

Evaluating of disability support programs in Maasin City, Philippines: Bridging gaps in social inclusion in Southeast Asia

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ABSTRACT

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This study evaluates the implementation of disability programs in Maasin City, Philippines, focusing on the extent of social inclusion for Persons With Disabilities (PWDs). Using a descriptive research design, the study gathered data from a sample of PWDs to assess the effectiveness of programs across five key areas: employment, education, health, auxiliary social services, accessibility, and political and civil rights. The findings of the study show that health, accessibility, and political and civil rights programs are implemented adequately with a mean score of 2.59, 2.79, and 2.70, respectively, however, employment, education, and auxiliary social services are inadequately implemented with a mean score of 1.96, 2.23, and 2.26, respectively. The identified problems impede the very inclusion of PWDs in the community; thus, interventions are needed to address it. The findings of this research conclude that even if there is progress in some areas, full implementation of the program is still lacking, as revealed by the grand mean of 2.42. This study emphasizes further that there is a need for improvement in service delivery with specific recommendations to upgrade or improve the infrastructure, create programs that are solely intended for PWDs in order to significantly reduce social exclusion gaps. Such results are crucial for developing policies and managing resources for an inclusive Southeast Asia society for PWDs.

1. Introduction

Persons With Disabilities (PWDs) in societal inclusion is still considered a challenge, according to the studies of Praslova (2023), Jardinez and Natividad (2024), Sousa et al. (2024), most especially in the Southeast Asian Nations, of which disproportions in accessing resources as well as opportunities carry on, as stated by Crosta and Sanders (2021), Singh (2022), Arias et al. (2023). There have been programs to support and encourage PWD inclusion, but according to the study of Hermawan and Anggoro (2024), Support Disability Programs (SDP) and their services continue to encounter challenges in fully implementing the actual involvement of PWDs in their social, economic, and political lives. PWDs' inclusion in all areas and social programs that they need to access is evaluated in this research, which is also

evaluated and assessed in regard to the program implementation, specifically in Maasin City, Southern Leyte, Philippines.

Although data about disabilities in Maasin City is scarce, this study delved into it and found out that the most predominant is physical disability. The research results emphasize the urgency and need for inter-governmental solutions, such as mobility aids, rehabilitation services, and improved accessibility, so that PWDs will not feel left behind by society. This research also found out other types of disabilities within the areas covered by the local government of Maasin City, which includes mental disabilities, learning disabilities, and visual disabilities, emphasizing that there is a need for more inclusive PWD support programs.

The United Nations (2006) stated that the Philippines signed into an agreement that it will commit to support and uphold the rights of every PWD and to complement the agreement, the Philippine Republic Act No. 7277 mandates inclusivity and equal protection rights for disabled persons. This law ensures every opportunity that a PWD can get (Republic of the Philippines, 1992). Even the enactment of the said law, there are still noticeable and significant gaps most especially in the implementation, such as areas in Maasin City. These gaps sometimes are present in opportunities such as employment, according to The Asia Foundation (2021), Imbong and Pielago (2021), lacking support to their education (Gonzales & Kang, 2022; Tabuga, 2021), and which also includes deficient auxiliary services.

The first outcomes of Maasin City's service provision to PWDs are varied and inconsistent, with advances in medical and other available services but significant inadequacies in job and educational programs. The disparity in service delivery impedes PWD inclusion in social and economic settings (Bustillo, 2024), revealing deeper structural faults in resource allocation and policy implementation, along with public sentiment toward these programs (Dela Cruz, 2023; Muego, 2021). All this calls for a subtle understanding of the current situation facing disability programs as well as the factors that determine whether the programs are successful or not.

The ASEAN Community Vision 2025 is the promotion of an inclusive community with equal access to opportunities for all member nations (Association of Southeast Asian Nations [ASEAN], 2015). By looking at the response from municipal governments, like Maasin City, toward the demands of people with disabilities, we can discover best practices and areas of improvement. This research intends to hold a comprehensive review of all services and initiatives being offered for people with disabilities in the city of Maasin, as regards job opportunities, education, and social inclusion.

