

RECRUITMENT, SELECTION, AND HIRING PRACTICES FOR ACCEPTABILITY AND INCLUSION FOR PWDS IN THE FOOD INDUSTRY

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ABSTRACT

In the Philippines, the Magna Carta for Persons with Disabilities was established to provide equal rights to PWDs. However, their potential remains untapped due to various barriers they face in employment. Thus, this study examines the extent of acceptability and inclusion of PWDs for employment at selected food establishments in Manila. A descriptive-correlational research design using Pearson's R correlation was utilized to analyze the interrelationship between recruitment, selection, and hiring practices and the acceptability and inclusion of PWDs in the food service industry. Findings indicate that the relationships between recruitment, selection, hiring, and acceptability and inclusion practices regarding PWDs were strongly correlated, highlighting the interconnectedness of these processes in fostering a more inclusive work environment. This study suggests that adopting inclusive employment strategies may foster a more diverse workforce and address gaps in workforce inclusivity within the industry.

Keywords: *Acceptability, hiring practices, inclusivity, recruitment practices, PWDs, selection practices.*

INTRODUCTION

Persons with disabilities (PWDs) are individuals with long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments in interaction with various barriers that may hinder their full and equal participation in society (World Health Organization, 2011). Despite legal protections, PWDs continue to face systemic discrimination and disproportionately high unemployment rates compared to non-disabled individuals (Gupta & Priyadarshi, 2020). Inaccessible recruitment systems, attitudinal biases, and limited workplace accommodations often constrain their career development.

In the Philippines, Republic Act No. 7277, or the Magna Carta for Persons with Disabilities, affirms the right of PWDs to equal employment opportunities. However, implementation gaps persist. As of 2023, only 20.5% of the 1.44 million registered Filipino PWDs were employed, with most working in informal or low-wage sectors (Philippine Statistics Authority [PSA], 2024; Pedron, 2024). This underemployment reflects broader challenges in inclusive hiring, such as job matching, reintegration barriers, and employer misconceptions about disability and productivity. Their potential often remains untapped due to various barriers they face in employment (Espinosa, 2023). Of the 1,187,563 Filipino PWDs registered with the National Council on Disability Affairs (NCDA), only 353,000, or about 20%, were part of the workforce as of 2022.

The literature highlights study gaps in the low employment rates of persons with disabilities (PWDs). For instance, inclusive hiring practices are not merely ethical imperatives—they are strategic interventions that can improve employment rates, foster diverse workplace cultures, and enhance organizational resilience (Kalargyrou et al., 2019; Gewurtz et al., 2016). However, a critical gap remains in human resource (HR) literature: while prior studies have explored job satisfaction (Heera & Devi, 2016; Vornholt et al., 2013), workplace discrimination (Kim et al., 2020; Luo & Wang, 2017), and employer attitudes (Mahmud, 2009; Mansour, 2009), few have examined how recruitment and selection processes themselves shape the inclusion of PWDs—particularly in service industries where communication and customer interaction are central. This study addresses that gap by focusing on two key constructs: workplace acceptability, defined as the

degree to which PWDs perceive the work environment as welcoming, respectful, and conducive to their participation (Marzo Campos et al., 2020); and inclusion, understood as the active integration of PWDs into organizational structures, roles, and cultures, beyond mere tokenism (Shore et al., 2018). These constructs are especially relevant in the food service sector, where deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals face unique barriers due to communication demands and customer-facing roles.

Thus, by examining inclusive recruitment practices and their relationship to workplace acceptability and inclusion, this study contributes to the advancement of Sustainable Development Goals—SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities). It also offers practical insights for hospitality businesses seeking to align with evolving social expectations, enhance brand equity, and reduce turnover through inclusive employment strategies. While the focus is on food establishments, the implications extend to broader hospitality contexts, reinforcing the value of ethical and inclusive HR frameworks. This builds stronger partnerships between companies and disability groups, reducing workplace stigma associated with disability and improving the availability of accommodations (Gewurtz et al., 2016).

