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Acceptability of Differently-Abled Persons in the BPO Industry

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Abstract

The Philippine Magna Carta for Persons with Disability - RA 10524 is an Act that encourages private corporations with more than 100 employees to reserve at least one percent of all positions for Differently-Abled Persons (DAP). This study explored the acceptability of Differently-Abled Persons in an easily accessible industry to all - Business Process Outsourcing (BPO). It looked into two constructs: the possibility of getting hired, and the second is the DAPs' social acceptance in the workplace. This research made use of the Descriptive Case Study design. The researcher employed Key Informant Interviews, Focus Group Discussions, and Surveys to gain insights into the performance and social acceptability of the DAPs in the BPO Industry. Based on the study's results, BPO accepts DAPs because it believes in their capabilities and social acceptance. The researcher proposes a collaborative program among the BPO, LGU, and Academe, which will pave the way to advance the interest of DAPs.

Key Words: acceptability, BPO, differently abled person (DAPS), hireability, social acceptance





1\$\}2960-3986

GEO Academic Journal Vol. 3 No. 1 – 2022 series

Bio Profile

Dr. Ryan Mark Molina is the EVP of STI West Negros University in Bacolod City,
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Philippines Visayas. His research interest is in Human Resources, Leadership, and
Communications.

Introduction

Nature of the Problem

In 2012, RA 10524 amended the Magna Carta for Persons with Disability which reserves at least one percent of all positions in all government offices, agencies, and corporations for PWDs. This also encourages private firms with more than one hundred employees to reserve at least one percent of all their positions for the same. Despite the amendment of the law and the incentives that go along with it, a study of the ULAN (Upholding Life and Nature) showed poor compliance with the law, which may be caused by a lack of awareness, knowledge, and experience in working with employees with disabilities among government offices and private firms (ULAN, 2018). With the growing demands of the BPO and the unemployment of the Differently-Abled Persons (DAP), this study was conducted to look at the hireability and social acceptance of the DAPs in the BPO Industry.





1\$\text{N} 2960-3986

GEO Academic Journal Vol. 3 No. 1 - 2022 series

Current State of Knowledge

The study of Montano and Kasprzyk on the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), and the Integrated Behavioral Model (2008) states that TRA and TPB assume that the best predictor of human behavior is Intention, which is determined by attitude toward the behavior and social normative perceptions regarding it. With regard to the acceptability of DAPs upon hiring, these two theories help understand the behavior of HR Practitioners, specifically on their assessment of whether the applicant will make a good employee.

On Social Acceptance by Team Leaders and co-workers, traditional Social Psychology evaluates responses to attitudes having cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions (Vornholt, Uitdewilliigen, and Nijhuis, 2013). Cognitive acceptance refers to the thoughts and ideas of employees having a differently-abled co-worker. Its high level of acceptance shows that organizational members perceive the differently-abled employee as a full member of the organization, his or her disability is understood and that co-workers value the competence of the DAP. Affective Acceptance refers to the high level of affective acceptance signifies that colleagues do not have a reservation about the disability of their co-worker and do not have negative emotions while working with DAPs. Finally, Behavioral



GEO Academic Journal Vol. 3 No. 1 - 2022 series

Acceptance refers to the high level of acceptance in this dimension which signifies that common areas, events, and social activities are accessible to DAPs.

These three dimensions contribute to the concept of Social Acceptance. Any employee with a disability is accepted when he or she is treated as a full member of the organization. His or her fellow organizational members do not expect him or her to meet the standards but experience the disability as a natural part of the differently-abled person and reward his or her performance (Vornholt, Uitdewilliigen, and Nijhuis, 2013).

Design and Methods

This research made use of the Descriptive Case Study Design. Three

Differently Abled Persons are featured for this purpose. The researcher employed

Key Informant Interviews, Focus Group Discussions, and Surveys to gain insight into
the Differently Abled Persons in the BPO Industry. This study considered the 23

BPO companies in Bacolod City, Philippines, as identified by the Bacolod-Negros

Occidental Federation for Information and Communications Technology (BENEFIT).

These include sixteen (16) Call Centers, four (4) English as Second Language

Centers, and three (3) IT Service Providers. Participants are HR Managers, Talent

Acquisition Specialists, Differently-Abled Employees, and their Team Leaders and

Teammates.





ISN 2960-3986

GEO Academic Journal Vol. 3 No. 1 – 2022 series

A researcher-made guide question was used in the conduct of the Key Informant Interview, while a researcher-made questionnaire was used in the survey among Team Leaders to know the social acceptance and work performance of the DAPS.