This study intends to provide practitioners, policymakers, and other stakeholders with concrete insights into how to enhance their decision-making processes. At the same time, our study challenges common negative perceptions about PWDs, presenting evidence-based conclusions that will promote better societal knowledge and acceptance (Gatchalian et al., 2014; Billote et al., 2022). Finally, the findings of this study contribute to the broader discourse on disability inclusion in Southeast Asia while also shedding light on a local perspective having an impact on local policy and practice.

2. Theoretical basis

It shall draw its theoretical foundation of the study on the assessment of disability programs in local areas like Maasin City in the Philippines from several propositions, theories, and even doctrines widely studied, explained, and used in the literature for disability research and

in the field of inclusive development. These theories offer critical standpoints in the investigation and understanding of the barriers against the complete participation of the impaired individuals in a lot of different areas, such as work, education, health, and even social inclusion itself.

The first theoretical basis is that of the Social Model of Disability, which is also different from the traditional medical model because it focuses more on societal barriers and attitudes that prevent people rather than actual disabilities. In the paradigm, disability is a social construct created by the interaction of damaged persons with society systems that exclude or disfavor them (Oliver, 1990). This concept is particularly relevant in Maasin City because it will help identify and analyze societal barriers that interfere with people with limitations from fully participating in their professional, educational, and social life. Once these barriers are removed, the Social Model of Disability highlights the need for inclusive policies and actions that empower PWDs.

Another significant concept is the Capability Approach, which Amartya Sen introduced and Martha Nussbaum further developed. According to the research done by Sen (1999), Nussbaum (2000), it focuses on what people may become and do, not their financial status. The Capability Approach is most appropriate for assessing disability-related projects because it focuses on the capabilities and resources available to PWDs to enable them to fulfill their potential. Using this approach, this article seeks to determine whether disability initiatives in Maasin City assist to the improvement of the capacities and psychological well-being of PWDs, therefore actively encouraging their involvement in society.

This also constitutes an important aspect in the study, the Rights-Based Approach to Disability. Such is based on human rights principles (United Nations, 2006), affirming that PWDs, as other individuals, enjoy rights and freedoms. Being consonant with international conventions, such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) that the country has ratified, this may become a possible basis to advance the welfare of children. Such an approach shall give legitimacy and ethic ground for examination of programs in Maasin City focusing on how programs are made effective in meeting the protection of the rights enshrined under national law and other international instruments of PWDs. Having such comparative evaluation of this study for local programs relating to compliance with such requirements, which is a method of having the gaps in ensuring and promoting further protection towards PWD's rights.

Policy Implementation Theory provides another perspective by focusing on the process and factors that are involved in policy implementation. The current situation concerning the implementation of programs for persons with disabilities in Maasin City utilizes this framework to understand the barriers and constraints to policy implementation. Several factors affect the effectiveness of resource allocation, institutional capacity, and local government systems (Pressman & Wildavsky, 1984). Using this method, the study will identify how local governance and organizational factors influence the outcomes of disability assistance programs in Maasin City.

On these theoretical foundations, the study suggests some research models and hypotheses. Following the Model of Societal barriers and PWD involvement, societal barriers, including undesirable perceptions and no enforcement of policies, greatly restrain PWDs from taking part in work, education, and other social life. Following the Capability Enhancement Model, special needs programs that increase people's capacities enhance their occupational, learning, and social performance. The argument of the rights-based evaluation framework is that effectiveness in implementation leads to increased compliance with national and international disability rights standards.

Using these theoretical views and analytical frameworks, the research project will perform a complete assessment of disability programs in Maasin City. This can not only reveal current gaps and issues but also identify best practices and practical recommendations for increasing the inclusion and participation of individuals with disabilities in Maasin City and throughout Southeast Asia.

3. Methodology

The research used a descriptive methodology that had a quantitative research design. Descriptive methodology is an approach to research that deals with the description of a phenomenon, situation, or population in detail (McCombes, 2023; Singh, 2023). This research methodology is appropriate when the researcher is interested in understanding the extent to which different conditions vary among various variables that are the focus of the research (Cornell, 2024). Descriptive research is the process of gathering information on current events or situations in order to describe and analyze them (Lesko et al., 2022; Kosie & Lew-Williams, 2024).

