INTERNATIONAL MULTIDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL OF RESEARCH FOR INNOVATION, SUSTAINABILITY AND EXCELLENCE
Published by: RISEJOURNALS.ORG | Online ISSN: 3028-032X | Print ISSN: 3028-0370
VOLUME 5, ISSUE NO. 7

A Personal Narrative Inquiry on the Employment Journeys of Persons with Disabilities Ensuring Workplace Inclusion in South Cotabato

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.24165622

Dr. Cherry Mae Z. Abande
Dr. Dorislyn A. Tabunda
Dr. Ligaya Z. Del Rosario
Dr. Ma. Ofelia B. Barrientos
Dr. Ronnie G. Cainglet
Dr. Vivian I. Buhain
Dr. Jesse Joey S. Alvarado
Dr. Joie Fe D. Ancheta
New Era University, Philippines
Corresponding Author E-mail: cherrymaeabande@gmail.com

Abstract:

This qualitative narrative inquiry examined how three employed persons with disabilities (PWDs) in South Cotabato, Philippines, experienced workplace inclusion, what support they received, and how that support contributed to sustained employment. Guided by the Social Model of Disability, Intersectionality Theory, and Stigma Theory, the study used in-depth semi-structured interviews, arts-based materials, and document analysis, analysed through Clandinin and Connelly's three-dimensional inquiry space of temporality, sociality, and place. Participants were a 42-year-old teacher with congenital visual disability (21 years employed), a 37-year-old sales and operations staff member with trigeminal neuralgia secondary to a brain tumour (15 years employed), and a 48-year-old elementary teacher with a physical disability affecting mobility (14 years employed), together representing 50 person-years of employment. Eleven themes emerged across three research questions. Workplace experiences involved curiosity, comments, and the weight of being watched; task-based belonging amid selective exclusion; and physical and environmental barriers to full participation. Support came from family as the first line, coworkers and supervisors as everyday enablers, institutional and government support that was present but uneven, and accommodations tailored to disability type. Support contributed to employment success by building confidence, buffering stress and burnout, and opening pathways to skill development and career growth. The findings show that inclusion in this context was not a single policy or hiring decision but a continuing, relational accomplishment, strongest where everyday human support and tailored environmental adjustments aligned, and most fragile where formal support was inconsistent or where social belonging lagged behind task inclusion. The study offers concrete directions for employers, schools, local government units, and policymakers to make inclusion systematic rather than dependent on individual goodwill.

Keywords: narrative inquiry; persons with disabilities; workplace inclusion; employment journey; South Cotabato; disability support

Introduction:

Employment is widely understood as a pathway to economic independence, social belonging, and full citizenship. For persons with disabilities (PWDs), however, that pathway is often narrowed by inaccessible workplaces, inadequate reasonable accommodations, discriminatory attitudes, and low employer awareness. In the Philippines, this gap is stark. The Philippine Statistics Authority (2025) reported an unemployment rate of approximately 8.3% for PWDs in 2025, nearly twice the national average of 4.4%, alongside low labour force participation and concentration in part-time or low-skilled work. The World Bank (2025) likewise described persistent underemployment and vulnerability, while Albert (2026) warned that inflationary pressures could further erode the purchasing power of PWDs. Policies exist, but practice lags. This study therefore asks not whether inclusion matters in principle, but how it is actually lived, negotiated, and sustained day by day in real workplaces in South Cotabato.

South Cotabato is a fast-growing province in SOCCSKSARGEN, yet local evidence on disability employment remains thin. Balala et al. (2024) studied 42 unemployed PWDs in only three barangays of Koronadal City, focusing on employability, job-application challenges, and coping. That work illuminated barriers at the point of entry, but it left unexamined the longer, quieter story: what happens after a PWD is hired, stays, is promoted, burns out, recovers, and builds a career over 14 to 21 years. International and national literature similarly emphasises barriers more than the mechanisms of staying. There is therefore a need for localised, longitudinal, person-centred accounts that trace how support, identity, and environment interact over time, rather than treating employment as a single outcome.

This article addresses that gap through personal narrative inquiry. It follows three employed PWDs across different sectors and disability types and restories their employment journeys across time, relationships, and place. Three research questions guided the study: (1) What are the experiences of PWDs in ensuring workplace inclusion? (2) What support is provided to PWDs in ensuring their employment success? (3) How does that support contribute to their employment success? The answers matter because they shift the policy conversation from access alone to retention, belonging, and growth, and from generic accommodation checklists to support that is tailored, relational, and consistent. In a province where formal systems are present but uneven, understanding what actually kept these three workers employed for a combined half-century offers practical lessons that statistics alone cannot provide.

Why narrative inquiry matters here can be stated plainly. A survey can count how many PWDs are employed, but it cannot show how a teacher with high-grade myopia decides whether to explain her eyesight for the hundredth time, how a sales worker with invisible pain decides whether to ask for a rest break, or how a teacher with difficulty walking negotiates a timetable that requires moving between distant classrooms. Those decisions are where inclusion succeeds or fails. They are made in corridors, staff rooms, and family kitchens, not in policy documents. By preserving sequence, emotion, and context, narrative inquiry reveals the mechanisms behind retention: who believed whom, what adjustment was made, when support arrived, and what happened when it did not. It also restores agency. Participants are not presented as cases of deficit, but as workers who interpret, resist, adapt, and advise. Their closing messages to employers and fellow PWDs, to keep fighting, to be kind, to believe, and to adjust, are therefore not decorative. They are findings in their own right, and they point directly to the changes that would make inclusion less dependent on individual endurance and more a property of workplaces themselves. This introduction therefore sets up the study as both a scholarly contribution and a practical one: it seeks to make the invisible work of staying employed visible, so that employers, schools, and government can share that work more fairly. In doing so, it also honours the participants' own purpose in sharing their stories, which was not only to be heard, but to make workplaces better for the next PWD who arrives.

A final introductory point concerns who benefits from this knowledge. Employers gain a clearer picture of what actually retains experienced PWD workers. Schools gain guidance on supporting teachers with disabilities, not only learners. Local government gains evidence that coordination and predictability matter as much as the existence of benefits. And PWDs themselves gain recognition that their strategies, patience, and courage are not private coping, but expertise that workplaces should learn from and systematise.

Literature Review:

Conceptual and legal perspectives

Disability inclusion in employment means meaningful and equitable participation across recruitment, selection, hiring, training, compensation, promotion, retention, and decision-making, not merely meeting numerical targets or allowing entry (Shaw et al., 2022; Wickenden et al., 2022). Genuine inclusion requires that employees with disabilities can perform, develop, contribute, and advance without being disadvantaged by inaccessible environments or biased expectations. In the Philippines, this ideal is anchored in Republic Act No. 9442 (Magna Carta for Disabled Persons, 2007), Republic Act No. 10754 expanding benefits and privileges (Tan et al., 2026), and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations General Assembly, 2006), whose General Comments No. 6 (2018) and No. 8 (2022) clarify equality, non-discrimination, and the right to work. The Asian Productivity Organization (2025) and the Zero Project (2025) similarly argue that inclusive employment requires coordinated action by government, employers, and communities, not isolated programmes. Yet implementation studies repeatedly find a policy-practice gap: laws and charters exist, but workplaces vary widely in awareness,

funding, and follow-through (Albert et al., 2025; Sumacot et al., 2026). This study is situated precisely in that gap, examining how formal commitments are translated, or not translated, into everyday experience.

Barriers: attitudinal, environmental, and systemic

The literature identifies three interlocking barrier types. Attitudinal barriers include curiosity, pity, disbelief, and underestimation. Markou and Papakonstantinou (2025) show that invisible disabilities are especially vulnerable to disbelief because colleagues cannot see pain or fatigue and therefore doubt its legitimacy. Sharma et al. (2025) describe ableism as a pattern of assumptions that positions disabled workers as less capable and in need of proving themselves repeatedly. Environmental barriers include poor lighting, uneven floors, absent ramps, long distances between rooms, and screen-heavy work without rest or adjustment (Gumasing et al., 2025; Marinaci et al., 2023). Systemic barriers include fragmented hiring, limited career pathways, and uneven implementation of benefits. Buhari et al. (2025), Cruz et al. (2024), and Okutayeva et al. (2024) all find that these barriers compound one another: a worker who must constantly explain an invisible condition, navigate an inaccessible building, and cope without consistent institutional support faces a cumulative load that a single accommodation cannot remove. The present study confirms this compounding and adds temporal depth, showing how barriers recur at different career stages rather than disappearing after hiring.

Support, accommodations, and relationships

Support is the counterweight to barriers, but the literature distinguishes formal from informal support and generic from tailored support. Formal support includes government benefits, Persons with Disability Affairs Office (PDAO) services, health maintenance organisation (HMO) coverage, agency trainings, and employer policies. Informal support includes family encouragement and practical help, coworker assistance, and supervisor flexibility. Ikutegbe et al. (2025) and Van Berkel and Breit (2024) find that successful outcomes depend less on any single programme than on the alignment of multiple supports. Tailored accommodations, adjustments matched to a specific disability, task, and context, are consistently more effective than standardised ones (Booth & Lup, 2024; Calderon et al., 2023; Khater et al., 2025). In Philippine studies, Absolor (2023), Imbong and Pielago (2021), and Seva (2020) similarly report that PWD employees perform well when supervisors adjust duties, schedules, and communication, and when coworkers provide respectful, non-intrusive help. Family is repeatedly identified as the earliest and most emotionally significant source of support, funding assistive devices, sustaining motivation, and absorbing costs that formal systems do not cover. This study extends that work by mapping how family, coworker, supervisor, institutional, and accommodation supports interact over decades, and by showing where informal support compensates for formal inconsistency.