It was already the height of the Covid-19 pandemic when this study was conducted. Among the twenty-three (23) BPOs, six (6) Call Centers gave their permission to participate in the study, as one (1) ESL and two (2) IT Service Providers. Other BPOs did not answer the research proposal via email, and/or office operations were on Work From Home status. The collection of data started in May and ended in August 2020.

Results and Discussions

Among the nine (9) participants, three (3) Call Centers have Differently-Abled Persons, while the six (6) others coming from various BPOs do not have DAPs primarily because no DAP has been applied in their company since inception.

Company A has Female DAP 1 is 43 years old, married, and a mother of two kids. She graduated BS in Business Administration. In a Key Informant Interview conducted with her, she explained that her gnarled hands were due to an overdose of medicine when she was diagnosed with rheumatic heart disease back when she was in first-year high school.

Table 1





1\$\$\\$2960-3986

GEO Academic Journal Vol. 3 No. 1 – 2022 series

Profile of Differently Abled Persons

	FEMALE DAP 1	MALE DAP	FEMALE DAP 2
Company Code	Company A	Company B	Company C
Gender	Female	Male	Female
Civil Status	Married	Married	Single
Age	43	27	34
Highest Educational			
Attainment	Tertiary	Tertiary	Tertiary
Type of Disability	Deformed Hands	Limp	Dwarfism
	Customer Service	Customer Service	Customer Service
Job Position	Representative	Representative	Representative
Number of years in the			
company	4 years	5 years	5 years

Female DAP 1 ventured into a BPO job after her husband lost his job due to health reasons. In 2015, she convinced her husband to allow her to work to meet their family's daily needs. Part of her preparation was to enroll in a training school for BPO, where she earned her NC II for a BPO job. Currently, her job as a Customer





IN 2960-3986

GEO Academic Journal Vol. 3 No. 1 - 2022 series

Service Representative in the BPO is a big help to her husband's earnings from being a motorcycle driver.

Company B has a Male DAP. He is 27 years old, married, and a father to a 1-year and 6-month-old Baby Boy. He has a limp, which was caused by his polio since birth caused by an overdose of medicine when he was still a baby. He graduated BS in Information Technology and joined the BPO industry since it is related to his course. He got hired after several attempts in the screening process and is currently one of the best agents in their company.

Company C has Female DAP 2. Her condition is dwarfism. She stands about 3ft and is 34 years old. She is single and has two siblings. She finished her BS in Information Technology through a scholarship grant from LGU. Her mother developed goiter while carrying Female DAP 2, which could have caused her dwarfism. She chose to work in the BPO as a Customer Service Representative because of the salary.

These DAPs have been working in the Call Center for not less than four years. Aside from the salary, they chose to work in a BPO because it has allowances on top of the basic pay, the recruitment process is fast, and they feel no discrimination even when they were applying for a job.

Female DAP 1 was proud to tell that despite her condition, she continues to be a hardworking employee. She was awarded as a Top Agent in April 2018 because of the highest revenue she has generated in their account and high-Quality





GEO Academic Journal Vol. 3 No. 1 - 2022 series

Assurance scores. She is always chosen to be a part of the pioneering team each time there is a new account. Their company is UK-based, and her learning the British accent was very challenging. Out of her perseverance in training, she is now adept with the language. She aims to improve herself, especially in people skills and sees herself as a Team Leader in three years.

Male DAP is also proud to say he is an ace in their company. He was awarded as Top Agent in December 2016 when he outscored other agents in terms of Quality Assurance, Average Handle Time, and Attendance. Changes in the schedule have been a challenge for him yet. His manner of walking may differ from the others, but he claims, "I always think, like what other people say, disability is not a hindrance to success in your life." He is proud that despite his condition, he has communication skills, confidence, and knowledge in IT, which were all essential in getting a job. He added that when he has enough money, Male DAP wants to put up his computer shop.

Female DAP 2 is another achiever. In 2018, she was awarded the Best Agent of Company C, attributed to her high-Quality Assurance scores, Attendance, and Attitude toward Work. Her story, ever since she was a student, has always been an inspiration to the people she met. When she had her internship at Negros Occidental Language Information Technology Center in Bacolod City, her life story was made known to the school's directress, who in turn nominated her for the Office of the Vice President's Istoria ng Pag-ASA Award presented to her by the Vice President





IN 2960-3986

GEO Academic Journal Vol. 3 No. 1 - 2022 series

herself, Leni Robredo. Her father's death a few years back has inspired her to strive harder in her job. She has been saving money since her first BPO, and when she reaches P50,000, she is looking at resigning and putting up a sari-sari store in her hometown so she can be with her mother all the time.