This study employed a descriptive approach to analyze the extent to which the Person with Disability Program was implemented in Maasin City's Local Government Units. The design also sought to identify the challenges encountered by PWDs in accessing programs and services intended for individuals with special needs. The authors used availability sampling, where each respondent was chosen based on his/her availability and convenience.

The five barangays in Maasin City, Southern Leyte, where the study was conducted included three barangays picked because they had a high number of people with disabilities, according to data provided by the persons with disability affairs office: Combado, Asuncion, and Ibarra. To minimize bias, two rural barangays, Canyuom and Tigbawan, were also picked for the study. The picking of these barangays is intended to represent both urban and rural standpoints.

The study focused on five barangays in Maasin City, each with a unique character. Combado has a population of 5,584, based on the 2020 census, and has 88 persons with disabilities, which is 1.57% of the population of this barangay. Asuncion, a barangay with a population of 5,063, has 66 PWDs, making up 1.30% of its population. Ibarra is a locality with a population of 4,346 inhabitants, wherein 71 PWDs comprise 1.63% of the total. Barangay Canyuom has a population of only 639 individuals, out of which 11 people with disabilities are recorded at 1.72%. Finally, there is Tigbawan Barangay with a population of 1,082. This particular barangay holds 15 PWDs at 1.38% of the total. The said barangays were picked to make sure that it will include all urban and rural activities with regard to PWDs.

Table 1

Respondent Distribution by Barangay and Category

Respondents	Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%) based on total (253)	Percentage (%) based on total frequency (118)
Combado	88 PWDs	30	11.87%	25.42%
Asuncion	66 PWDs	30	11.87%	25.42%
Ibarra	71 PWDs	30	11.87%	25.42%
Canyuom	11 PWDs	11	4.35%	9.32%

Respondents	Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%) based on total (253)	Percentage (%) based on total frequency (118)
Tigbawan	15 PWDs	15	5.92%	12.71%
PDAO	01 Officer	01	0.40%	0.85%
CSWDO	01 Officer	01	0.40%	0.85%
Total	253	118	46.72%	100%

Note. The data are from authors

The study respondents consisted of individuals with special needs living in the chosen barangays in Commodo, Asuncion, Ibarra, Canyuom, and Tigbawan. One (01) officer from the PDAO and one (01) officer from the CSWDO were also respondents of the study. Respondents were determined through availability sampling, a method in which the participants are determined based on the availability of the respondent and their convenience. The total number of respondents consisted of 116 PWDs and 02 officers for a total of 118 respondents.

The primary tool in data gathering for this research is a structured questionnaire prepared to conform to Republic Act 7277, known as the “Magna Carta for Disabled Persons.” Structured questionnaires typically consist of closed or prompted questions with predefined answers, and in this study, responses were measured using a Likert Scale, where respondents selected the option that best reflected their opinions. The questionnaire was divided into three sections: Part I gathered demographic information on the respondents, Part II assessed the extent of implementation of various disability programs, with responses ranging from 1 (very low) to 4 (very high), and Part III evaluated the challenges faced by PWDs in accessing and utilizing these programs.

The questionnaire underwent a thorough validation process to ensure its reliability and accuracy. A jury of experts in research and disability programs, including local PDAO officers, evaluated the instrument, where the validity test resulted in a very high validity score. Expert suggestions and recommendations were incorporated into the final version of the questionnaire. A pilot test was conducted with nine PWDs and one CSWDO officer, none of whom participated in the actual data collection.

For the data gathering procedure, the researchers sought permission from the barangay captains of the selected barangays. Upon obtaining the necessary approvals, the researchers approached the respondents personally, explaining the study’s objectives and potential benefits. Every respondent acknowledged giving informed consent, with parental consent obtained in cases when the respondent was a minor. The questionnaires which contained filled information were seen only by the researchers who destroyed them after obtaining their data.

