

# Employability of Persons With Disabilities

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**Abstract:** *Employment is a vital factor in the growth of a country's economy. One of its growths is making the persons with disabilities part of the workforce by developing their processes and environment. It has been reported that PWDs shows an exemplary work performance. However, many are still in doubt on their work-related skills like soft and hard skills which decreases the employment rate. Considering this, the researchers are encouraged the researchers to investigate the specific skills must the PWDs must have to be employed and the kind of disabilities that most likely to be employable in Bulakan, Bulacan. To answer this, the researchers employed a descriptive method that describes the soft skills, hard skills and kind of disabilities that employers preferred for the PWDs. The technique used was a survey method through an adapted questionnaire. It utilizes Likert scale to measure the skills and kind of disability considered employable. Based on the survey, service businesses is dominant with 57% and businesses operated for one to five years with 72%. The most considered disability in employment is medical disability with a mean score of 3.51. Openness to criticism scored the highest for soft skills with a mean score of 4.63 while management skills scored the highest for hard skills with a mean score of 4.63. With the utilization of Dependent Sample T-test, it shows that there is a significant difference between soft skills and hard skills which concludes that employers prefer soft skills over hard skills in hiring PWDs.*

**Keywords—** employability, persons with disabilities, soft skills, hard skills

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Globalization influences the development of employment of a country. It helps in the increment of employment opportunities to people, and it enhances the human resource management of the organizations and businesses. Majority of human resource professionals had provided a suitable work environment for their person with disabilities employees as an extended obligation to ensure that they can perform their work efficiently and safely. They have considered the various factors such as the resources and size of the employing entity, the nature of work and the nature and degree of the disability of an individual to accommodate them and at the same time to make them efficient in their work. (Marshall, 2019). In addition, human resources and other high-level managers generally have favorable attitudes toward workers with disabilities and expressed a moderate level of commitment to hiring workers with disabilities.

However, unemployment of PWDs is still an issue even in the first world country like United States. Only 29% of Americans ages 16 to 64 with disabilities are employed as of July 2018 in comparison to 75% of Americans without disabilities which shows the gap of the employment opportunities (Accenture, 2018). Although there are several laws and regulations in different countries regarding this, businesses seem to still be reluctant in hiring persons with disabilities. In the same study conducted by Kaye, Jans and Jones (2011), the main barriers in employing persons with disabilities are the lack of awareness of the disability and accommodation, financial concern and fear of legal liability. It is also evident in the Philippines that persons with disabilities have a low employment rate due to the lack of

awareness and accommodation for their different needs, inaccessible work environment and infrastructure and poor compliance of the government and private corporations (Ambiong, 2021). Another barrier confronted by the persons with disabilities is their soft and hard skills in which may have difficulty in acquiring them. Due to the poor accessible environment and limited socialization, the ability to develop these skills are limited.

In addition, there is low implementation and awareness of the Republic Act no. 10070 or the Institutional Mechanisms for the Magna Carta for Disabled Persons that ensures the implementation of programs and services in the country, specifically the employment opportunities for persons with disabilities (UP Media & Public Relations Office, 2018). It is evident that employing persons with disabilities is still a challenge to companies and organizations. The innate limitations among PWDs cause management to hire them with reservations (Alson, et.al, 2019). This shows that there are still gaps in the laws regulated to the reality in employing people with disabilities which need to be mended to ensure that the organizations and businesses' environment is suitable for everyone.

The lack of response of the government to this sector became a barrier not only to the person with disabilities but also to the businesses who are considering employing them to ensure a free-discrimination work environment. This matter should be given focus as it can affect the opportunities for everyone and to the economy of the Philippines. Hence, the study aims to pursue the factors considered by employers in employing persons with disabilities.

Given the context of PWD employment, this study discusses the issue of what qualifications a person with a disability should possess in order to obtain a job. It intends to identify businesses such as service, manufacturing, merchandising, retail and agriculture that see PDWs' capabilities as suitable employees. Employing people with disabilities is a difficulty for businesses. PWDs' inherent restrictions prompted management to feel them as a burden, and some hired them with hesitation. The low rate of employment among PWDs, despite their ability to execute a certain profession efficiently, encouraged the researchers to investigate what specific skills may be necessary for a PWD to be on par with employees who do not have special needs.

### 1.1 Statement of the Problem

The general problem of the study is to determine the employability of persons with disabilities. Specifically, the study sought answers to the following questions:

1. How may the respondents be described in terms of:

1.1 nature of business;

1.2 years of business operation?