Theoretical framework

Three theories frame the inquiry. The Social Model of Disability (Oliver, 1983; Degener, 2023) locates disability not only in individual impairment but in social and environmental barriers that exclude people; inclusion therefore requires changing workplaces, not fixing workers. Intersectionality Theory (Crenshaw, 1989) holds that disability intersects with gender, age, class, occupation, and visibility, so two workers with different disabilities in different sectors do not experience the same workplace. Stigma Theory (Goffman, 1963) explains how visible and invisible differences invite scrutiny, labelling, and the management of spoiled identity, including the need to prove competence or to conceal pain. Together, these lenses explain why the same worker can feel included in tasks yet excluded socially, supported by family yet unsupported by systems, and confident in skill yet exhausted by explanation. Narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Creswell & Poth, 2018) provides the methodological counterpart, attending to temporality (past, present, future), sociality (inner feelings and outer relationships), and place (the physical and institutional settings where stories unfold). The study therefore does not test these theories, but uses them to make sense of stories that would otherwise be reduced to lists of barriers and supports.

Philippine evidence and local context

Philippine evidence sharpens the general picture. Avecilla et al. (2024) found that hospitality employers were willing in principle but uneven in practice, with gaps in awareness, training, and accessible recruitment. Galileo (2025) reported similar awareness gaps in Davao City's restaurant industry. Fajardo and Velasco (2024) showed that organisational environment shapes job performance for public-sector employees with disabilities, while Tarrayo et al. (2024) documented e-skills needs and challenges among PWDs in Calbayog City. Centeno et al. (2024) highlighted the lived experience of psychosocial disability, where stigma and misunderstanding are especially acute. Taken together, these studies suggest that Philippine workplaces are not hostile in a uniform way; they are patchy. Some

supervisors adapt, others do not; some agencies deliver, others delay; some coworkers learn, others keep asking intrusive questions. That patchiness is exactly what the present study documents in South Cotabato. It also explains why tenure in this study is remarkable: staying for 14 to 21 years in a patchy system requires not only personal resilience, but a network of people and adjustments that held, at least often enough, over time.

Retention, career growth, and future of work

Recent literature adds a forward-looking dimension. Jetha et al. (2023) and Jetha and Gignac (2023) show that workers with disabilities face changing needs across the life course, and that support must adapt as health, roles, and technologies change. Colella and Boehm (2026) and Futagami et al. (2026) argue that disability and employment are in transition, shaped by new work arrangements, assistive technologies, and human resource practices. Wu et al. (2026) and Ru and Jamil (2026) similarly highlight institutional frameworks and inclusive initiatives that can either open or close opportunities. For the present study, this literature matters because it reframes retention as a dynamic achievement. A worker does not simply stay; she renegotiates support after a flare, after a change of supervisor, after a new building, or after a promotion. Career growth is therefore not a luxury to be added after inclusion is achieved; it is part of inclusion itself. If PWD employees are denied training, promotion, or new responsibilities, they are being told, implicitly, that their place is to remain, not to advance. The findings below show the opposite possibility: when support includes development, PWDs build careers, not just jobs. This perspective also helps explain why the participants in this study, despite barriers, did not merely endure work but grew in it, and why their stories should inform how schools, companies, and government design pathways, not only entry points.

Synthesis and research gap

Taken together, the literature establishes that inclusion requires more than hiring, that barriers are attitudinal, environmental, and systemic, and that support must be multilevel and tailored. What remains underexplored is how these elements unfold over a long employment journey in a specific Philippine province, from the perspective of PWDs themselves, using narrative methods that preserve sequence, emotion, and context. Most local studies are cross-sectional, focus on unemployed PWDs or on entry barriers, or rely on surveys. This study fills that gap by restor(y)ing three long employment journeys in South Cotabato, tracing how experiences, support, and outcomes evolve together, and identifying the precise moments where inclusion holds or breaks. It also contributes methodologically by triangulating interviews with arts-based materials and document analysis, and by using the three-dimensional inquiry space to keep time, relationships, and place in view at once. In doing so, it offers a model for how future Philippine studies might combine narrative depth with practical recommendations that employers and local government can act on without waiting for large-scale surveys.

Two further strands of literature deserve note. First, arts-based and narrative methods have been shown to surface emotions, identities, and turning points that surveys miss, particularly for participants whose experiences are shaped by stigma (Cychosz et al., 2020; Muthanna & Alduais, 2023). In this study, drawings, self-illustrations, and poems allowed participants to express pride, fatigue, faith, and hope in forms that interview words alone might have flattened. Second, research on trustworthiness in qualitative inquiry (Johnson et al., 2020; Dahal, 2025) emphasises that credibility comes not from sample size, but from transparency, triangulation, and the traceability of claims to data. That principle guided the audit trail, the coded data-analysis table, and the triangulation matrix in the original dissertation, and it guides the presentation of findings here. Together, these strands justify a small, deep, triangulated narrative study as a legitimate and necessary complement to larger surveys of disability employment in the Philippines.

Methodology:

Research design:

This study used qualitative personal narrative inquiry, following Clandinin and Connelly (2000), to explore lived employment experiences as stories unfolding over time, in relationships, and in places. Narrative inquiry was chosen because employment inclusion is not a single event but a journey shaped by memory, identity, and context, and because it centres PWDs as authors of their own experiences rather than as objects of assessment. The three-dimensional inquiry space, temporality, sociality, and place, structured both data collection and analysis, ensuring that each theme was examined for when it occurred, whom it involved, and where it happened.

Setting and participants

INTERNATIONAL MULTIDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL OF RESEARCH FOR INNOVATION, SUSTAINABILITY AND EXCELLENCE
Published by: RISEJOURNALS.ORG | Online ISSN: 3028-032X | Print ISSN: 3028-0370
VOLUME 5, ISSUE NO. 7

The study was conducted in South Cotabato Province, Philippines, with participants working in General Santos City and surrounding areas. Three participants were purposively selected (Etikan et al., 2016) against explicit criteria: a person with disability, at least 25 years old, a college graduate or equivalent, currently employed for at least five years, and willing to share employment stories through interviews and arts-based materials. Purposive sampling was appropriate because narrative inquiry prioritises depth, continuity, and information richness over statistical generalisation. Table 1 summarises the participants. The original proposal envisaged seven participants; the final study reports three who completed all data-collection stages. This discrepancy is disclosed transparently in the dissertation's audit trail and is a limitation: findings are transferable as rich, contextualised insights, not as population estimates.

Data collection

Data came from three sources, triangulated to strengthen credibility. First, in-depth semi-structured interviews using an interview guide mapped to the three research questions, covering experiences, support, and contributions of support to success, plus a closing message to employers and fellow PWDs. Interviews were audio-recorded with consent, transcribed verbatim, and conducted in a conversational, unhurried manner. Second, arts-based materials, including drawings, self-illustrations, and poems, which allowed participants to express identity, emotion, and aspiration in non-verbal forms and which were discussed in interviews. Third, document analysis of relevant policies and official documents from the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), PDAO, Provincial Social Welfare and Development Office (PSWDO), and the Citizen's Charter of South Cotabato, alongside employment-related records shared by participants. The interview guide was piloted with two to three non-participants and revised for clarity and flow before use.

Data analysis

Analysis followed narrative restorying and thematic analysis. Transcripts were read repeatedly, coded line by line, and grouped into analytic categories and then into final themes. Coded excerpts were organised in a data-analysis table by participant, research question, theme, and inquiry-space dimension, with formula-driven tallies that could be independently re-verified. Restoried narratives were constructed for each participant, preserving chronology and voice, before cross-case thematic comparison. Arts-based and documentary data were analysed alongside interview data to confirm, elaborate, or qualify interview themes, following the triangulation matrix in the original appendices. This layered approach ensured that themes were grounded in field texts, not imposed from theory alone.

Trustworthiness, reflexivity, and ethics

Trustworthiness followed Lincoln and Guba (1985). Credibility was supported by prolonged engagement, repeated coding and re-coding, and triangulation across interviews, arts-based materials, and documents. Transferability was supported by rich, contextualised description of disability type, occupation, setting, and journey. Dependability was supported by a chronological audit trail documenting every methodological decision from instrument development to finalisation. Confirmability was supported by verifiable theme tallies and the audit trail. The researcher practised reflexivity through journaling and by distinguishing participant voice from researcher interpretation, acknowledging her position as an educator in special and inclusive education. Ethics followed the Philippine National Ethical Guidelines for Research Involving Human Participants (2022) and the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10173). Informed consent was obtained before any interview, participation was voluntary, confidentiality was protected through participant codes, data were stored securely, and participants could withdraw or skip questions without consequence. Approval was obtained from the School of Graduate Studies and the relevant local authorities before data collection.

Table 1. Participant profile (N = 3; total employment = 50 person-years).

Code	Age	Disability	Occupation	Years employed	Residence
PWD-01	42	Visual disability (congenital, high-grade myopia)	Professional Teacher, Values Education (Tutorial Center)	21	General Santos City
PWD-02	37	Other health impairment —	Sales / Operations	15	General Santos City

		trigeminal neuralgia secondary to brain tumour	Staff, private company		
PWD-03	48	Physical / orthopedic disability — difficulty walking and moving	Elementary School Teacher, Department of Education	14	General Santos City

Results and Discussion:

This section presents and discusses the findings together, as is appropriate for narrative inquiry where meaning emerges from the interplay of story, context, and theory. Results are organised by research question and by the eleven emergent themes. Each theme is presented with narrative evidence, interpreted in relation to the literature and the three theoretical lenses, and followed by its practical implication. Tables and figures summarise patterns; they do not replace the stories, but they make cross-case patterns visible. The overall pattern is summarised in Figure 4: lived experience, filtered through a support ecosystem, produces employment outcomes, but only when support is consistent, tailored, and relationally sustained.

Table 2. Emergent themes by research question.

