phenomenology as the study elicited deeper understanding of the struggles of the handicapped employees in their respective workplaces. Hermeneutic Phenomenology is a phenomenological approach focused on interpreting experiences to generate sense of individual's subjective lived experience. Phenomenology as an approach is designed to describe and understand the essence of the lived experiences of individuals who have experienced a particular phenomena(Litchman,2013).

Research Setting

As the study required full attention of the participants, the study was conducted in a private place where atmosphere was quiet and favorable for both the participant and the researcher.

Sampling

This study made use of purposive sampling and participants were selected based on these criteria:

The participant of this study are:

1. Person With Disability (PWD)
2. an employee who holds a regular status, job order or a casual status in the workplace
3. willing to be interviewed and,
4. willing to share rich information about the phenomenon.

Data Sources and Collection

The main purpose of this study is to determine the lived experiences of a person with disability. A semi-structured interview was used to get the needed responses. Doyle, 2019 pointed out that a semi-structured interview is a meeting in which the interviewer does not strictly follow a formalized list of questions. They were asked more open-ended questions, allowing for a discussion with the interviewee rather than a straightforward question and answer format.

As a researcher, interview and observations were the methods in obtaining the responses of the participants. The participants were interviewed in a private place where the atmosphere is quiet and undisturbed. The responses were recorded through the use of a recorder and expressions and body languages were observed.

The following steps were considered in the conduct of the study:

1. Obtain permission to conduct the study
2. Recruit participants
3. Obtain written informed consent
4. Set up interview schedule
5. Conduct the interview
6. Collect Data
7. Observe

DATA ANALYSIS

In analyzing the data, this study made use of Colaizzi's(1978)method where significant statements that pertains the phenomena were extracted from each transcript then formulate meanings from these statements. Colaizzi's (1978) distinctive seven step process provides an intensive analysis, with each step staying close to the data (Morrow et.al, 2015). Findings and actual results are concise yet all-inclusive description of the phenomenon under study, confirmed by the participants that generated it. The method depends upon rich first-person accounts of experience and these may come from face-to-face interviews, but can also be obtained in multiple other ways such as written narratives, blogs, research diaries, online interviews and so on. The stages included: 1) Familiarization; 2) Identifying significant statements; 3) Formulating meanings; 4) Clustering themes; 5) Developing an exhaustive description; 6) Producing the fundamental structure; and 7) Seeking verification of the fundamental structure.

Semi-structured Interview:

Sub-questions:

- 1.How do you regard your work?
- 2.How do people treat you in the workplace?
- 3.How do people in the workplace value your work as an individual?

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The decision making and dignity of the participant was highly considered as a major ethical consideration. And due to the sensitivity of the questions asked by the researcher during the conduct of the semi-structured interview to elicit responses on the questions raised in this study, the identity of the participants and their workplace are treated with utmost confidentiality. Each participant was given a pseudonym and names in transcripts were changed as were the names of the workplaces.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the analysis of the responses that were transcribed and coded as a result of the interview with the participants involved in the study.

Findings

Theme 1: Work gives a sense fulfillment

When the participants were asked about how do they regard their work, they positively responded without any reservations and hesitations that their job is giving them a feeling of fulfillment. They take pleasure and pride in performing their job. For them, they don't feel the need anymore to prove to people around them that they are capable of doing a lot of things as normal people do. They consider their job very important and that they should do their best. According to them, having a work despite their condition is something they should be grateful about and to be proud of. Their accommodation in the job alone gives them a rewarding feeling. They expressed that the people that surround them are not considered as competitors but people who are there to deal with. *Participant 1* said that when she was given a task to perform, like sitting as a secretary during the selection of employees to be hired in the institution where she currently works, she felt proud of this trust given to her by her immediate superior. Sitting there as one important person playing a big role in the selection process is considered as a greatest contribution to the workplace. And that feeling of fulfillment is there as she was entrusted with a task that is usually given to an employee who is much capable physically.

Participant 2 shared the he is always given a special assignment by his immediate supervisor. Doing a job that is not within his job description is seen as a trust accorded to him. He feels that his other skills are considered such as driving his boss on an official trip. The company even sends him to the bank to deposit a big amount of money. The nature of his job is to supervise or check the products that are delivered to the different stores and groceries. He expressed his confidence that he can do that kind of job. This has become a usual routine in the workplace. He always finds pleasure in performing this tough job for a long time already. "This alone, is already a great fulfillment on his part." he proudly remarked.

Assessing their feeling towards work, these two individuals who both have physical disabilities, find dignity, relevance and worth in their respective workplaces. The two participants expressed their aspiration to better their work so that just like any other employees in the workplace they will become productive and and at the same time assets of the society.

Relative to this common perceptions shared by the two participants, the study of Javier et al.,2014 found out that some PWDs have good cognitive and adaptive skills that make them suitable for regular jobs which reconciles the result of the study of Seva et al.,2020. Their study presents that Oliver copes up with the everyday targets of the job. The target is a source of concern like other employees, but he was able to manage it daily. He functions very well in the organization except for some social gaffes that were corrected by the supervisor. Lady, on the other hand, is the only employee that was allowed to interact with customers. She has a good memory and remembers the names of customers and their "usual" orders. Customers appreciate this unique capability of Lady.

Theme 2: Inclusion in the Workplace and freedom to enjoy the rights and privileges

The participants interviewed in this study did not only see fulfillment in their job but saw for themselves the acceptance of their colleagues despite their condition. When asked how they are treated by their co-workers, they positively and smilingly responded that they are treated well.