The method employed in analyzing the collected data included tabulation and scrutiny of the data collected via appropriate statistical methods. An approximate measurement of the extent that the disability services are employed and the obstacles that hinder the access of PWDs to the programs was derived from the use of weighted means. In addition, frequency counts and percentage distributions were utilized in finding the demographic profile of the respondents. The scale’s weighted mean values interpreted, thus: 3.26 - 4.00 indicates extremely high, 2.51 - 3.25 shows high, 1.76 - 2.50 is low, while 1.00 - 1.75 suggests very low.

4. Results and discussion

This section is about the report of findings from the study on programs and services to Persons With Disabilities (PWDs) in Maasin City, Southern Leyte. This was aimed to assess how services provided had been effective in the given key areas, which are employment, education, health, auxiliary social services, accessibility, and political/civil rights. The purpose of the analysis is to determine both the strengths and deficiencies in Maasin City's existing PWD programs using the data collected. Evaluating the distribution and accessibility of these services will provide insight into the challenges that people with disabilities have in obtaining them, as well as the extent to which their rights and requirements are being met on a broader scale. These findings, as presented in the following sections, give a comprehensive understanding of the extent to which programs are carried out, thus shedding light on the current disability services environment in Maasin City.

Table 2

Distribution of Age of the Respondents

Age	f	%
03 - 10	07	5.93
11 - 18	15	12.71
19 - 26	13	11.02
27 - 34	24	20.34
35 - 42	13	11.02
43 - 50	16	13.56
51 - 58	18	15.25
59 - 66	08	6.78
67 - 74	01	0.85
75 - 82	03	2.54
Total	118	100%

Note. The data are from authors

The distribution by age of the respondents to this study, as shown in Table 2, gives an integral demography of Persons With Disabilities (PWDs) across the barangays chosen within Maasin City, Southern Leyte. Respondents span from age 03 years old to 82, pointing out that disability cuts across all life stages and support needs change with time and circumstances. This wide age spectrum points to the need for age-birth-specific disability programs under the rubric of the LGU so that the diverse needs at different stages of life of PWDs can be addressed.

A notable trend in the distribution is that about 20.34 percent of the sample falls within the 27 - 34 age group. This demographic is mainly youth, the problems it has in the sphere of employment, education, and social inclusion, especially in being in early or mid-career years for most members, which places a challenge to the LGU to tailor its programs that help the population by developing vocational skills and placing and preparing individuals at the workplace. Such programs would enhance economic independence and social integration among young adult PWDs, thus enhancing the quality of life and engagement within the broader community.

The two largest age groups in the sample are 51 - 58 years old (15.25%) and 43 - 50 years old (13.56%). Combined, the two age groups account for more than 28% of all replies. Middle-aged people are likely to confront both handicap obstacles and aging-related health difficulties. They will need strong services in health care, medical support, and social help, specifically designed for the needs of middle-aged people with disabilities. Providing that needy individuals have access to affordable healthcare and community-based service support will significantly increase their well-being and the ability with which they can address health-related issues where complications arise.

In addition, the age brackets 03 - 10 years and 11 - 18 years account for 5.93% and 12.71%, respectively, of the total respondents, meaning that together they make almost 18% of the sample. This suggests there is a call for programs of inclusive education and early interventions for children and adolescents with impairments. This is because social integration and developmental progress of younger PWDs whose forms of support could lay a foundation for lifelong participation and success demand LGU policies that promote accessible education and family-centered support services.

Although the older age groups, 59 - 66, 67 - 74, and 75 - 82, make up only about 10% of the sample, these people are a distinct group that, because of both their aging and disability, will face challenges in mobility limitations, chronic health conditions, and greater needs for assistance in living. Elder care-related programs, accessible infrastructures, and assistance in independent living will be given importance by the LGU for older PWDs to sustain their autonomy and quality life.

Both 19 - 26 and 35 - 42 years-old also fall in the share of 11.02%, which only supports the idea of varied requirements at every stage of life. An age group such as 19 - 26 years old can be assisted with entering higher education or entering the career ladder while an age group such as 35 - 42 will require balancing work and family and health responsibilities. Tailoring local government unit services according to the age-specific needs of these brackets would improve their social and economic outcomes.

From the age distribution analysis, it can be understood that Maasin City LGU will benefit from a segmented approach to PWD program implementation, age-sensitive. By customizing services to each age group's specific needs, the LGU would be able to better tackle the different challenges of each PWD, enhancing quality of life and promoting their full inclusion in society.