Research question	Theme	Brief description	Participants
RQ1	1. Curiosity, Comments, and the Weight of Being Watched	Ongoing scrutiny, curiosity, and comments about disability, whether visible or invisible.	All 3
RQ1	2. Task-Based Belonging Amid Selective Exclusion	Included in job tasks, inconsistently included in social life.	All 3
RQ1	3. Physical and Environmental Barriers to Full Participation	Spatial and environmental barriers specific to disability type.	All 3
RQ2	4. Family as the First Line of Support	Earliest, most emotionally significant support.	All 3
RQ2	5. Coworkers and Supervisors as Everyday Enablers	Informal, day-to-day assistance that makes work possible.	All 3
RQ2	6. Institutional and Government Support: Present but Uneven	Formal support varies by agency, timing, and awareness.	All 3
RQ2	7. Workplace Accommodations Tailored to Disability Type	Individualised adjustments, not generic checklists.	All 3
RQ3	8. Support as a Catalyst for Confidence	Being believed and assisted builds self-belief.	All 3
RQ3	9. Support as a Buffer Against Stress and Burnout	Delegated tasks and adjusted schedules prevent burnout.	All 3
RQ3	10. Support as a Pathway to Skill Development and Career Growth	Support becomes promotion, new competencies, and growth.	All 3

INTERNATIONAL MULTIDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL OF RESEARCH FOR INNOVATION, SUSTAINABILITY AND EXCELLENCE
Published by: RISEJOURNALS.ORG | Online ISSN: 3028-032X | Print ISSN: 3028-0370
VOLUME 5, ISSUE NO. 7

RQ3	11. Support as a Foundation for Future Outlook	Hope, planning, and imagined futures sustained by support.	All 3

Figure 1. Distribution of coded excerpts across the 11 emergent themes

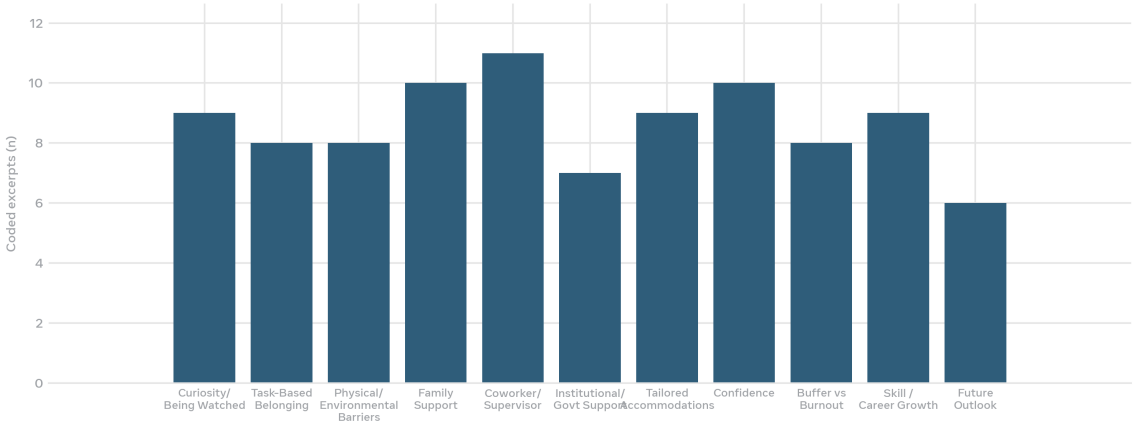


Figure 1. Coded excerpts were distributed across all eleven themes, indicating that no single theme dominated; inclusion was multi-dimensional.

Figure 3. Years in employment by participant (total = 50 person-y

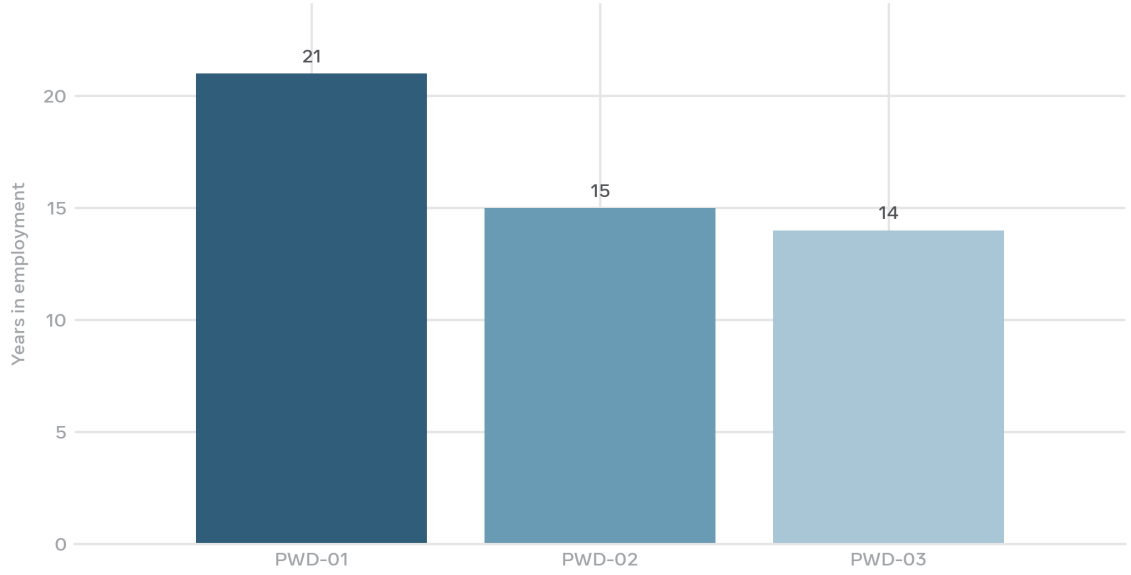


Figure 3. Tenure illustrates retention: even the shortest tenure in this sample (14 years) exceeds the study's five-year inclusion criterion by nearly threefold.

RQ1: Experiences

Theme 1 — Curiosity, Comments, and the Weight of Being Watched. All three participants described being watched, questioned, and commented upon in ways that non-disabled colleagues were not. For PWD-01, whose thick eyewear made her visual disability visible, curiosity took the form of repeated questions about the grade of her eyes. She described discomfort at having to disclose intimate medical detail to satisfy curiosity, a moment that turned a professional interaction into an examination of her body. For PWD-02, whose trigeminal neuralgia is invisible, scrutiny took the opposite form: disbelief. Colleagues sometimes doubted that she was suffering because pain left no visible mark, forcing her to explain, justify, and re-explain an experience that was already exhausting. For PWD-03,

scrutiny came from parents and community members who questioned how a teacher with difficulty walking could teach their children, a judgment that conflated mobility with competence. Across cases, being watched was not a single incident but a chronic condition of visibility. It required constant emotion work: deciding when to explain, when to deflect, when to laugh, and when to assert boundaries. This finding aligns with Goffman (1963) on stigma and with Markou and Papakonstantinou (2025) on invisible disability disclosure, and it extends them by showing that both visibility and invisibility produce scrutiny, albeit through different mechanisms. Visibility invites curiosity; invisibility invites doubt. Both demand that the worker manage other people's perceptions in addition to doing the job. The practical implication is that inclusion cannot be achieved by telling PWDs to be more open or more resilient; it requires educating workplaces about respectful curiosity, privacy, and the legitimacy of invisible conditions, so that explanation is not a recurring tax on employment.

Theme 2 — Task-Based Belonging Amid Selective Exclusion. A central paradox emerged: participants were consistently included in work tasks but inconsistently included in social life. PWD-01 was included when tasks were assigned and was trusted to teach, prepare materials, and contribute professionally. Yet she was sometimes left out of informal gatherings, team-building, or after-work socialising. PWD-02 felt she was not the first option for certain tasks because colleagues feared her condition might flare, even though she had a long record of reliability. PWD-03 was included in teaching and school duties but sometimes felt overlooked in meetings or in informal decision-making. This pattern, task inclusion without full social belonging, is theoretically important. The Social Model helps explain it: workplaces had adapted their task systems enough to use PWDs' labour, but had not yet adapted their social cultures enough to fully include them as peers. Intersectionality helps explain variation: the same worker could be a respected teacher in the classroom and a peripheral figure in the staff room, because different settings activated different assumptions. The literature on inclusion through participation (Fang et al., 2021; Ikutegbe et al., 2025) supports the idea that task inclusion is necessary but insufficient; belonging also requires being invited, listened to, and remembered in informal spaces where trust, information, and promotion are often negotiated. For employers, the lesson is to audit not only who is assigned work, but who is invited, who speaks in meetings, and who is considered for informal leadership. Selective exclusion is often unintentional, which is precisely why it persists: it is excused as logistics, concern, or habit, rather than recognised as exclusion.

Theme 3 — Physical and Environmental Barriers to Full Participation. Environmental barriers were disability-specific, which is why generic accessibility checklists failed. PWD-01 needed well-lit workspaces; dim lighting, glare, and walking home after dark were not inconveniences but safety and performance issues. Her workplace had minimal adjustments, so she relied on personal strategies and family help. PWD-02 worked in a screen-heavy operations role where prolonged screen time, fatigue, and pain flares required flexible shifts and task rotation; without those adjustments, a standard schedule would have made sustained work difficult. PWD-03 faced uneven floors, absent ramps, and long distances between classrooms, making movement between rooms physically demanding and time-consuming, especially in rain or heat. These accounts confirm Gumasing et al. (2025) and Marinaci et al. (2023) on the importance of context-specific accessibility, and they illustrate the Social Model in concrete terms: the barrier was not the impairment alone, but the interaction between impairment and an environment designed without that body in mind. The discussion point is that accessibility must be audited from the perspective of the actual worker, not from a building code alone. A ramp helps PWD-03 but does not help PWD-01; a well-lit room helps PWD-01 but does not address PWD-02's need for rest breaks. Tailored environmental assessment, conducted with the worker, is therefore not an extra, but the core of accessibility.