They are one in advocating for their fellow DAPs to grab the opportunity of working in a BPO as the recruitment process is fast, the workplace is not discriminatory, and the pay is good.

The fast recruitment process is attributed to the demand for employees. BPOs especially Call Centers hire hundreds of Call Center Agents per month. This is not only because it needs hundred newly-hired agents to fill in the positions required but also to replenish the number of agents who have resigned. The HR Manager of Company B also shared that their company needs to hire 7,500 Call Center Agents to fill in all the seats of their two newly-built buildings. The challenge, however, is on the number of qualified applicants they could hire, not primarily to take the new seats but to take the seats vacated by resigned agents. And so, the hiring process is fast. In most cases, once applicants undergo the screening process and have met the job requirements, they get a chance to join training in the next 48 hours.

The workplace is not discriminatory. All applicants are on equal footing, according to the DAPs. They must undergo the same experiences as normal ones to get hired. Because of the nature of the business, the primary skills that HR is more particular with applicants are those who are able to pass the written and oral





GEO Academic Journal Vol. 3 No. 1 – 2022 series

communication skills and technical skills, especially in the field of Information

Technology. BPO treats the DAPs like any regular employee in the workplace, with
no special treatment or discrimination.

The pay in the BPO is good. Not only in the sense that it provides satisfying basic pay but also because it has allowances like rice, clothing, transportation, and communication allowances, among others. Bonuses are also sought, especially by agents who belong to the Sales Accounts. The DAPs also continue to display the value of self-confidence and self-respect. Companies A, B, and C are all Call Centers.

Table 2

DAPs' Profile in the Company

	COMPANY A	COMPANY B	COMPANY C
Number of Hired DAPs since inception	4	Not determined	10
Current Number of Employees	1,000	4,000	1,000
Number of DAPs currently employed	1	20	3
Percentage of DAPs against the number of employees	0.10%	0.50%	0.30%
Awareness of RA 10524	Yes	Not aware	Yes



Not aware

GEO Academic Journal Vol. 3 No. 1 – 2022 series

Awareness of the Incentives that go along with RA 10524

Yes

Yes

Company A has accepted a total of 4 DAPs since its inception. It currently has 1 DAP with approximately 1,000 FTE or only .1% of its population. Company A is aware of RA 10524, yet their acceptance of DAPs is not motivated by the incentives that go along with it. It goes with the sense of fulfillment each time they help DAPs. Company B, with a population of almost 4,000 employees, currently has about 20 DAPs, equivalent to only .5%. The HR Manager cannot recall how many they've had since inception. It is not aware of RA 10524. They accept DAPs not because of the incentives but because it gives them a sense of pride. The HR Manager also expressed his thoughts on having DAPs in Company B, "For me, personally, because I am a nurse and a rehab nurse at one time, it's gratifying to see DAPs being able to enter and get hired. It gives you a good feeling that you were able to help them." Company C is also aware of RA 10524, yet their intention, like Company A, is also the sense of fulfillment. They have hired at least 10 DAPs since its inception. Company C's population is estimated at 1,000 employees, where there are 3 DAPs or equivalent to .3%. According to their HR Manager, they treat the DAPs fairly because they believe in their potential to soon become leaders of their organization.





12

ISN 2960-3986

GEO Academic Journal Vol. 3 No. 1 - 2022 series

The six (6) other BPOs which participated in the study showed no record of any DAP employed in their companies. These include three (3) Call Centers, one (1) English as Second Language Center, and two (2) IT Service Providers.

A Key Informant Interview conducted among the HR Managers revealed that among these remaining participants, five (5) BPOs, eighty-three percent (83%) said no DAP has applied in their company. In contrast, one of them (English as Second Language Center or ESL) or seventeen percent (17%) mentioned that their client prefers to have somebody who is more physically appealing.

Sixty-six point sixty-seven percent (66.67%) of these companies are open to accepting DAPs, and they stressed that part of their organizational culture is equality. They have never discriminated against applicants for as long as they are qualified. Sixteen point sixty-seven percent (16.67%), however, representing one Call Center, Company E, albeit shows no discrimination, considers hiring a DAP a challenge for them, especially regarding training. Another sixteen point sixty-seven (16.67%) of the participants on the onset made it clear that face value as part of its hiring criteria is client dictated.

When asked if all these nine (9) BPOs are aware of the RA 10542, thirty-three point thirty-three percent (33.33%) are aware, while sixty-six point sixty-seven percent (66.67%) are not aware.

To know how socially accepted these DAPs are, the researcher conducted a Focus Group Discussion among the Teammates of these Differently-Abled Persons.