Table 3

Distribution of Sex of the Respondents

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Female	45	38.13
Male	73	61.86
Total	118	100%

Note. The data are from authors

The gender distribution of respondents in this study, as shown in Table 3, demonstrates a significant gender imbalance, with men comprising 61.86% of the sample ($n = 73$) and females constituting 38.13% ($n = 45$). This gap reveals probable gender-related dynamics

among the PWD population in the chosen barangays of Maasin City, Southern Leyte, and emphasizes the need of taking sex into account when developing programs and policies to serve people with disabilities.

It could mean that disability is a higher share or has a higher visibility among men in this community. Such a tendency could be related to several reasons, including gender disparities in labor market involvement, lifestyle preferences, and health habits. For instance, research studies have indicated that males, particularly in rural or semi-urban regions, are more likely to engage themselves in more arduous manual labor and hence, have a higher probability of injury or an accident leading to disability. In light of this, the LGU should focus its budget allocations for injury prevention and occupational health services, which target males, specifically those who are of working age so as to reduce risks and rehabilitative care.

This proportion of fewer replies may imply that women who have disabilities face specific problems when trying to get access to services and aid. Women, in general, experience more challenges since the combination of their gender and disabilities results in difficulty when seeking employment, healthcare, and other social benefits. This recommends that the LGU should develop specific programs to address these dual challenges while neither eliminating or discriminating against women who have disabilities from employment, healthcare, and community support services.

These findings indicate the importance of integrating sex-specific considerations into the planning and implementation of PWD programs. By considering the needs of both male and female people with disabilities, the local government may enhance its accessibility, effectiveness, and inclusiveness in service delivery. This would further support a more balanced system of disability assistance in Maasin City, where all members, regardless of gender, can access such comprehensive and timely services.

Table 4

Respondents' Disability Type

Type of disability	f	%
Physical	54	45.76
Mental	14	11.86
Learning	09	7.62
Speech and Language Impairment	09	7.62
Multi-Disability	02	1.69
Psychosocial	02	1.69
Intellectual	07	5.93
Hard of hearing	09	7.62
Visual	10	8.47
Disability due to Chronic Illness	02	1.69
Total	118	100%

Note. The data are from authors

The distribution of disabilities across the respondents, as seen in Table 4, is highly varied. Physical impairments are found to dominate at 45.76% (n = 54), and this preponderance of physical impairments would point toward a critical intervention area for PWDs in Maasin City, which could likely be related to occupational hazards, underutilization of preventive health, and aging populations. The high incidence of physical disabilities calls for targeted municipal initiatives to improve accessibility, provide mobility aids, and support rehabilitation services that could enhance independence and quality of life for physically disabled people.

Mental disabilities account for 11.86% (n = 14) of the respondents, which shows that there is a significant percentage of the PWD community dealing with mental health issues. As such, psychosocial support and counseling services at the community level are essential for enhancing mental strength and removing stigma against mental illness. In this related thread, visually impaired respondents constitute 8.47% (n = 10), which calls for specific vision care interventions and assistive technologies as well as community health assessments that can address avoidable or treatable visual impairments among people with disabilities.

People with learning disabilities, difficulties with speech and language, and impairments of hearing account for 7.62% (n = 9) of those with disabilities, covering a wide range of particular requirements. Each of these impairments needs particular and tailored interventions, such as special education programs, speech therapy, and additional communication aids, to assist affected persons' inclusion and growth. Intellectual disability made up 5.93% (n = 7) of the population, a lesser but still sizable number that may need specifically designed education and career-preparation programs in order to make them more sociable and productive.

Finally, multi-disabilities, psychosocial disabilities, and disabilities due to chronic illness are reported by 1.69% (n = 2) of respondents. Although infrequent, these complex conditions point to the need for multidisciplinary care and comprehensive support services, since compounded challenges lead to holistic approaches in the provision of services.

These findings underscore the need for a diversified and inclusive approach in PWD programs within Maasin City, since different types of disabilities present various challenges. A well-rounded program framework that takes these varied needs into account would allow the LGU to provide more effective and equitable services to the PWD community, thus enhancing overall well-being and inclusion of the community.