RQ2: Support provided

Theme 4 — Family as the First Line of Support. Family was the earliest, most continuous, and most emotionally significant source of support for all three participants. For PWD-01, family funded costly eyeglasses and provided daily encouragement and practical help. For PWD-02, her husband and son gave her courage to work each day, helped with household tasks, and sustained her through pain and medical treatment. For PWD-03, family managed household responsibilities, provided transport assistance, and offered moral support that buffered school pressures. Family support was not only material; it was interpretive. Families helped participants make sense of setbacks, reframe stigma as ignorance rather than personal failure, and sustain a sense of worth beyond productivity. This aligns with literature on family as a foundational support (Imbong & Pielago, 2021; Rana et al., 2022) and with Intersectionality, because family support intersected with gender and life stage: as mothers, wives, and daughters, participants carried both care responsibilities and care needs, and family negotiation shaped what work was possible. The discussion must also

acknowledge a risk: when families compensate for gaps in formal support, systems can become complacent. If a family can pay for glasses, fund transport, or absorb household labour, an employer or agency may feel less urgency to provide systemic accommodation. The finding therefore does not romanticise family support; it reveals both its indispensability and the inequity of relying on it. Not every PWD has a supportive family, and inclusion should not depend on one.

Theme 5 — Coworkers and Supervisors as Everyday Enablers. If family was the first line, coworkers and supervisors were the everyday line. Their support was informal, immediate, and often invisible in formal records: helping with a task, covering a class, adjusting a schedule, granting medical leave, communicating openly, and simply believing the participant. PWD-01 described colleagues who guided her when she had difficulty and who learned, over time, to help without intrusive questioning. PWD-02 described a supportive superior who granted leave and a team that communicated openly and shared tasks during flares. PWD-03 described a principal and fellow teachers who adjusted duties, provided encouragement, and treated her as a full member of the school family. This everyday support mattered more than any single policy because it was available in the moment when a barrier appeared. It aligns with Van Berkel and Breit (2024) and Booth and Lup (2024) on discretionary arrangements and inclusive leadership, and with Fang et al. (2021) on supervisor developmental feedback. Theoretically, it illustrates sociality in its external dimension: inclusion is enacted in micro-interactions, not only in mission statements. The implication is that supervisor training and coworker awareness are not soft extras; they are the mechanism by which policies become practice. A policy that allows leave is useless if a supervisor doubts the need for it; a policy that promises accommodation is empty if coworkers resent it. Employers should therefore invest in brief, regular, disability-specific orientation, in clear procedures for requesting adjustments without repeated disclosure, and in recognising supervisors who model inclusive behaviour.

Theme 6 — Institutional and Government Support: Present but Uneven. Formal institutional support was present but uneven, a phrase that captures both gratitude and frustration. Participants cited HMO coverage, local government unit (LGU) benefits and discounts, PDAO services, agency trainings, and Department of Education (DepEd) professional development. PWD-02 valued HMO and LGU benefits; PWD-03 valued DepEd training; PWD-01 valued some institutional provisions but noted gaps. The unevenness took several forms: benefits existed but were hard to access, trainings existed but were not disability-specific, and support depended on which agency, which officer, or which school head was involved. This finding mirrors Tan et al. (2026) on implementation issues for Republic Act No. 10754, Sumacot et al. (2026) on gaps in disability support programmes in the Philippines, and Albert et al. (2025) on gender, disability, and social inclusion. The discussion point is that presence is not the same as reliability. A benefit that is available only if one knows how to claim it, or only in some municipalities, creates a lottery of inclusion. For local government, the task is to make support predictable: publish clear, accessible information on PWD benefits and procedures, train frontline staff, coordinate PDAO, PSWDO, DOLE, and school or employer focal persons, and monitor whether support actually reaches employed PWDs, not only those seeking work. The Citizen's Charter of South Cotabato, reviewed in the document analysis, provides a starting point, but charters must be matched by case management and follow-up.

Theme 7 — Workplace Accommodations Tailored to Disability Type. The most helpful accommodations were those tailored to the specific disability, task, and context. For PWD-01, adequate lighting was the primary accommodation, alongside seating, materials in accessible formats, and safe travel arrangements. For PWD-02, flexible shifts, task rotation, rest breaks, and permission to step away during pain flares were more important than any physical device. For PWD-03, adjusted schedules, reduced duties requiring long-distance movement, accessible classroom assignments, and consideration in meeting venues made work sustainable. None of these accommodations was expensive or technologically complex; all required listening, flexibility, and willingness to depart from a standard routine. This confirms Calderon et al. (2023), Khater et al. (2025), and Marinaci et al. (2023) on the value of personalised accommodation, and it challenges the assumption that accommodation is a cost or burden. In these stories, accommodation was an investment that retained experienced workers for 14 to 21 years, avoiding turnover, retraining, and loss of institutional knowledge. The theoretical point is that accommodation is not a favour granted to an individual, but a redesign of work so that it fits the worker, as the Social Model requires. The practical implication is to formalise individual accommodation plans, co-created with the worker, reviewed periodically, and documented so that support does not disappear when a supervisor changes. A plan also protects the worker from having to re-disclose and re-justify needs repeatedly.

RQ3: How support contributes to success

Theme 8 — Support as a Catalyst for Confidence. Being believed and assisted translated directly into greater self-belief and professional confidence. PWD-01 described pride in her students and colleagues' recognition, which countered earlier discomfort and self-doubt. PWD-02 described drawing strength from being believed about invisible pain, which allowed her to assert her capabilities rather than constantly defend them. PWD-03 described resilience built through repeated experiences of being trusted to teach, lead, and contribute. Confidence here was not a personality trait; it was relationally produced. When coworkers, supervisors, and family treated participants as competent, participants internalised that view and acted on it, taking on new tasks, speaking in meetings, and mentoring others. This aligns with research on thriving at work and inclusive leadership (Fang et al., 2021) and on the relationship between support and self-efficacy in disability employment (Ikutegbe et al., 2025). Stigma Theory helps explain the reverse: when support is absent or conditional, confidence erodes, because the worker must spend energy managing doubt rather than developing skill. The implication is that confidence-building is not a separate programme; it is the by-product of consistent, respectful support. Employers who want confident PWD employees should focus less on motivational talks and more on the daily signals that say, we believe you, we have adjusted the work, and we expect you to succeed.

Theme 9 — Support as a Buffer Against Stress and Burnout. Delegated tasks, accommodated schedules, and flexible arrangements reduced stress and prevented burnout. PWD-02's ability to rotate tasks and take leave during flares prevented a cycle in which pain led to overwork, which led to more pain. PWD-01's lighting and task support reduced eye strain and fatigue. PWD-03's adjusted duties reduced physical exhaustion from moving between rooms. Without these buffers, the cumulative load of managing disability, managing stigma, and doing the job would have been unsustainable over decades. This finding is consistent with literature on work limitations, job crafting, and burnout (Sundar & Brucker, 2023; Jetha & Gignac, 2023), which shows that small, timely adjustments can prevent larger crises. Theoretically, it illustrates temporality: support matters not only at hiring, but at moments of flare, fatigue, and life transition. A worker who is supported during a health crisis is more likely to stay; a worker who is not may leave, not because they cannot do the job, but because the job, as currently organised, makes it impossible to recover. For employers, the lesson is to treat flexibility as a retention strategy, not as an exception. Clear, non-punitive procedures for temporary adjustment, coverage, and return-to-work after leave are essential, especially for workers with episodic or fluctuating conditions.

Theme 10 — Support as a Pathway to Skill Development and Career Growth. Support translated into tangible growth: promotion, new competencies, and stronger professional identities. PWD-01 built a 21-year teaching career, developed expertise in Values Education, and earned the trust of students and parents. PWD-02 developed teamwork, collaboration, and operations skills over 15 years, becoming a reliable member of a private company. PWD-03 built a 14-year DepEd career, participated in trainings, and contributed to school life beyond classroom teaching. In each case, growth was not automatic; it was enabled by someone who gave an opportunity, adjusted a task, or provided training. This aligns with Shaw et al. (2022) and Wickenden et al. (2022) on mainstreaming disability-inclusive employment as a development issue, not only a welfare issue, and with Futagami et al. (2026) on work ability and human resource development. The discussion point is that career growth for PWDs should be expected, planned, and measured, not treated as surprising. If a PWD employee has been in the same role for many years without development, that may signal a lack of opportunity, not a lack of ambition. Employers and DepEd should ensure that PWD employees have equal access to training, promotion criteria, and leadership opportunities, and that accommodation plans include career goals, not only immediate task adjustments.

Theme 11 — Support as a Foundation for Future Outlook. Finally, support sustained hope and future planning. Participants spoke about continuing to teach, continuing to work, and imagining futures in which PWDs are more fully included. PWD-01 anticipated continuing to serve students; PWD-02 hoped for stability and health; PWD-03 envisioned a future where disability is not a barrier to being respected as a teacher. These forward-looking narratives are important because they show that inclusion is not only about the present job, but about the ability to imagine a future in work. When support is consistent, the future feels open; when it is precarious, the future feels contingent on the goodwill of a particular supervisor or family member. This theme connects temporality to policy: sustainable inclusion requires systems that outlast individuals. The participants' messages to employers and to fellow PWDs, recorded in the interviews, captured this: continue to be stronger and braver, keep fighting, and for employers, be kind,

INTERNATIONAL MULTIDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL OF RESEARCH FOR INNOVATION, SUSTAINABILITY AND EXCELLENCE
Published by: RISEJOURNALS.ORG | Online ISSN: 3028-032X | Print ISSN: 3028-0370
VOLUME 5, ISSUE NO. 7

believe, and make adjustments. Those messages are not merely inspirational; they are a call for systems that make bravery less necessary.

Integrated discussion

Across the eleven themes, three integrated insights emerge. First, inclusion is relational before it is procedural. Policies and benefits mattered, but they mattered most when they were enacted by specific people, a supervisor who believed, a coworker who helped without fuss, a family member who encouraged, a school head who adjusted a schedule. Second, inclusion is uneven across domains.