GEO Academic Journal Vol. 3 No. 1 – 2022 series

According to them, DAPs are no different from other employees in the workplace, so they treat them the way they treat their usual colleagues. DAPs, according to them, serve as their motivation to work as they display independence, productivity, and sociability.

Table 3

Characteristics of DAPs as described by their Teammates

	FEMALE DAP 1	MALE DAP	FEMALE DAP 2
Company Code	Company A	Company B	Company C
Number of years in the	4 years	5 years	5 years
company			
	She is very vocal;	He deals with	She is friendly
How communicative is	very expressive.	people like any	to everyone.
the Differently-Abled	She's like a	other normal	She is very good
Person in your Team?	mother to all of	employee in the	at her
	us.	office.	communication
			skill.
What wins and	She knows how	No challenges	We don't have
challenges have you	to deal with all	were	any issue having
experienced while	people in the	encountered.	her as our
working with a	office.		teammate or
Differently-Abled	We treat her		co-employee.
Person?	fairly, like how		As a matter of
	we treat other		fact, she even is



15 1 2960-3986

GEO Academic Journal Vol. 3 No. 1 - 2022 series

people in the a motivation to office. all of us. Challenges, there's nothing much except that during emergencies, it is hard for her to easily get out because she can't reach the control of our door. She is very good As a Team member, She serves as an He is punctual what can you say about inspiration to all and a good at her the contribution of the performer. attendance. of us. Differently-Abled She contributes Persons in your Team? good scores for the Team. How participative are She is very vocal. Despite her He has a strong the Differently-Abled She is even the condition, she is personality. He is active and a Persons in your team one organizing an extrovert. during meetings or events for us. friend to She joins in all team-building Very trustworthy. everyone. our activities activities?





GEO Academic Journal Vol. 3 No. 1 - 2022 series

and has never been aloof.

Female DAP 1 knows how to deal with people. She has been cooperative and is familiar with almost all the company policies. According to one of her teammates, Female DAP 1 gave us the courage to fight for our rights because she stood for us. She is very vocal, trustworthy, and inspiring to everyone in the company.

Male DAP is a friend to everyone. In the five years he has stayed in the company, he has always been participative, a team player, and independent. He has never been bothered by his condition. His teammates agree in saying that Male DAP always excels. One of his teammates shared how amazed she is with Male DAP, "We find things difficult for him, but it's not manifested in how he acts. He is strong. He always offers help. He even has more friends compared to us, and yes, even with the guards."

Female DAP 2 always finds her way to get solutions to problems or work-related cases she finds difficult. Her condition did not hinder her from doing her job and establishing good relationships with the people in the office. Her teammates stressed that there is no discrimination in their workplace. Female DAP 2 has been too friendly, good in attendance, and has high scores, which makes their Team outshine the others.





GEO Academic Journal Vol. 3 No. 1 - 2022 series

Table 4 presents the performance of the DAPs and their social acceptance as perceived by their Team Leaders.

The figures shown under each scale represent the number of respondents who chose the corresponding rate with the following legend:

- 4 Strongly Agree
- 3 Agree
- 2 Disagree
- 1 Strongly Disagree

One hundred percent (100%) of the Team Leader respondents Strongly
Agree or show no objection to the statements: (1) Employees do not mind having
Differently-Abled Persons in the workplace; (2) Differently-Abled Persons easily
mingle with their teammates; (3) Differently-Abled Persons easily mingle with their
co-workers; (4) Differently-Abled Persons actively participate in team-building
activities. Sixty-six percent (66.66%) Strongly Agree or show no objection to the
statement that Employees treat Differently-Abled Persons the same as the abled
persons. While thirty-three percent (33%) Agree or have the same opinion with the
statement. Sixty-six point sixty-six percent (66.66%) Strongly Agree that DifferentlyAbled Persons display company values. At the same time, thirty-three point thirtythree percent (33.33%) Agree. Sixty-six point sixty-six percent (66.66%) Agree that





15 1 2960-3986

GEO Academic Journal Vol. 3 No. 1 – 2022 series

Differently-Abled Persons comfortably share whether positive or negative feelings with the Team Leader. While only thirty-three point thirty-three percent (33.33%) Strongly Agree. Sixty-six point sixty-six percent (66.66%) Agree that Differently-Abled Persons proactively share ideas or thoughts to strengthen team bonds. While thirty-three point thirty-three percent (33.33%) Strongly Agree with the statement.

Table 4

DAPs Work Performance and Social Acceptance as Perceived by their Team

Leaders.