Table 5

PDAO and CSWD Officers' Length of Service

PDAO/CSWD Officer	Length of Service
PDAO COORDINATOR	05 YEARS
CSWDO HEAD	09 YEARS

Note. The data are from authors

Table 5 outlines the tenure of key personnel charged with coordinating programs for people with disabilities in Maasin City. The PDAO Coordinator has served for 05 years, while the CSWD Head has been in her position for 09 years. Tenures this long may give moderate to high experience in administering and coordinating programs for disabilities, which might positively influence successful implementation and service delivery through such a policy.

The 5-year tenure of the PDAO Coordinator is sufficient for the office to gain familiarity with nuances in PWD services as well as the local landscape of disability, allowing an officer to respond to emerging concerns and facilitate the integration of PWDs into the community. Conversely, the 09 years the CSWD Head has worked underlines experience in providing social welfare programs, even those focused on PWDs. This longer tenure probably allows for a better appreciation of the needs of the PWD population and for greater continuity in administering welfare services as well as improving strategic planning and resource allocation capacity.

These service periods depict a stable leadership structure in the Maasin City LGU that is important to the effective management of PWD programs. The knowledge acquired by these officers could translate to more informed decision-making processes, more sustainable programs, and more consistent ways of adapting to the needs of the disabled. In consequence, the PDAO Coordinator and CSWD Head knowledge might be the key in improving the delivery and extension of inclusive services for the PWDs in the region.

Table 6

Extent of Implementation of PWD Program

PWD Programs and Services	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
Employment	1.96	Low
Education	2.23	Low
Health	2.59	High
Auxiliary Social Services	2.26	Low
Accessibility	2.79	High
Political and Civil Rights	2.70	High
Grand Mean	2.42	Low

Note. The data are from authors

Table 7

Mean Range and Interpretation

Mean Range	Interpretation
3.26 - 4.00	Very High
2.51 - 3.25	High
1.76 - 2.50	Low
1.00 - 1.75	Very Low

Note. The data are from authors

Tables 6 and 7 give an overview of the extent of the implementation of programs and services for Persons With Disabilities (PWDs) in Maasin City, with Table 6 giving the mean scores of different program areas and Table 7 providing the interpretation scale for the scores.

As seen in Table 6, the execution of PWD initiatives varies substantially by location. The Employment, Education, and Auxiliary Social Services programs had the lowest implementation rates, with mean scores of 1.96, 2.23, and 2.26, respectively. These scores fall into the “Low” category on the interpretation scale in Table 7, indicating that services in these

regions are either unavailable or do not reach the target PWD population. Low ratings in these areas would imply significant gaps in access to critical resources like employment, education, and social services required for PWDs to fully participate in the community. Such restrictions may be due to the lack of infrastructure, poor engagement by the corporate and public sectors, or a lack of finance for such endeavors.

While it's the contrary with regards to the programs, such as health, accessibility, and political and civil rights have implemented much better, with average ratings at 2.59, 2.79, and 2.70, respectively. In terms of categorization, all fall under "High." Having relatively high scores for this, this reflects a greater or better execution in Maasin City pertaining to providing health services, improvement on accessibilities, and even rights protection regarding PWDs for their civil and political rights. It is most probable that these services are highly ranked due to their foundational value for the well-being and social integration of PWDs into society. This can further point out that Maasin City has made more pronounced headway in establishing foundational services and infrastructures for promoting the health and rights of persons with disabilities.

The grand mean of 2.42, which falls under the "Low" category, reflects the overall effectiveness of the PWD program implementation in the city. This means that while some areas are getting better, the general condition of PWD service delivery remains suboptimal, indicating a lot of room for improvement. The findings underscore the necessity of a more concerted effort in enhancing the service delivery of all program areas, especially employment, education, and auxiliary social services, since they are very crucial in the empowerment and inclusion of persons with disabilities.