Participant 1 claims that her inclusion in the activities, chitchats during break time and during office hours gives her a feeling of assurance that the group accepts her. She feels without any doubt that she belongs to the group. She does not feel the need anymore to fit in herself as she is already accepted. She does not see anymore the need to gain their approval every time she talks with them as she is treated well. Admittedly, in some instances, some employees have to consider her disability in a situation where it is really needed. She shared that during programs, light role is given to her as she could not dance nor perform any heavy physical activities because of her legs deformity. According to her, this kind of situation does not offend her at all as this is the reality of her life. She shared that for others to accept her, she has to accept her limitations and should not see this thing as a form of discrimination.

Participant 2, on the other hand, gladly shared that during programs or any office gatherings, he is never left behind. He joins the group and the group shows their warm treatment. I asked how would he know that the group genuinely accepts him. He narrated that he is a person who is sociable despite his speech problem and he always shows good relationship to them. As a result of this kind of attitude, he perceived that he is accepted by the group. In his own perception, if there are people who are annoyed by his condition, it may only be a few.

Participant 2 says that he is open to the idea that organization is not perfect and so are the people that compose the organization.

This obtained responses are relative to the idea presented by Kulkarni & Lengnick-Hall(2011); and Schur et al.,(2005), for new employees, ensuring that the socialization process provides the right opportunities for integration is important. Organizational leaders' behavior vis-à-vis employees with disabilities will set the tone for coworkers' own behaviors; if supervisors do not behave in ways that demonstrate acceptance of the newcomer, it is unlikely that colleagues will. Coworkers also help in the socialization of employees with disabilities, by engaging in cooperative behaviors (e.g., introducing new employees to colleagues), helping them with task-related functions, and acting as mentors. The visible presence of other coworkers with disabilities also helps with socialization. Further, Naraine and Lindsay (2011) suggest that socialization could also be devoted to meeting the individual needs

The Lived Experiences of the Persons with Disabilities(PWDs) in the Workplace: A Phenomenological Study

of employees, such as allowing extra time for newcomers who are blind or have low vision to meet with sighted colleagues to get to know the colleague with a disability Bas individuals^ (p. 401). Thus, the spirit behind any activity should be to foster and cultivate social inclusion for all employees.

Theme 3: Independence in the Performance of Work Assignments

The participants were exposed to a question on how people in the workplace value their work. They clearly narrated that for work that is done properly, they are being commended for a job well done through words of praise coming from a co-worker or coming from their immediate superior of the department they belong. They feel that the amount of efforts they pour into their work are recognized in some occasions. For the participants, they admit and they know that to be in the workplace requires their physical and mental strength. They fully understand they do not compete with others but they need to perform their job.

Participant 1 affirms that she can perform all the jobs given to her without being instructed. Since the start of her work, she manages to perform tasks on her own. Her orientation of the job is already enough. She said that as long as instructions are given clearly, she can do the job by herself. As this becomes a routine for her, she has developed a feeling of independence. She does her work without relying to anyone in the office.

Participant 1 admits that there are still matters that she need to consult but does not do this most of the time as she does not want to cause disturbance in the workplace. When asked of any embarrassing incident relative to the performance of her job, she said with a happy tone, "None so far!". And because of this, she feels that she is efficient in her work and thus developed an independence.

Participant 2, in his assuring voice, said that he knows exactly the nature of his work. He performs his work assignments without relying to others. His experience and length of service in the workplace provide him a wider experience in performing his work thus lead to an independent work. When asked if he has encountered any untoward incident while performing his work. Accordingly, he could not recall any embarrassing moment where his boss or anyone called his attention relative to his lapses in performing his work. When asked if their independence in work qualifies them to be called productive employees.

Participant 2 responded that his capability to perform work by himself qualifies him to be called a productive employee. He, as well, claims that he contributes in the attainment of the goals and objectives of the organization. His work productivity can be measured by the quality and amount of work he finishes within the day.

As the two participants identically develop a feeling of independence, this suggests that their productivity most likely increases. Relative to this, the study conducted by Kaletta et al. (2012) analyzed productivity differences between employees with and without disabilities. They found that across 31 locations in three distribution centers, the difference in productivity for workers with and without disabilities was statistically insignificant in 18 locations. When there were productivity differences, employees with disabilities were more productive in 10 locations, while those without disabilities were more productive in three locations. Similarly, the industry report by Hernandez and McDonald (2007) found no differences in performance or need for supervision between employees with and without disabilities, the latter dispelling another concern expressed by managers (Kaye et al., 2011). Employment of PWDs increase the talent pool of companies and allow them to receive incentives from the government (Henry, Petkauskos, Stanislawzyk, & Vogt, 2014; Pillas, 2017).

CONCLUSIONS

This study obtained positive attitude and responses of the PWDs towards their lived experiences in their workplace. Finding fulfillment in their job as theme number one reconciles their feelings towards the organization they belong. Theme number two, their inclusion and freedom to enjoy their rights and benefits is seen as a motivation for them to better their performance in the workplace. The last theme, which is independence in performing their works allow them to become productive and assets of their workplace. These obtained positive responses show that the people in the work place have become aware of the situations of the PWDS and that respect and equal treatment is rightly accorded to them.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As this study suggests wide inclusion of the PWDs in the workplace, the HR department should continually look into ways on how to increase their accommodation. They should not only see this as a requirement but consideration should be focused on what these individuals are capable of despite their handicap.

The positive responses of the two participants involved in this study regarding their lived experiences in the work place shall be validated by conducting another study involving more participants.

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