2. What kinds of disabilities that employers consider employable?

3. What skills do the PWDs possess in order to be hired in terms of:

3.1 soft skills

3.2 hard skills

4. Is there a significant difference between soft skills and hard skills that employers consider employable?

## 2. METHODS OF THE STUDY

The design of the study is a descriptive method using a quantitative approach. It describes the sample population which is the business owners in Bulacan. This method of data collection would be suitable for this study as it aims to discover what skills the employer is considered in hiring a person with disabilities. Moreover, the study used survey methods to gather the necessary data regarding the kinds of disabilities that employers consider employable, and the skills the persons with disabilities possess to be hired.

Overall, the use of frequency, mean, and percentages is used as it is one of the most useful and convenient for obtaining information for the needed information in this study which can be used in widening the employment opportunities of PWDs and enhancing the human resource management of the businesses in Bulacan.

### 2.1 Sample of the Study

There are 1,370 businesses based on the information gathered from the Municipality of Bulakan. The sample population of the study was 65 business owners based on the computation using Raosoft Calculator. In the computation of the sample population, the researchers applied a 10% margin of error and 90% confidence level which results in 65 of the population size. The questionnaire was distributed to businesses through online questionnaires. The researchers used random sampling.

### 2.2 Research Instrument

To gather the needed information, the researchers formulated a questionnaire adapted to the study from Alson, Espela and Urbina (2019) which is divided into 2 parts. The first part of the questionnaire is about the demographic profile and other information of the business owners in Bulacan including the nature of the business and the years of business operations. The second part pertains to the kinds of disabilities that employers consider employable and the skills the persons with disabilities possess in order to be hired using the Likert scale. The questionnaire is validated for its credibility and ensures that each statement will give clarity for the respondents to be able to gather the expected results.

### 2.3. Statistical Analysis

Frequency distribution is a tabular representation of data used in organizing and summarizing the data gathered by determining the percentage of each item. This will be used for the demographic profile of the business owners.

Formula:  $\% = f/n \times 100$

% - percentage

f - frequency

n - total number of respondents

Mean is the average value of each item which will be used in comparing the different sets of data. This will be used to the variables such as soft skills and hard skills.

The Dependent Samples T-Test. This statistical tool compares the means of two independent groups to determine whether there is statistical evidence that the associated population means are significantly different.

Likert scale is a commonly employ in questionnaires which has a degree of opinion or agreement that is obtain from the participants (Bertarm, n.d). This is one of the easy methods to use to gather and analyze data as each order has a corresponding value that cannot be presumed equal. In this study, it will utilize a 5-point scale with the corresponding verbal interpretation of data.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The data collected by the researchers allow for uncovering the corresponding answers to the given questions on the statement of the problem. Through this, the researchers were able to present it using tables and graphs.

**Demographic Profile**

**Table 1. Nature of Business**

Nature of Business	Frequency	Percentage
Service	37	57%
Merchandising	10	15%
Manufacturing	10	15%
Agriculture	1	2%
Retail	7	11%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 1 shows the frequency and percentage on nature of business of the respondents. Majority of the respondents were services, which is fifty-seven percent (57%). Merchandising and manufacturing have the same result, which is fifteen percent (15%). Furthermore, the two lowest natures of business that the researchers collected are retail with eleven percent (11%) and agriculture with two percent (2). In conclusion, most of the businesses in Bulakan are services in nature which can influence in the employment of person with disabilities.

**Table 2. Years of Business Operation**

Years of Business Operation	Frequency	Percentage
1 to 5 years	47	72%
6 to 10 years	11	17%
11 to 15 years	1	2%
Above 15 years	6	9%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 2 illustrates the years of business operation of the respondents. Based on the result, most of the respondents are operating for 1 to 5 years, with forty-seven out of 65 or (72%). Furthermore, eleven or (17%) of them have a business operation for 6 to 10 years, while six or (9%) have a business for almost 15 years. Only one or (2%) respondents that are operating for 11 to 15 years. In conclusion, businesses in Bulakan are just starting up their businesses and do not have stable operations yet.