This study seeks to raise awareness and offer beneficial insights to the food service industry, encouraging inclusivity by hiring persons with disabilities. Despite representing less than a quarter of the total population of PWDs in the Philippines—numbering around 99,319 individuals—this paper specifically focuses on those who are deaf or hard of hearing. This focus stems from the limited employment opportunities for deaf individuals in the food service industry, where communication is critical. Research suggests that deaf individuals encounter unique barriers to employment, including misconceptions about their abilities and a lack of inclusive workplaces. Adopting inclusive employment strategies may foster a more diverse workforce and address gaps in workforce inclusivity within the industry. Hospitality businesses may find that implementing these strategies

aligns with societal expectations for inclusivity, potentially enhancing brand image and customer perception. Additionally, the data suggests that investing in training and mentorship programs could support retaining employees with disabilities, potentially reducing turnover costs over time. While this study focuses on food establishments, the implications may extend to other areas within the hospitality sector. Overall, exploring inclusive employment practices for PWDs supports hospitality leaders in developing or enhancing diversity initiatives, which could contribute to a more supportive and inclusive industry culture.

The research aims to examine the recruitment, selection, and hiring practices in employing persons with disabilities (PWDs) in the food service industry in Manila and to determine the relationship between employment practices, acceptability, and inclusion in mainstream employment in the industry. Specifically, it seeks to answer the following questions: (1) What is the respondents' assessment of the recruitment, selection, and hiring of PWDs in the food service industry? (2) What is the extent of acceptability and inclusion of PWDs for employment in the food service industry? (3) Is there any significant correlation between the recruitment, selection, and hiring practices and the acceptability and inclusion of PWDs for employment in the food service industry? Moreover, (4) What strategic interventions can be developed to enhance the hiring process for persons with disabilities in the food service industry?

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored in the classic Resource-Based Theory (RBT) of Barney (1991), which posits that sustainable competitive advantage stems from resources that are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable. RBT emphasizes internal organizational capabilities—particularly human resources—as key drivers of long-term performance (Kozlenkova, Samaha, & Palmatier, 2014). It provides a strategic lens for evaluating how firms leverage unique assets, including inclusive HR practices, to differentiate themselves in competitive markets.

Barney (2001) later expanded this framework to highlight the strategic role of human capital in achieving organizational goals and fostering innovation. Human resources are not only operational assets but also strategic levers for diversity, equity, and inclusion. In this context, inclusive employment—especially of persons with disabilities (PWDs)—is reframed from a social obligation to a strategic opportunity (Alemany & Vermeulen, 2023). Organizations that embrace disability inclusion tap into underutilized talent pools, enhance workforce diversity, and reflect the heterogeneity of their consumer base (Kalargyrou & Volis, 2014). The authors found that hospitality firms implementing disability inclusion initiatives reported benefits such as improved employee morale, customer satisfaction, and brand reputation. These findings align with Miethlich (2019), who emphasized that employing PWDs contributes to cost efficiency, reduced turnover, increased reliability, and enhanced organizational loyalty. Dibben et al. (2002) similarly argued that disability-inclusive employment practices can strengthen organizational identity and stakeholder trust, especially in service-oriented industries.

By integrating RBT, this study underscores the strategic value of inclusive recruitment, selection, and hiring practices. RBT posits that organizations gain a competitive advantage by leveraging unique, valuable, and inimitable resources—including human capital. In this context, disability inclusion is positioned not only as a moral imperative but also as a source of operational strength and innovation, particularly salient in the food service sector, such as restaurants, catering services, institutional food operations, and hotel-based dining facilities. This is a rapidly expanding domain within hospitality characterized by high customer interaction, fast-paced service delivery, and labor-intensive roles, and each demanding a workforce

that is adaptable, empathetic, and responsive to diverse customer needs. Given its reliance on frontline employees and its vulnerability to high turnover and burnout, the food service sector presents both a challenge and an opportunity for inclusive human resource strategies. This framework supports the study's aim to promote inclusive HR strategies that not only enhance employee engagement and retention but also generate broader social impact—benefiting both businesses and marginalized communities.