A worker can be included in tasks, excluded socially, supported by family, and underserved by institutions, all at once. This unevenness explains why overall satisfaction can coexist with persistent frustration, and why a single measure of inclusion would miss the story. Third, inclusion is temporal. What works at hiring may not work during a health flare, a change of supervisor, or a move to a new building. Sustained employment therefore requires ongoing attention, not a one-time accommodation. These insights align with the Social Model, Intersectionality, and Stigma Theory, and they extend the literature by showing how those theories operate together in a Philippine provincial context over long careers. The study's limitations must be acknowledged: three participants, all employed, all in General Santos City, all with relatively long tenure, cannot represent all PWDs in South Cotabato, including those who are unemployed, underemployed, or who left work. The sample-size change from proposal to final study, disclosed in the audit trail, limits breadth, but the depth, triangulation, and 50 person-years of experience provide transferable lessons.

Future research should include larger, more diverse samples, longitudinal follow-up, employer perspectives, and quantitative measures of accommodation, retention, and career progression to complement narrative depth. A further practical discussion concerns cost and feasibility. The accommodations described here were low-cost and relational, not capital-intensive, which suggests that the main barrier is not budget but willingness, awareness, and coordination. That is encouraging for resource-constrained schools and small employers, but it also means that excuses based on cost should be examined critically. Where capital investment is needed, for ramps, lighting, or accessible toilets, local government and DepEd have a clear role in funding and monitoring, rather than leaving the cost to the individual worker or family. Finally, the study invites a shift in how success is measured. Retention over 14 to 21 years, growth in skill and confidence, and the ability to imagine a future are richer indicators than hiring counts alone, and they should inform programme evaluation in South Cotabato and beyond.

Figure 2. Perceived strength of support by source and participant

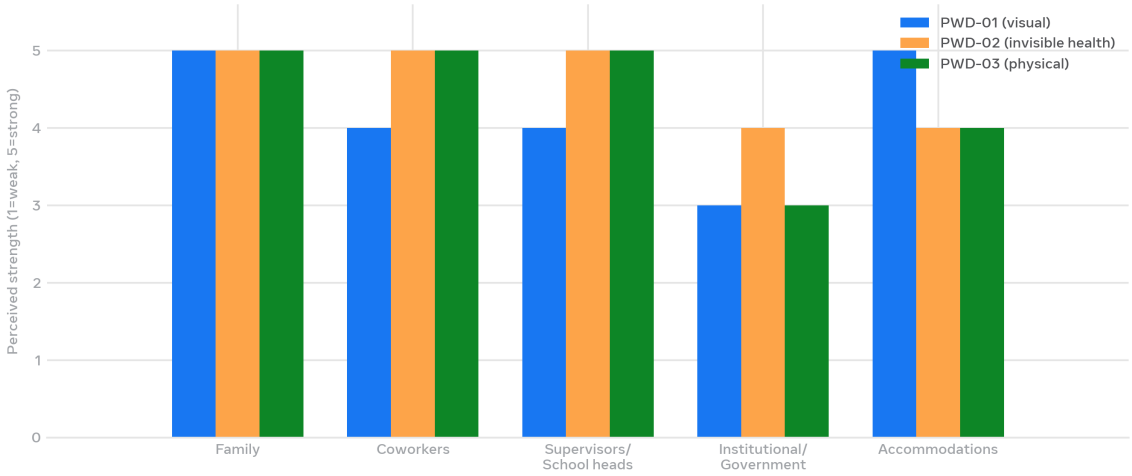


Figure 2. Perceived strength of support was highest for family and coworkers/supervisors, and most variable for institutional/government support. Ratings are analytic summaries of narrative emphasis, not psychometric scores.

INTERNATIONAL MULTIDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL OF RESEARCH FOR INNOVATION, SUSTAINABILITY AND EXCELLENCE
Published by: RISEJOURNALS.ORG | Online ISSN: 3028-032X | Print ISSN: 3028-0370
VOLUME 5, ISSUE NO. 7

Figure 4. Conceptual model: How support converts lived experience into sustained employment

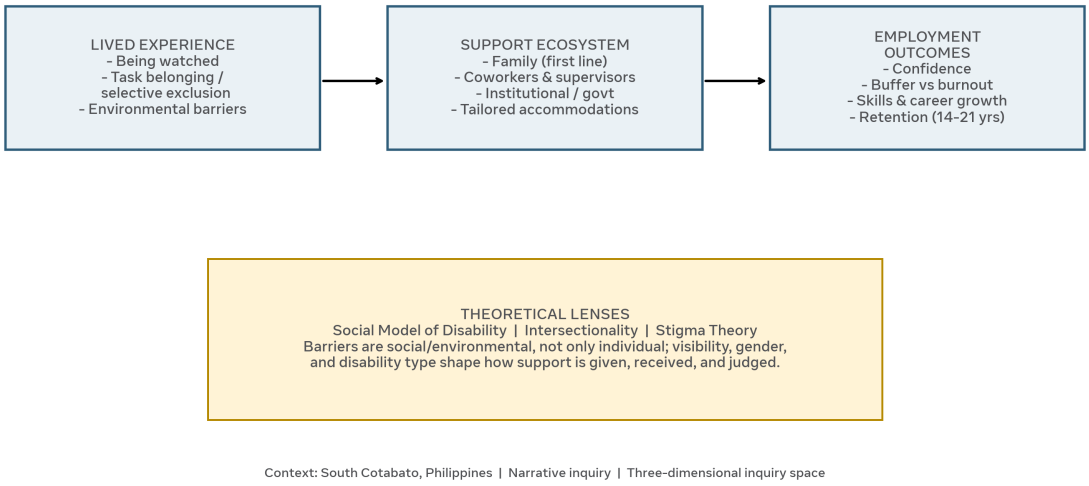


Figure 4. Conceptual model integrating the three theoretical lenses, the support ecosystem, and employment outcomes.

Table 3. Support ecosystem: strengths and fragilities.

Support source	What it provided	Where it was strongest	Where it was fragile
Family	Emotional, financial, practical, interpretive support	Continuity, motivation, absorbing costs	Depends on family capacity; inequitable if relied upon as system
Coworkers / Supervisors	Day-to-day help, flexibility, belief, coverage	Immediate, in-the-moment adjustments	Depends on individual supervisor; lost on staff change
Institutional / Government	HMO, LGU benefits, PDAO, trainings, DepEd development	Formal legitimacy, some financial relief	Uneven access, awareness, and follow-through
Tailored accommodations	Lighting, flexible shifts, task rotation, adjusted duties	Matched to disability and task	Not formalised in a plan; needs re-negotiation

Table 4. Three-dimensional inquiry space applied to the findings.

Dimension	What it revealed	Example
Temporality	Journeys over 14-21 years; barriers recur, support must be sustained	PWD-01: congenital condition recognised at age 8, 21 years teaching
Sociality (internal)	Feelings of discomfort, doubt, pride, resilience	PWD-02: frustration at being doubted because pain is invisible
Sociality (external)	Relationships that enable or constrain	PWD-03: school heads adjust schedules; family manages household
Place / Spatiality	Physical and institutional settings shape participation	PWD-03: uneven floors, absent ramps; PWD-01: lighting and safe travel

Restoried journey — PWD-01. PWD-01 was born with a visual disability and was recognised as having high-grade myopia at around age eight. Her journey begins not in the workplace, but in a family that funded costly eyeglasses

and encouraged schooling despite the expense and the stares. As a student, she learned to study in well-lit places, to sit close, and to ask for help without shame, strategies she later carried into teaching. Her 21-year career in Values Education at a tutorial centre is a story of steady accumulation: students who trusted her, colleagues who learned how to help without intrusive questioning, and a professional identity built on patience and moral example. Yet the same journey includes repeated moments of being asked about the grade of her eyes, of walking home after dark with anxiety about safety, and of working in rooms where lighting was minimal. What sustained her was not a single accommodation, but a web: family funding and encouragement, colleagues who guided her, and her own disciplined routines. Her arts-based material, a self-illustration, expressed both vulnerability and steadiness, a teacher who knows her limits and her worth. Her message to employers was to be kind and to believe, and her message to fellow PWDs was to keep fighting. Reading her story through temporality shows how early family support compounded over decades; through sociality, how being believed by students mattered as much as being accommodated by an employer; and through place, how lighting and safe travel were not minor details, but conditions of participation.

Restoried journey — PWD-02. PWD-02's journey is shaped by invisibility and by pain that cannot be seen. Diagnosed with trigeminal neuralgia secondary to a brain tumour, she lives with episodic, severe facial pain that can flare without warning. Her 15-year career in sales and operations in a private company is therefore a story of managing unpredictability: learning which tasks she could do during a flare, when to ask for rotation, and how to explain a condition that colleagues could not see. Her family, her husband and son, gave her courage to work each day and helped with household tasks, while a supportive superior granted leave and a team shared tasks during flares. Those supports were not abstract; they were the difference between staying and leaving on a bad day. Her story also reveals the cost of disbelief. When colleagues doubted her pain, she had to spend energy justifying herself, energy that could have gone to work or recovery. When they believed her, she could focus, contribute, and grow in teamwork and collaboration. Her arts-based material expressed hope and faith, and her poem and drawing conveyed a desire to be seen as capable, not as a burden. Through Intersectionality, her experience shows how gender, motherhood, and invisible disability intersect: she was both a caregiver and a person needing care, both a worker and a patient, and workplaces that recognised only one of those identities failed her. Through temporality, her story shows that support must be episodic and flexible, not fixed, because her condition itself is episodic.