**Kinds of Disabilities That Employers Consider Employable**

**Table 3. Kinds of Disabilities**

Kinds of Disabilities Considered Employable	Frequency and Percentage					Mean	Interpretation
	5	4	3	2	1		
1. Blind and Visually Impaired	5	9	13	18	20	2.40	Less Considered
2. Deaf	4	18	20	15	8	2.92	Moderately Considered
3. Orthopedically challenged (scoliosis, cerebral palsy, etc.)	6	19	26	9	5	3.18	Moderately Considered
4. Intellectual disability (down syndrome, etc.)	5	10	15	20	15	2.54	Less Considered
5. Learning disability (dyslexia, dysgraphia, etc.)	6	14	21	16	8	2.91	Moderately Considered
6. Autism	4	13	14	18	16	2.55	Less Considered
7. Multiple disability (deaf-blind, visually impaired and intellectual disability, etc.)	4	8	11	16	26	2.20	Less Considered
8. Emotional disorders (bipolar, anxiety, schizophrenia etc.)	5	16	21	16	7	2.94	Moderately Considered
9. Communication disorder, speech and language impairment	11	13	25	8	8	3.17	Moderately Considered
10. Medical disability (diabetes, AIDS, etc.)	18	18	14	9	6	3.51	Considered
<b>OVERALL MEAN</b>						<b>2.83</b>	<b>Moderately Considered</b>

Table 3 shows the kinds of disability that the employer considered employable. The highest level of consideration was computed as the mean of (M= 3.51) on statement 10. It

revealed that as of this study, the employer considered PWDs with Medical Disability such as diabetes, AIDS, etc.

Further analysis of the computed mean reveals that employers will moderate considered the PWDs with Orthopedically challenged (scoliosis, cerebral palsy, etc.) with a mean score of (M= 3.18), while item 9 or communication disorder, speech and language impairment also got a moderate consideration with a mean score (M= 3.17) meaning that the employer also prefers to employ a PWDs with Communication disorder, speech and language impairment. On the other hand the employer has less consideration to employ PWDs with a Multiple disability (deaf-blind, visually impaired and intellectual disability with a mean score of (M= 2.20). The overall mean score of the Kinds of Disabilities That Employers Consider Employable was 2.83 which is considered moderate by the employer, this means that the employers still regard disabilities such as mutism and deafness as barriers to effective employment. It appears that government initiatives and legislation are insufficient to provide employment as a source of income for people with disabilities, as defined.

In the related study by Alson et. al (2019), most of the employers disinclined in employing persons with disabilities as they viewed them to be not efficient and productive in comparison with non-disabled persons. The results from the study are similar to the gathered data in this study because medical disability got the highest ranking. Those people who have medical disability can still do locomotor functions which are relevant in the business operation, considering that most of the businesses in Bulakan are services.

**Skills Do the PWDs Possess in Order to Be Hired**

**Table 4. Qualifications in Soft Skills**

Soft Skills	Frequency and Percentage					Mean	Interpretation
	5	4	3	2	1		
1. Decision-making	3 7	2 2	6	-	-	4.48	Highly Required
2. Leadership skills	2 6	2 8	9	2	-	4.20	Highly Required
3. Teamwork	3 6	1 7	1 0	1	1	4.32	Highly Required
4. Creativity and problem-solving skills	4 0	1 8	6	1	-	4.49	Highly Required

5. Adaptability	4 0	2 1	4	-	-	4.55	Highly Required
6. Time Management	4 2	1 8	4	1	-	4.55	Highly Required
7. Openness to criticism	4 4	1 8	3	-	-	4.63	Highly Required
8. Resourcefulness	3 6	2 3	4	1	1	4.42	Highly Required
9. Critical Thinking	1 1	1 3	2 5	8	8	4.35	Highly Required
10. Stress Management	3 7	2 0	6	1	1	3.51	Required
<b>OVERALL MEAN</b>						<b>4.44</b>	<b>Highly Required</b>

Table 4 shows the qualifications in soft skills that a person with disabilities must possess to be hired. The highest level of consideration in soft skills was computed as the mean of (M= 4.63) on openness to criticism.

Further analysis of the computed mean reveals that items 1 to 9 are also considered to be highly required soft skills for the PWDs which are creativity and problem-solving skills (M=4.49), decision making (M=4.48), adaptability & time management (M=4.55), resourcefulness (M=4.42), critical thinking (M=4.35), teamwork (M=4.32) and leadership skills (M=4.20). The skill in stress management is considered required only with a mean score of 3.51

The overall mean score of the qualification in soft skills that PWDs should possess to be hired was 4.44 which has a verbal interpretation of high required. This concludes that employers expect and require PWDs to have high soft skills to be considered employable. Also, it may be concluded that employers view PWDs similarly to non-disabled people in terms of soft skills as they focus more on what they can do as an employee.

