

Challenges confronting persons with disabilities in Talaingod, Davao del Norte

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Abstract

This study critically analyzed the implementation of the Magna Carta for Persons with Disability (RA 9442) in Talaingod, Davao del Norte, using a qualitative case study approach. Through in-depth interviews with persons with disabilities (PWDs) and key informant interviews with program implementers, the research aimed to uncover challenges faced by PWDs in various domains covered by RA 9442. Thematic Analysis revealed obstacles in employment, education, health, telecommunications, transportation, and accessibility. Employment challenges encompassed access mobility, limited socio-economic programs, and skill limitations. PWDs faced social, financial, and physical constraints, while health challenges included information dissemination and financial assistance issues. Transportation obstacles comprised social barriers and knowledge gaps. Accessibility issues involved physical and social barriers, with limited access to government services. Despite some support from implementers, challenges like limited funds, tight timelines, discrimination, and inaccessible facilities were acknowledged. This study underscores the pressing issues confronting PWDs in Talaingod, informing policymakers and implementers to enhance RA 9442 implementation for the improved well-being of PWDs.

Keywords: *persons with disability, PWD, magna carta for PWD, qualitative research, program implementation, policy making*

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Introduction

This study explored the peculiar experiences of persons with disabilities in Talaingod, Davao del Norte, which is challenged by geographical and financial limitations. Given the hindrances and limitations of persons with disabilities in remote areas, the study aims to significantly contribute to the development of mechanisms to vigorously implement the laws that safeguard the rights of persons with disabilities. Furthermore, it seeks to reveal meaningful recommendations that would help enhance existing policy monitoring and execution and evaluation mechanisms.

Methodology

This study was descriptive in design and qualitative in approach, particularly using the case study approach. A case study is a strategy of inquiry in which the researcher explores in-depth a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals. Case studies are distinguished by their exclusive focus on a particular case and their use of a full variety of evidence, such as existing documents, observations, and interviews (Creswell, 2012). Moreover, qualitative methodology, particularly in-depth interview a method of collecting the data needed in the study. In-depth interviews are a qualitative research method that allows researchers to collect rich and detailed information about how individuals experience, understand, and explain life events (Patton, 2019). Lastly, this study focused on the case of persons with disabilities in Talaingod, Davao del Norte. Through this approach, research questions were addressed based on actual accounts and experiences of persons with disabilities

Findings

The results indicated several challenges in the various aspects of the lives of the people with special needs such as access and mobility, limited number of socio-economic programs for PWDs, limitation on skills and qualifications, social and behavioral constraints, financial constraints to education, physical constraints, social obstacles, lack of knowledge and awareness, inadequate dissemination of information, financial constraints, physical barriers and social barriers. Despite these challenges, some members of the class of the

people with special needs were still be able to enjoy minimal opportunities such as cash for work and honorariums.

In terms of education, people with special needs encounter problems such as being involved as victims in cases of bullying. Financial constraints also hinder their Education since people with special needs require costlier ways to live and thrive. There is little to no educational support provided to them which leads ultimately to just dropping out of school due to extreme poverty. For instance, some members may not only have speech or hearing impairments, but some of them are also physically incapable to move from one place to another. This issue in mobility hampers their compliance in requirements for enrolment. Some may have support from their loving families, some may not and are just basically trying to live by each day without assistance nor any form of support. This issue in mobility hampers people with special needs in a way that sometimes, it is just physically impossible for them to try to enroll in school since this entails long processes that will also physically challenge their disabled bodies. Although the implementers try to provide educational assistance for them, the limited funds cannot suffice to the needs of the entire class. There is also not a specific program specific to the educational needs of these people.

With respect to health, there were not much available and accessible health services for people with special needs because of poor dissemination of information from the local government's responsible departments and the subjects. If there were any programs established by the local government, these programs do not become materialized, nor do they happen at all. Financial assistance could be given through providing minimum benefits even merely in procuring medication, but some members are not able to avail. Despite efforts of the implementers to conduct medical missions, health lectures, and free medication, they struggle because of very limited budget allocation.

In terms of transportation and accessibility, people with special needs are unaware of existing privileges provided under the implementing law of Republic Act No. 9442 (RA 9442), nor do the drivers of the public utility vehicles inform them of their designated seats. The accessibility lanes are not fully maximized. There are no accessibility lanes for people with special needs, only for other classes such as the senior citizens and the pregnant women. There are establishments that do not provide a friendly environment for people with special needs. For instance, identification cards are still required despite the presence of the person

with special needs himself. There is also an unspoken discrimination for people with special needs and this is common in living in a day-to-day basis. The implementers mentioned the privileges in transportation, such as fare discounts and priority access, and they testified as to the reality of people with special needs getting discriminated in public transportation. The implementers also discussed the noncompliance of government buildings and institutions with building standards. However, the political and civil rights of people with special needs are otherwise valued and respected, as shown in the intent of the legislators or the framers in implementing the law of Republic Act No. 9442 (RA 9442) or the Magna Carta for Persons with Disabilities.

Conclusion

The study shows that people with special needs face various challenges surrounding the many different aspects of life, such as employment, education, health, telecommunication, transportation, and accessibility. Despite the persistence of these challenges, the implementers try to materialize the objectives set forth in implementing the law for people with special needs through giving assistance, privileges, and support, in whatever way possible and practical to lessen their troubles and establish a healthier environment and place for them. In the process of providing policies for the people with special needs, the implementers also face several problems that need immediate but well-planned and long-term solutions. These problems include, but do not limit to, limitations in budget, tight program time frames, and combatting discrimination that is otherwise inevitable.

The study also indicates that people with special needs have limited access to government social services and auxiliary social services. Therefore, governments and other stakeholders need to address these challenges and provide more inclusive policies and programs that cater to the needs of people with special needs.

There are also significant implications that can serve as guide for or influence, policy and practices. Firstly, it offers valuable policy recommendations that can guide the formulation of disability-related policies at different levels, including local, regional, and national levels. These recommendations encompass measures such as strengthening enforcement mechanisms, allocating increased budgets for disability programs, and

establishing support services and infrastructure to address the specific challenges faced by individuals with disabilities in the area. Secondly, the research is crucial in raising awareness and promoting sensitivity among policymakers, government officials, and community leaders regarding the rights and needs of people with disabilities. This awareness can pave the way for targeted training programs and awareness campaigns to engage key disability-related policy and practice stakeholders. Lastly, the research contributes to capacity building efforts by informing the development of training initiatives for government officials, service providers, educators, and community leaders. These initiatives are designed to enhance their comprehension of disability rights and equip them with the necessary skills to implement and enforce the law's provisions effectively.

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