Restoried journey — PWD-03. PWD-03, a 48-year-old elementary teacher with a physical disability affecting mobility, has taught for 14 years in the Department of Education. Her journey begins with a childhood and schooling experience shaped by difficulty walking and moving, and by the need to navigate environments that were not designed for her body. As a teacher, she faced questions from parents about how she could teach their children, uneven floors, absent ramps, and long distances between classrooms. She also found a school family: a principal and fellow teachers who adjusted duties, provided encouragement, and treated her as a full member of staff. Her family managed household responsibilities and provided transport assistance, allowing her to conserve energy for teaching. Her story is one of resilience built through repetition: each year she taught, each parent she convinced through competence, each student she guided, added to a record that made the next year easier. Her arts-based material expressed pride in being a teacher and a desire to be respected for that identity, not pitied for disability. Through the Social Model, her story shows that the barrier was not her mobility alone, but the interaction between her mobility and a school built without ramps, with distant rooms, and with timetables that assumed easy movement. Through place, it shows that a single accessible classroom assignment or a reconsidered meeting venue could change a whole day. Her message to fellow PWDs, to be stronger and braver, is not a slogan; it is a summary of a strategy that worked for 14 years, but that should not have to depend on individual bravery alone.

Cross-case comparison: what is common, what differs. Across the three journeys, common patterns are clear. All three experienced scrutiny, task inclusion without full social belonging, and environmental barriers. All three relied on family, coworkers, supervisors, and some institutional support. All three turned support into confidence, burnout prevention, and growth. Yet differences matter. Visibility shaped scrutiny: PWD-01 faced curiosity, PWD-02 faced disbelief, PWD-03 faced doubt about competence. Disability type shaped accommodation: lighting for PWD-01, flexible shifts and task rotation for PWD-02, accessible movement and scheduling for PWD-03. Sector shaped institutional support: DepEd training and school-head flexibility mattered for PWD-03, private-company HMO and supervisor flexibility mattered for PWD-02, and tutorial-centre collegiality mattered for PWD-01. Gender and life stage also shaped experience: all three participants are women who navigated motherhood, marriage, and family care alongside work, and family support was therefore both a resource and a negotiation. These differences confirm

Intersectionality: there is no single PWD experience, and no single accommodation checklist will suffice. What is common is the mechanism: when support was consistent, tailored, and relational, employment was sustained; when it was inconsistent, generic, or dependent on one person, employment became precarious. That mechanism, rather than any single barrier or support, is the study's central finding.

Implications for employers and school heads. For employers and school heads, the findings translate into five concrete actions. First, co-create an individual accommodation plan with each PWD employee, covering lighting, seating, schedule, task rotation, rest breaks, movement, and meeting venues, and review it at least annually and after any change of supervisor, building, or role. Second, train supervisors and coworkers in disability-specific awareness, focusing on respectful communication, privacy, the legitimacy of invisible conditions, and the difference between helping and intruding. Third, audit both task inclusion and social belonging: who is assigned work, who is invited, who speaks, and who is considered for informal leadership. Fourth, formalise flexible procedures for temporary adjustment, coverage, and return-to-work after leave, so that a flare or a health crisis does not become a career crisis. Fifth, ensure equal access to training, promotion criteria, and leadership opportunities, and include career goals in accommodation plans. None of these actions requires large capital outlay, but all require leadership commitment and follow-through. A principal or manager who models belief and flexibility does more for inclusion than a policy document that no one reads.

Implications for local government and policy. For local government units, PDAO, PSWDO, DOLE, and DepEd, the findings point to coordination and predictability. Publish clear, accessible information on PWD benefits, procedures, and entitlements in formats that are themselves accessible. Train frontline staff so that support does not depend on which officer is on duty. Coordinate focal persons across agencies and schools so that an employed PWD does not have to navigate multiple systems alone. Monitor whether support reaches employed PWDs, not only those seeking work, and track retention, accommodation, and career progression, not only hiring counts. Fund capital accessibility where needed, ramps, lighting, accessible toilets, and safe travel, and inspect schools and workplaces for compliance. These steps would close the gap between policy and practice that this study and the wider literature document. They would also reduce reliance on family as a substitute for systems, which is both inequitable and unsustainable. The Citizen's Charter of South Cotabato and the PDAO structure provide a foundation; what is needed is case management, follow-up, and accountability.

Limitations and future research in depth. The limitations of this study should be read as directions for future work, not as dismissals of its findings. The sample of three, all employed, all in General Santos City, all with long tenure, cannot represent PWDs who are unemployed, underemployed, or who left work, nor those in rural municipalities, in other sectors, or with other disability types, including intellectual, psychosocial, and sensory disabilities beyond visual disability. The change from a proposed seven participants to a final three, disclosed in the audit trail, limits breadth, but the depth and triangulation provide transferable insights. Future research should therefore include larger and more diverse samples, longitudinal follow-up that tracks participants through changes in health, supervisor, and workplace, employer and coworker perspectives to complement PWD voice, and quantitative measures of accommodation, retention, promotion, and well-being. Mixed-methods studies could test whether the mechanism identified here, consistent, tailored, relational support leading to confidence, burnout prevention, and growth, holds in larger samples and in other provinces. Such work would strengthen the evidence base for the policy and employer actions recommended here, and would ensure that the next generation of PWD workers does not have to rely on extraordinary resilience to achieve ordinary inclusion.

Conclusion:

This narrative inquiry followed three employed persons with disabilities in South Cotabato through 50 person-years of work and found that workplace inclusion is not a single hiring decision but a continuing, relational accomplishment. Participants experienced curiosity and the weight of being watched, belonging in tasks but selective exclusion socially, and environmental barriers specific to their disabilities. They were sustained by family as the first line of support, by coworkers and supervisors as everyday enablers, by institutional and government support that was present but uneven, and by accommodations tailored to disability type. That support built confidence, buffered stress and burnout, opened pathways to skill development and career growth, and sustained hope for the future.

The study's central message is that inclusion becomes sustainable when everyday human support and tailored environmental adjustments align, and when formal systems become predictable rather than dependent on individual goodwill. For employers and school heads, this means formalising individual accommodation plans, training supervisors and coworkers in respectful, disability-specific support, auditing both task inclusion and social belonging, and ensuring equal access to training and promotion. For local government units, PDAO, PSWDO, DOLE, and DepEd, it means making benefits and procedures clear, accessible, and coordinated, monitoring whether support reaches employed PWDs, and closing the gap between policy and practice. For PWDs and their families, the participants' own message endures: continue to be stronger and braver, and keep claiming a place in workplaces that must learn to include fully. Future research should broaden the sample to include unemployed and underemployed PWDs, employer perspectives, and other municipalities in South Cotabato, and should combine narrative depth with longitudinal and quantitative measures of retention and career progression. If those steps are taken, the stories in this study will not remain exceptions sustained by extraordinary support, but will become the ordinary experience of PWDs in an inclusive workforce.

The study also carries a message for the wider research community. Narrative inquiry, arts-based methods, and document analysis together allowed this study to show not only what barriers exist, but how they are lived, negotiated, and sometimes overcome. That methodological combination should be used more widely in Philippine disability research, alongside surveys and programme evaluations. When PWDs are invited to tell their stories in their own forms, drawings, poems, and interviews, they reveal mechanisms that checklists miss. When those stories are triangulated with policy documents, the gap between promise and practice becomes visible in concrete terms. Future researchers who adopt this approach will be better placed to inform policy that is not only well-intentioned, but well-implemented. In the end, the measure of success for this study is not only that it was completed, but that it is used: by a school head who adjusts a timetable, by a supervisor who believes a worker's pain, by a local government officer who follows up on a benefit, and by a PWD who reads these stories and feels less alone in claiming a place at work.

References:

Abed, M. G., Abed, L. G., & Shackelford, T. K. (2024). A qualitative, small-sample study of employment challenges for people with disabilities in Saudi Arabia. Healthcare, 12(3), 346. https://doi.org/10.3390/healthcare12030346

Absolor, J. L. (2023). The lived experiences of the persons with disabilities (PWDs) in the workplace: A phenomenological study. International Journal of Social Science and Human Research, 6(3). https://doi.org/10.47191/ijsshr/v6-i3-31

Albert, J. R. G. (2026, April 15). Who suffers most when oil prices spike?. Philippine Institute for Development Studies. http://doi.org/10.62986/pn2026.09

Albert, J. R. G., Bayudan-Dacuycuy, C., Quisumbing, A.R., Basillote, L.B., Cabalfin, D.L.D., Vargas, A.R.P., Luzon, P.E.D., & Mahmoud, M.A. (2025). Gender equality, disability, and social inclusion in the Philippines: Progress, challenges, and opportunities in SDG 5 and SDG 10. Philippine Institute for Development Studies Discussion Paper Series, 2025-35. https://doi.org/10.62986/dp2025.35

Anglmayer, I. (2020). Implementation of the employment equality directive in light of the UN CRPD. European Parliamentary Research Service. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2020/654206/EPRS_STU(2020)654206_EN.pdf

Asian Productivity Organization. (2025). Enhancing disability-inclusive employment policies in Asia: Challenges, good practices, and policy recommendations. APO Publications. https://www.apo-tokyo.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/Enhancing-Disability-Inclusive-Employment-Policies-in-Asia_PUB.pdf

Avecilla, J. E. V., Cedeno, F.J.C., Gloriani, M.M.L., Millevo, M.C.T., Sanchez, Z.B., & Andalecio, A.V.P. (2024). Breaking down employment barriers for PWDs: Disability inclusion in the Philippine hospitality industry. Journal of Tourism, Culinary, and Entrepreneurship, 4(1), 1-16. https://doi.org/10.37715/jtce.v4i1.3529

Balala, K. A. M., Claveria, H. S., Favia, J. M., Quintana, M., Santural, R. L., Quijano, E. D., & Estrella, P. J. A. (2024). An action research on employability assessment, challenges, and coping mechanism of persons with

disabilities (PWDs) in applying for a job. International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science, 8(7), 841-861. https://doi.org/10.47772/ijriss.2024.807068

Billote, W. J. S., Ponce, R., Ponce, T. E., Arca, J. M., Cabrito, Ma. K. C., Candel, C. J., Dasig, C., Gato, L. J., Regidor, I. N., & Zabala, V. J. (2022). Issues and challenges faced by persons with disabilities in Basco, Batanes. JPAIR Multidisciplinary Research, 48(1), 1. https://doi.org/10.7719/jpair.v48i1.401