In the related study by UDS Foundation (2020), soft skills are core competencies that define how an employee works. These transferable skills come in handy regardless of job and are useful in any professional environment. There is a higher chance you've developed a set of soft skills once an individual is employed. Based on the results, openness to criticism is the

highly required soft skill in Bulakan. This is crucial for the development of an employee, specifically the person with disabilities, as it becomes the training ground to accept ideas and to give suggestions for the team or for the business (Grensing-Prophal, 2019). Since most of the businesses in Bulakan are in service, employers may be looking for ideas to improve their business based on the observation of their employees. Thus, constructive criticism is important for both employers and employees.

Table 5 shows the qualifications in hard skills that a PWD should possess to be hired. Based on the given data of this study, it shows that the most required hard skill is management skills which has a mean score of 4.17. Followed by mathematics and numeracy skills with a mean score of 3.91 and career-specific skills with a mean score of 3.77. The other hard skills such as technical skills, planning skills, digital communication skills and copywriting are also required hard skills with a mean score of 3.54, 3.45, 3.45 and 3.08 respectively.

Further analysis of the computed mean reveals that employers moderately require PWDs to have basic computer skills with a mean score of 3.35 and the remaining skills which are research and data analysis and working linguistics skills with a mean score of 3.14 and 3.30 respectively.

The overall mean score of the hard skills a PWD should have to be hired was 3.49, which is interpreted as required. It demonstrates that these hard skills are required as they can help in the operation of the business.

**Table 5. Qualifications in Hard Skills**

Kinds of Disability (Considered Employable)	Frequency and Percentage					Mean	Interpretation
	5	4	3	2	1		
1. Basic computer skills (MS Office, etc.)	15	21	9	12	8	3.35	Moderately Required
2. Research and data analysis	11	19	12	14	9	3.14	Moderately Required
3. Working Linguistics skills (Bilingual, Trilingual, Multilingual)	11	11	22	11	10	3.03	Moderately Required

4. Ability to draft plans (panning skills)	13	21	19	6	6	3.45	Required
5. Mathematics and Numeracy skills	25	21	11	4	4	3.91	Required
6. Copywriting	10	15	22	6	12	3.08	Required
7. Digital communication	18	21	9	6	11	3.45	Required
8. Technical skills	16	24	11	7	7	3.54	Required
9. Management skills	29	23	8	5	-	4.17	Required
10. Career-specific skills	19	27	9	5	5	3.77	Required

**OVERALL MEAN**

**3.49 Required**

Further data that were accumulated by the past researchers stated that while soft skills matter more on the factors that employers look for in the employees that they wanted to hire, it is still highly required to enthrall them through their hard skills.

Through the means of this, employers have the opportunity to evaluate their employees who have disabilities and help them to further improve for their own development and of the society. Beacon Group (n.d) firmly believes that through thorough training of such individuals on their hard skills, it will encourage them more to be out in the public and work according to their pace and ability. It will also be a means of having other individuals who share the same stand and outlook in life to be more confident and that they can function well too in the society. According to the Simmons Advantage (2021), while hard skills are not that fundamentally valued, it is said that it is more practical to train than to not. It can bring greater impacts to the organization; it will make them more flexible to learn more than what they know and will give them a sense of responsibilities within it.

**Table 6. The significant difference between soft and hard skills on hiring PWD's**

**Paired Samples Test**

	Mean	Std. Dev	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
<b>Soft skills</b>	4.44	.417	8.317	64	.000
<b>Hard skills</b>	3.49	.959			

Table 6 aims to know the significant difference between the soft skills and hard skills on hiring PWDs. The table above shows the results from soft skills ( $M=4.44$ ,  $SD=.417$ ) and hard skills ( $M= 3.49$ ,  $SD= .959$ ) scores of the respondents shows a difference in the result. Based on the findings, the employer much preferred to employ PWDs with soft skills over hard skills particularly articulate communications and ability to work as a team. Furthermore, this finding also shows that the difference is significant because the null hypothesis is rejected,  $t(64) = 8.317$ ,  $p = (0.000) < 0.05$ .