		RA	TING :	SCALE	
ON S	SOCIAL ACCEPTANCE	4	3	2	1
1	Employees do not mind having Differently-Abled Persons in the workplace.	3			
2	Employees treat Differently-Abled Persons the same as the abled persons.	2	1		
3	Differently-Abled Persons easily mingle with their teammates.	3			
4	Differently-Abled Persons easily mingle with their co-workers.	3			
5	Differently-Abled Persons display company values.	2	1		
6	Differently-Abled Persons comfortably share whether positive or negative	4	2		
6	feelings with the Team Leader.	1	2		
7	Differently-Abled Persons actively participate in team-building activities.	3			



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18

ISN 2960-3986

GEO Academic Journal Vol. 3 No. 1 - 2022 series

8	Differently-Abled Persons proactively share ideas or thoughts to strengthen team bonds.	1	2
ON W	ORK PERFORMANCE		
1	Differently-Abled Persons possess the appropriate job qualifications	3	
	(communication, soft, and listening skills).	3	
2	Differently-Abled Persons manifest capability in performing daily tasks.	3	
3	Differently-Abled Persons are as productive as abled workers by hitting daily	3	
	targets.	J	
4	Differently-Abled Persons show eagerness to learn during coaching sessions.	3	
5	Differently-Abled Persons are observed to apply lessons taught during	3	
	coaching sessions.	J	
6	Differently-Abled Persons are dependable - lower in tardiness, absenteeism,	2	1
	and turnover.	_	-
7	Differently-Abled Persons are able to hit monthly targets based on KPI.	3	
8	Differently-Abled Persons display compassion to the team by helping other	2	1
	members accomplish the goal.	۷	1

Aside from the DAPs social relationship with Teammates, one-hundred percent (100%) of the Team Leaders Strongly Agree or show no objections to the statements that (1) Differently Abled Persons possess the appropriate job qualifications (communication, soft and listening skills); (2) Differently Abled Persons





GEO Academic Journal Vol. 3 No. 1 - 2022 series

manifest capability in performing daily tasks; (3) Differently Abled Persons are as productive as abled workers by hitting daily targets; (4) Differently Abled Persons show eagerness to learn during coaching sessions; (5) Differently Abled Persons are observed to apply lessons taught during coaching sessions; and (6) Differently Abled Persons are able to hit monthly targets based on KPI. Sixty-six point sixty-six percent (66.66%) of the Team Leaders Strongly Agree that Differently Abled Persons are dependable - lower in tardiness, absenteeism, and turnover. While thirty-three point thirty-three percent (33.33%) Agree with the statement. Sixty-six point sixty-six percent (66.66%) of the Team Leaders also Strongly Agree that Differently Abled Persons display compassion to the team by helping other members accomplish the goal. While thirty-three point thirty-three percent (33.33%) Agree with the statement.

Among the three types of BPOs which participated in the study, the Call Centers and IT Service providers have expressed that having Differently Abled Persons in their companies is welcome. To them, there should be no discrimination. Understandably, the English as Second Language Training Center looks into their employees' face value and other physical features.

Conclusions

After conducting the study, the researcher concluded that this study affirmed the Theories of Reasoned Action, Planned Behavior, and Self-concordance. The Human Resources Department perform the behavior of accepting DAPs because





151 2960-3986 20

GEO Academic Journal Vol. 3 No. 1 - 2022 series

they believe in their abilities. At the same time, like any breadwinners, DAPs have needs to satisfy. They wanted to build their self-esteem and avoid the feeling of shamefulness. With this, the collaboration among the BPO, the LGU, and the Academe is a great start to advance the interest of the Differently Abled Persons.

The Differently Abled Persons are treated no differently from other applicants in the BPO Industry. They undergo the same process as any other applicants. The Recruitment Manager of Company B shared that "as long as the employee is capable of taking in calls, use the keyboard and are able, then we give them the opportunity." Once these DAPs are hired, the BPOs want them to feel that they are like regular employees. They do not receive any special treatment like the schedule of work or even special workstations. The BPOs do not label them as DAPs, which could also be why when the HR Managers were asked about the number of DAPs in their company, they gave the researcher the number they could best recall. The BPO industry does not discriminate, and hiring DAPs is more of a Corporate Social Responsibility.

Recommendations

Based on the results of the study, the following recommendations are forwarded:

 Propose a project that advances the Differently Abled Persons' interest and helps fill in the demand for talents in the BPO Industry.





GEO Academic Journal Vol. 3 No. 1 - 2022 series

Solicit the extent of support of the Local Government Unit, specifically of the
 Office of the Congressman, to lobby in the Lower House for the promotion of
 awareness of RA 10524.

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1 1 2960-3986 23

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1\$\frac{1}{2}960-3986

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