Booth, J. E., & Lup, D. (2024). Enabling inclusion: An analysis of positive and negative outcomes of discretionary work arrangements for employees with disabilities. British Journal of Industrial Relations, 63(3), 394-412. https://doi.org/10.1111/bjir.12862

Braga, I. K. (2025, October 17). South Cotabato leads SOCCSKSARGEN as fastest-growing economy in 2024. South Cotabato Official Website. https://southcotabato.gov.ph/south-cotabato-leads-soccsksargen-as-fastest-growing-economy-in-2024/

Buhari, A. M., Sultan Ibrahim, S. A., & Mohamed Radhil, N. I. (2025). Exploring factors influencing employment opportunities among people with disabilities: A scoping review. Malaysian Journal of Medicine & Health Sciences, 21. https://medic.upm.edu.my/upload/dokumen/20250910075603MJMHS_2124.pdf

Calderon, O., Giffords, E. D., & Kane, K. (2023). What do we need? Accommodations in the workplace: People with lupus share their work experiences. Disability Studies Quarterly, 42(3-4). https://doi.org/10.18061/dsq.v42i3-4.7705

Centeno, M. A. M. G., Guerrero, E. T., Morañas, T. P., & Supat, A. R. B. (2024). More than meets the eye: The lived experiences of individuals with psychosocial disability. https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.25488.72965

Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2000). Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research. Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Colella, A., & Boehm, S. A. (2026). Disability and employment in transition: Challenges, innovations. Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior, 13, 277-307. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-110622-055845

Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. (2018). General comment No. 6 (2018) on equality and non-discrimination (CRPD/C/GC/6). United Nations. https://docs.un.org/en/CRPD/C/GC/6

Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. (2022). General comment No. 8 (2022) on the right of persons with disabilities to work and employment (CRPD/C/GC/8). United Nations. https://docs.un.org/en/CRPD/C/GC/8

Crenshaw, Kimberle (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics. University of Chicago Legal Forum, 1989(1). https://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/uclf/vol1989/iss1/8

Creswell, J.W. and Poth, C.N. (2018) Qualitative inquiry and research design choosing among five approaches (4th ed.) SAGE Publications, Inc.

Cruz, J. M. D., Encinares, G. Y. A., Garces, F. A. D., & Ramirez, C.S. (2024). Quantifying employment barriers for people with disabilities: A statistical investigation into inclusivity challenges. Journal of Public Health Sciences, 3(2), 77-98. https://doi.org/10.56741/jphs.v3i02.579

Cunningham, J. B. (2023). Defining the climate for inclusiveness and multiculturalism: Linking to context. Adm. Sci., 13(4), 100. https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci13040100

Cychosz, M., Romeo, R., Söderström, M., Scaff, C., Ganek, H., Cristià, A., Casillas, M., Barbaro, K. de, Bang, J. Y., & Weisleder, A. (2020). Longform recordings of everyday life: Ethics for best practices. Behavior Research Methods, 52(5), 1951. https://doi.org/10.3758/s13428-020-01365-9

Dahal, N. (2025). Qualitative data analysis: Reflections, procedures, and some points for consideration. Frontiers in Research Metrics and Analytics, 10, 1669578. https://doi.org/10.3389/frma.2025.1669578

Dati, M. (2025, November 26). South Cotabato clinches 2nd place in 2025 RMSKPA. South Cotabato Official Website. https://southcotabato.gov.ph/south-cotabato-clinches-2nd-place-in-2025-rmskpa/

Degener, T. (2023). The human rights model of disability in times of triage. Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research, 26(1), 437-449. https://doi.org/10.16993/sjdr.1088

Dela Cruz, J. M., Encinares, G. Y. A., Garces, F. A. D., & Ramirez, C. S. (2024). Quantifying employment barriers for people with disabilities: A statistical investigation into inclusivity challenges. Journal of Public Health Sciences (JPHS), 3(2), 77-98. https://doi.org/10.56741/jphs.v3i02.579

Etikan, I., Musa, S. A., & Alkassim, R. S. (2016). Comparison of convenience sampling and purposive sampling. American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics, 5(1), 1–4. https://doi.org/10.11648/j.ajtas.20160501.11

Ezeonu, C. T., Obu, D. C., Daniyan, O. W., Asiegbu, U. V., Oyim-Elechi, O., Edafioghor, L. O., & Okoro, K. J. (2021). Coping strategies of caregivers of persons with a disability attending a special education center in Abakaliki, Southeast Nigeria: A cross-sectional study. Pan African Medical Journal, 39(249). https://doi.org/10.11604/pamj.2021.39.249.26884

Fabeyo, S. (2022). Ensuring ADA compliance in AI hiring: Review, analysis, and disability discrimination framework [Doctoral proposal]. Middle Georgia State University. https://comp.mga.edu/static/media/doctoralpapers/2025_Fabeyo_0715160954.pdf

Fajardo, J. J. C., & Velasco, M. S. (2024). Organizational environment and job performance of public sector employees with disabilities. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/378073182_Organizational_Environment_and_Job_Performance_of_Public_Sector_Employees_with_Disabilities

Fang, Y. C., Ren, Y. H., Chen, J. Y., Chin, T., Yuan, Q., & Lin, C. L. (2021). Inclusive leadership and career sustainability: Mediating roles of supervisor developmental feedback and thriving at work. Front. Psychol., 12. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.671663

Fenta, A. A. (2024). Assessing the socioeconomic challenges of graduate unemployment on the community: the case of Sekela Woreda, Ethiopia. Cogent Social Sciences, 10(1). https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2024.2306922

Futagami, S., Kettunen, E., & Jaussaud, J. (2026). Work ability, inclusion, and human resource development of disabled people. Human Resource Development International, 1–24. https://doi.org/10.1080/13678868.2026.2622080

Galileo, V. J. (2025). Hospitality for all: Examining the awareness and employment readiness for PWDs in Davao City's restaurant industry. Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Studies, 3(3), 12-34. https://al-kindipublishers.org/index.php/jths/article/download/11105/10072

Ghimire, A., & Neupane, M. S. (2024). A generation at risk: The unseen consequences of Nepal's nursing shortage on undergraduate nursing students clinical education. BMC Nursing, 23(1). https://doi.org/10.1186/s12912-024-02578-5

Goffman, E. (1963). Stigma: Notes on the management of spoiled identity. Prentice-Hall.

Gumasing, M. J. J., Del Castillo, T. R. P., Palermo, A. G. L., Tabino, J. T. G., & Gatchalian, J. T. (2025). Enhancing accessibility in Philippine public bus systems: Addressing the needs of persons with disabilities. Disabilities, 5(2), 45. https://doi.org/10.3390/disabilities5020045

Ikutegbe, P., Randle, M., Sheridan, L., Gordon, R., Allingham, S., Connolly, A., & Dolnicar, S. (2025). Enablers of successful employment outcomes for people with disabilities. Journal of Management & Organization, 31(1), 73–89. https://doi.org/10.1017/jmo.2024.46

Imbong, M. F., & Pielago, M. (2021) Lived experiences on employment of persons with disability in Mandaue City, Cebu, Philippines, International Forum Journal, 24(1), 214-245. https://journals.aiias.edu/info/article/view/337

Jetha, A., & Gignac, M. A. M. (2023). Changing experiences, needs, and supports across the life course for workers living with disabilities. In Wahrendorf, M., Chandola, T., Descatha, A. (Eds), Handbook of life course occupational health (pp. 377-398). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-30492-7_24

Jetha, A., Shamaee, A., Tompa, E., Smith, P., Bültmann, U., Bonaccio, S., Tucker, L. B., Norman, C., Banks, C. G., & Gignac, M. A. M. (2023). The future of work in shaping the employment inclusion of young adults with disabilities:

A qualitative study. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal, 42(9), 75–91. https://doi.org/10.1108/EDI-06-2022-0154

Jetha, A., Shamaee, A., Bonaccio, S., Gignac, M. A. M., Tucker, L. B., Tompa, E., Bültmann, U., Norman, C. D., Banks, C. G., & Smith, P. M. (2021). Fragmentation in the future of work: A horizon scan examining the impact of the changing nature of work on workers experiencing vulnerability. American Journal of Industrial Medicine, 64(8), 649–666. https://doi.org/10.1002/ajim.23262

Johnson, J. L., Adkins, D., & Chauvin, S. W. (2020). A review of the quality indicators of rigor in qualitative research. American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education, 84(1), 7120. https://doi.org/10.5688/ajpe7120

Jonsson, E. (2025). Research on inclusion and diversity. Mercuri Urval Research Institute. https://www.mercuriurval.com/globalassets/muri/research-on-inclusion-and-diversity-2025.pdf

Khater, M., Aboelazm, K.S., Imad, D., Chami, Y., & Aly, H. (2025). The role of assistive technology in reinforcing the rights of persons with disabilities to employment from a legal perspective. International Journal of Law and Management. http://www.emerald.com/ijlma/article-pdf/doi/10.1108/IJLMA-04-2025-0151/10337312/ijlma-04-2025-0151en.pdf

Kim, S., & Adu-Ampong, E. A. (2025). Disabilities, functionings and capabilities: the capability approach in accessible tourism. Current Issues in Tourism, 28(2), 272–286. https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2023.2300989

Kuknor, S., & Saadan, S. (2025). Advancing diversity research: A systematic literature review for hypotheses development on inclusion and organizational outcomes. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal, 1-40. https://doi.org/10.1108/EDI-04-2025-0246

Lee, P., & Lee, B. (2022). Lived experiences of domestic violence in women and their children: A phenomenological study. Healthcare, 10(8), 1556. https://doi.org/10.3390/healthcare10081556

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). Naturalistic inquiry. Sage Publications, Inc.