In the study of Wonderlic as cited in the article of Peoplescout (n.d), 93% of the employers and hiring leaders say that soft skills are essential in the decision making during the hiring process. Moreover, it is also stated that they prefer soft skills more than technical or hard skills. McLaren (2019) showed the results of LinkedIn's Global Talent Trends 2019 stating 92% of talent professionals believed that soft skills are equally or even more important than hard skills and if they were not accepted, then they lack soft skills. It also highlighted in the study of Deloitte Access Economics cited by Barnard (2019) that because of the intensive use of robots and machines, most of the jobs will require soft skills for two-thirds of all jobs by 2030.

Most employers believe that soft skills are more important than hard skills because this is about how people communicate and interact with others. Lacking in soft skills can limit one's potential which decreases the efficiency of a person. In relation to this, Garcia (2014) stated that most of the persons with disabilities lack participation within its society due to the inaccessible buildings and environment. This leads to the limitation of their capability to develop their soft skills which are highly important based on the results. Babik and Gardner (2021) stated that social exclusion and isolation of persons with disability are the effects of the negative attitude from the society.

The low rate of employment among PWDs, inherent limitations to perform a certain job with efficiency and skills required to be at par with non-disabled employees tempted management and companies to hire them with reservations.

Given such a backdrop of employment issues on persons with disabilities, this research delves into the requirements a person with disability should possess in order to acquire a job. It also intends to find out the view-point of businesses and local government units who recognize abilities of PWD's as potential employees. The low rate of employment among person with disabilities despite their efficiency in performing a certain job prompted the researchers to probe what specific skills may be required for a PWD's to be at par with non-disabled employees.

Most of the businesses in Bulakan are in services with 57%, 2% in agriculture, and the rest are in Merchandising, Manufacturing, and Retail. The majority of respondents have been operating their business for 1 to 5 years, with 72%.

Furthermore, when it comes to the kind of disabilities that employers deem employable, medical disabilities like diabetes and AIDS have a high chance of being recruited. They also consider disabilities such as orthopedically challenged (scoliosis, cerebral palsy, etc.) as well as in communication. For the soft skills, openness to criticism, adaptability and time management are the requisite soft skills to be employed in Bulakan. For the hard skills, management skills are math and numeracy skills, as well as career-specific skills are the top required skills. The comparison of the soft skills and hard skills is done to determine which skills do businesses in Bulakan prefer. Based on the testing, soft skills are preferred over hard skills particularly articulate communications and ability to work as a team.

### 3.1. Conclusions

Based on the data results and findings the researchers concluded that:

1. Most of the businesses in Bulakan are services in nature which can influence the employment of persons with disabilities.
2. Businesses in Bulakan are just starting up their businesses for one to five years and do not have a stable operation yet.
3. Employers still regard disabilities such as autism and deafness as barriers to effective employment and they highly consider medical disability as employable. It appears that government initiatives and legislation are insufficient to employ a source of income for people with disabilities.
4. Employers expect and require PWDs to have high soft skills to be considered employable, especially openness to criticism and they view PWDs similarly to the non-disabled person in terms of soft skills as they focus more on what they can do as an employee. Knowing the cases of persons with disabilities, businesses expected them to be more open to criticism for them to be more efficient and adapt to their environment.
5. Hard skills are required especially in the management and skills which are specific to the job they are applying for.
6. As a whole, employers much preferred to employ PWDs with soft skills over hard skills.

### 3.2. Recommendations

The researchers recommend this study to the employers, people with disabilities, government agencies, and future researchers:

1. Employers. In terms of employment, employers play a significant role in the lives of PWDs as they are the ones who determine whether or not to hire the applicant. This study is for employers, to expand their expertise in employing and modifying PWDs by being aware of their current situation and learning on the importance of PWDs as employees through various trainings and programs of the government.
2. Company. Strengthen the hiring pipeline by engaging with community groups. Tapping the talent pool of persons with disabilities, this research propounds to start building a robust recruitment conduit in part by engaging with groups that support people with disabilities.
3. Disabled Persons. The persons with disabilities must focus on developing their hard skills specifically on basic management skills, mathematics and numeracy skills and career-specific skills to have a higher chance on being employed in Bulakan, Bulacan.
4. Government. The government should strengthen their training and programs for persons with disabilities on enhancing their skills, specifically the soft skills to be competitive on the workforce and raise awareness about the importance of employment of PWDs especially on the local level to ensure that everyone will have an equal chance on job opportunities. The government should also invest more on the PWDs by making the whole community aware of their situation through various seminars.
5. Researchers. The future researches may use this as a continual guidance. Their research may go further in analyzing the reason why employers do not hire PWDs considering their skills and other factors that hinder it.

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