There are indications that the sectors of health, accessibility, and political and civil rights are implemented effectively. Low overall score points to how much the city needs to fully adjust policies, allocate more resources, and implement the programs that will address these gaps in services and bring in more equitable outcomes for people with disabilities in Maasin City.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

The findings of the study are important in guiding programs and services for PWDs in Maasin City, Philippines, as well as the gaps they help bridge to significantly improve social inclusion in Southeast Asia. Gender imbalance was also observed, with more males, having 61.86%, than females. The gender-specific factors related to occupational risks, health behaviors, and social influences could be among the causes for this disparity. Further, the fact that physical disabilities are prevalent among respondents (45.76%) suggests that services should focus on people with mobility and physical impairments. The range of disabilities found in the PWD population indicates that the needs of the group are varied and therefore require specific interventions in each of the types of disabilities: mental, learning, and visual impairments.

An analysis of the implementation of PWD programs reveals notable disparities across different sectors. Health, accessibility, and political and civil rights programs are relatively more in their levels of implementation, with mean scores of 2.59, 2.79, and 2.70, respectively, that is to say that in these areas, more efficient service delivery is being made. Conversely, the levels of programs under employment, education, and auxiliary social services are not so good, with mean scores of 1.96, 2.23, and 2.26, respectively. Results of this study have underscored significant gaps that characterize the service provision process as crucial in empowering and mainstreaming PWDs into the community.

Despite the years of service for key personnel such as the PDAO Coordinator and CSWD Head, whose experience suggests good management of disability programs, the overall low implementation score, with a grand mean of 2.42, suggests a need to better coordinate, resource, and programmatic adjustments.

For the above findings, several recommendations are made to improve disability programs in Maasin City. More gender-sensitive programs should be developed to accommodate the different needs of males and females PWDs. Examples would be injury prevention, rehabilitation, and occupational health for men; conversely, barriers against gender-based discrimination and health care access should be developed for women. In addition, the municipal government should enhance upgrading infrastructural facilities to facilitate accessibility for physically disabled people as well as extend rehabilitation programs and facilitate mobility aids so that they will maintain both independence and quality of life.

More programs, for instance, must be developed to meet the needs of PWDs with mental, learning, and visual impairments. The programs would comprise tailored educational interventions, speech therapy, counseling, and assistive technologies. Some recommendations have been made to bridge these gaps in employment, education, and auxiliary social services: increasing efforts in vocational training and educational programs that are open and accessible to everyone and, at the same time, improving the quality and reach of social services offered to PWDs.

The experience of key personnel is also taken into account in the recommendations, and their expertise should be tapped to enhance coordination and bring about a more integrated approach to service delivery. A unified monitoring and evaluation system will help track progress, identify gaps, and ensure that resources are aligned with the most urgent needs of the PWD population. There is a need for public awareness campaigns to reduce stigma, to enhance the rights of PWDs, and to treat them as more active participants in society. Recommendations to distribute resources better involve support in employment, education, and social services, presently being short-changed. In doing so, Maasin City can improve its commitment to social inclusion gaps and promote the full participation of PWDs in society as a contribution to the greater efforts of social equity in Southeast Asia.

SCIENTIFIC CONTRIBUTION

The manuscript presents statistically and practically significant findings; the manuscript clearly identifies a research gap; the manuscript provides new datasets or empirical evidence; the manuscript extends or refines existing theories; the manuscript offers policy/managerial/technological implications; the manuscript opens new directions for further research.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

CRedit: **Rannie Morillo Sumacot**: Conceptualization, Methodology, Formal Analysis, Investigation, Writing - Original Draft, Supervision, Project Administration, Funding Acquisition; **Magdaleno Samaco, Jr.**: Methodology, Formal Analysis, Visualization, Writing - Review & Editing; **Maria Risa Jean Pascualado**: Investigation, Data Curation, Writing - Original Draft; **Annalyn Aguelo**: Investigation, Resources, Writing - Review & Editing; **Jhon Michael Pia**: Investigation, Validation, Writing - Review & Editing; **Jussa Padilla**: Investigation, Data Curation; **Mary Joy Castalla**: Investigation, Writing - Review & Editing; **Nerizza Requiso**: Investigation, Validation; **Vencent Siega**: Investigation, Resources.

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All authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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