Magna Carta For Disabled Persons, Republic Act No. 9442 (2007). https://lawphil.net/statutes/repacts/ra2007/ra_9442_2007.html

Marinaci, T., Russo, C., Savarese, G., Stornaiuolo, G., Faiella, F., Carpinelli, L., Navarra, M., Marsico, G., & Mollo, M. (2023). An inclusive workplace approach to disability through assistive technologies: A systematic review and thematic analysis of the literature. Societies, 13(11), 231. https://doi.org/10.3390/soc13110231

Markou, N., & Papakonstantinou, D. (2025). Navigating invisible disability disclosure and workplace inclusion: Employers' attitudes and workplace policies. Disabilities, 5(2), 37. https://doi.org/10.3390/disabilities5020037

Matthews, B., & Ross, L. (2010). Research methods: A practical guide for the social sciences. Pearson Education.

Mara, D., & Vlad, D. (2024). Strategies for social integration in the workplace for different categories of socially disadvantaged people. In Workplace social inclusion (pp. 68-104). Bentham Science Publisher. https://doi.org/10.2174/9789815165494124010008

Murtiasih, M., Junaidi, A. A. R., Dewantoro, D. A., & Irvan, M. (2024). An analysis of social discrimination forms of workplace inclusion for people with disabilities: A literature study. Education for All, 2(1), 87-94. https://doi.org/10.57142/inclusion.v2i1.38

Musonda, K., Simui, F., & Kalimaposo, K. (2025). Lived experiences of persons with physical disabilities in low-resourced communities. A 10-year literature disclosure, 2015-2025. European Journal of Special Education Research, 11(7). http://dx.doi.org/10.46827/ejse.v11i7.6439

Muthanna, A., & Alduais, A. (2023). The interrelationship of reflexivity, sensitivity and integrity in conducting interviews. Behavioral Sciences, 13(3), 218. https://doi.org/10.3390/bs13030218

Nagra, H., Mines, R.A., & Dana, Z. (2025). Exploring the impact of digital peer support services on meeting unmet needs within an employee assistance program: Retrospective cohort study. JMIR Publications, 12. https://doi.org/10.2196/68221

National Privacy Commission (2012). Republic act 10173 data privacy act of 2012. https://privacy.gov.ph/data-privacy-act/

Naz, F. (2020). Difficulties faced by the persons with disabilities for getting employment. Pakistan Social Sciences Review, 4, 647. https://doi.org/10.35484/pssr.2020(4-ii)52

Niekerk, Z. V., Maguvhe, M. O., & Magano, M. D. (2022). How education, training and development support the wellness of employees with disabilities. African Journal of Disability, 11. https://doi.org/10.4102/ajod.v11i0.882

Okutayeva, S. T., Smagulova, Z., Mukanova, A. S., Askerov, E., & Metsik, O. (2024). Inclusive employment: barriers and ways to overcome them. Entrepreneurship and Sustainability Issues, 12(1), 209-222. https://doi.org/10.9770/jesi.2024.12.1

Oliver, M. (1983). Social work with disabled people. Macmillan Education Ltd. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-86058-6

Philippine Health Research Ethics Board (2022). Philippine national ethical guidelines for research involving human participants 2022.

Philippine Statistics Authority. (2025, December 10). Labor force participation rises to 63.6% in October 2025: Special release on the employment status of persons with disabilities. https://psa.gov.ph/statistics/labor-force-survey

Pinheiro, A., & Palma-Moreira, A. (2025). Job satisfaction, perceived performance and work regime: What is the relationship between these variables? Administrative Sciences, 15(5), 175. https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci15050175

Pletzen, E. van, Kabaso, B. N., & Lorenzo, T. (2021). Community-based workers' capacity to develop inclusive livelihoods for youth with disabilities in Botswana. African Journal of Disability, 10. https://doi.org/10.4102/ajod.v10i0.851

Ragmoun, W., & Abdulaziz, A. (2024). Facilitating sustainable employment for people with physical disabilities: A pathway to inclusion: An ISM-MICMAC Approach. Journal of Disability Research, 3(6). https://doi.org/10.57197/jdr-2024-0070

Rajapakse, R. P. C. R. (2024). Enhancing workplace inclusion for individuals with disabilities through supported employment programmes: Empowering individuals and enhancing mental health and work-based skills through CBT and social skills training as key approaches. OSFPreprints. https://doi.org/10.31219/osf.io/pqjm2

Rana, S., Murray, N., Sapkota, K., & Gurung, P. (2022). Lived employment experiences of persons with physical disabilities in Nepal: A phenomenological study. Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research, 24(1), 136-150. https://doi.org/10.16993/sjdr.860

Rementina, R. M. J. A. (2025). Education to employment: Exploring common transition support experiences and outcomes among Filipinos and Americans with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) [Master's thesis]. University of Minnesota. https://conservancy.umn.edu/bitstreams/3babf427-9c7f-4776-ad4c-f0f833196b4d/download

Ru, O. S., & Jamil, R. (2026). Institutional framework for neurodiversity employment. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal, 1-25. https://doi.org/10.1108/EDI-05-2024-0226

Sansfaçon, A. P., Gravel, É., & Gelly, M. A. (2024). Dealing with scam in online qualitative research: Strategies and ethical considerations. International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 23. https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069231224610

Sarkar, R. (2023). Understanding disability and discrimination. International Education & Research Journal, 9(8), 33-36. https://ierj.in/journal/index.php/ierj/article/view/2887

Seva, R. R. (2020). A productivity assessment of PWD employees in a Philippine company. DLSU Business & Economics Review, 29(2), 93-103. https://doi.org/10.59588/2243-786X.1135

Shaw, J., Wickenden, M., Thompson, S. C., & Mader, P. (2022). Achieving disability inclusive employment – Are the current approaches deep enough? Journal of International Development. 34(5), 942-963. https://doi.org/10.1002/jid.3692

Sharma, R. H., Asselin, R., Stainton, T., & Hole, R. (2025). Ableism and employment: A scoping review of the literature. Social Sciences, 14(2), 67. https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci14020067

Soeker, M. S. (2020). A descriptive, qualitative study of the challenges that individuals with autism spectrum disorder experience when transitioning from skills training programs into the open labor market in Cape Town, South Africa. Work, 65(4), 733. https://doi.org/10.3233/wor-203127

Sumacot, R. M., Magdaleno Jr, S., Pasculado, M. R. J., Aguelo, A., Pia, J. M., Padilla, J., ... & Siega, V. (2026). Evaluating of disability support programs in Maasin City, Philippines: Bridging gaps in social inclusion in Southeast Asia. Ho Chi Minh City Open University Journal of Science-Social Sciences, 108-122. https://doi.org/10.46223/HCMCOUJS.soci.en.16.3.3868.2026

Sundar, V., & Brucker, D. L. (2023). Work limitations as a moderator of the relationship between job crafting and work performance: Results from an SEM analysis of cross-sectional survey data. Journal of Occupational Rehabilitation, 33(1), 107–120. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10926-022-10055-6

Tan, M. S. S., Valeriano, J. C., De Peralta, I. C. S., Jim, J. T., Abrogar, D. L. S., Carlos, A. N. S., & Pepito, V. C. F. (2026). Implementation issues of Republic Act 10754 (An act expanding the benefits and privileges of persons with disability) in the Philippines: A qualitative study. International Journal of Health Governance, 1-17. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJHG-05-2025-0055

Tarrayo, H. C., Ortiz, R. R. L., & David, J. E. A. (2024). E-Skills levels, needs, and challenges of persons with disabilities: A case of Calbayog City, Samar, Philippines. Innovations, 79, 1171–1189.

Tompa, E., Mofidi, A., Jetha, A., Lahey, P., & Buettgen, A. (2022). Development and implementation of a framework for estimating the economic benefits of an accessible and inclusive society. Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion, 41(3), 318–339. https://doi.org/10.1108/EDI-07-2020-0186

Tryana, M. G. P., Anggraeni, D. D. R., Yanto, V. A., Fikriyyah, J., Mareti, D. A., & Hamidah, S. (2024). Mengenali potensi dan pengalaman karir individu para disabilitas. Garuda: Jurnal Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan dan Filsafat, 2(2), 164-172. https://doi.org/10.59581/garuda.v2i2.3232

Trezzini, B., Schüpbach, S., Schuller, V., & Bickenbach, J. (2022). Coping strategies of disabled people facing barriers to their participation in education, vocational training and employment. Alter, 16(3), 73-89. https://doi.org/10.4000/9ifd

United Nations General Assembly. (2006). Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities (A/RES/61/106). United Nations. https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/588742

The Valuable 500. (2022). The Valuable Truth 2022. https://www.thevaluable500.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/The-Valuable-Truth-2022.pdf

Van Berkel, R., & Breit, E. (2024). Organizational practices for the inclusion of people with disabilities. A scoping review. Journal of Occupational Rehabilitation, 35, 469-478. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10926-024-10228-5

Wickenden, M., Mader, P., Thompson, S. C., & Shaw, J. (2022). Mainstreaming disability inclusive employment in international development. Journal of International Development, 34(5), 933-941. https://doi.org/10.1002/jid.3679

World Bank. (2025). Philippines economic update, December 2025: Growth corridors - Pathways out of poverty. http://hdl.handle.net/10986/44081

Wu, X., Almeida, S., Schulz, R., & O'Brien, M. (2026). Barriers and inclusive initiatives: A systematic literature review of women's employment in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics workplaces. The Economic and Labour Relations Review, 1-19. https://doi.org/10.1017/elr.2026.10064

Zero Project. (2025). Zero Project Report 2025: Innovative solutions for inclusive employment. https://zeroproject.org/fileadmin/root_zeroproject/Downloads/Publications/2025_Zero-Project-Report_Employment-ICT_accessible.pdf

Zhang, J. (2024). Analysis and research on the survival and employment situations of disabled populations. Frontiers in Business, Economics and Management, 16(2), 148-151. https://doi.org/10.54097/t66hv168