Conceptual Framework

In depicting the overall purpose of the study, the researchers design a conceptual framework anchoring on the resource-based theory of Barney (1991) and from the studies of Bonaccio, Connelly, Gellatly, et al., (2019), and Oyadiran (2023) shown in Figure 1.

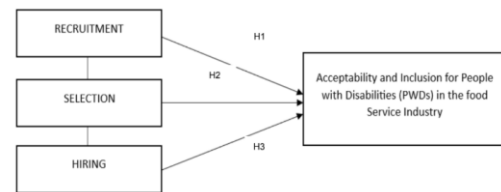


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework (author)

Literature Review

The literature review explores three key themes relevant to the study: (1) human resource management in the food service industry, (2) recruitment, selection, and hiring practices, and (3) workplace acceptability and inclusivity for persons with disabilities (PWDs)

General Recruitment Practices in the Food Service Industry

Human resource management (HRM) in the food service industry shares core functions with other sectors—such as payroll, compliance, and staffing—but is uniquely shaped by high turnover, customer-facing roles, and service quality demands. Employee retention is particularly critical, as it directly influences customer satisfaction and operational stability (Reich, n.d.).

Reward systems, including promotions, incentives, and training programs, have been shown to improve retention and motivation among food service employees (Awolusi & Jayakody, 2021). Carter (2023) emphasizes that HR managers in hospitality must foster motivation and satisfaction to ensure consistent service delivery and organizational success. Similarly, HR Cloud (2023) reports that effective HR practices in restaurants contribute to lower turnover, better customer experiences, and improved financial performance. While HR is increasingly recognized as a driver of inclusion, disability-related HR strategies remain underexplored in food service contexts. Schloemer-Jarvis, Bader, and Böhm (2022) note that disability inclusion within HRM is often fragmented across disciplines, limiting its practical application in industry-specific settings.

Inclusive Recruitment for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs)

Inclusive recruitment refers to HR practices that actively remove barriers and promote equitable access for marginalized groups, including PWDs. Barba-Sánchez, Ortiz-García, and Olaz-Capitán (2019) argue that fostering a socially inclusive environment is essential for integrating PWDs into the workforce. Their study highlights that social barriers—not impairments—are the primary obstacles to employment, and that entrepreneurship and tailored recruitment can serve as pathways to inclusion.

Hagner, Dague, and Phillips (2015) found that workplace culture plays a pivotal role in the inclusion of employees with disabilities. Their

research revealed that stronger workplace cultures correlate with higher levels of social integration and acceptance of PWDs, underscoring the importance of HR-led cultural interventions.

Kulkarni and Valk (2010) explored how HR managers and employees with disabilities perceive organizational practices related to entry, integration, and development. Their findings suggest that both groups often avoid highlighting disability due to stigma, resulting in underutilization of PWD talent. This calls for proactive HR policies that normalize disability as a form of diversity and provide structured support.

Vornholt, Uitdewilligen, and Nijhuis (2013) conducted a comprehensive review of factors affecting workplace acceptance of PWDs. They identified three key influences: coworker attitudes, organizational culture, and individual characteristics. Their work supports the notion that inclusion is not merely about hiring but about fostering environments where PWDs are respected, supported, and socially integrated.

Collectively, these studies affirm that inclusive recruitment is not a peripheral HR function but a strategic imperative. In the food service industry—where communication, teamwork, and customer interaction are central—tailored recruitment and onboarding processes for PWDs can enrich workplace diversity, challenge stigma, and elevate organizational outcomes.

Recruitment, Selection and Hiring Practices

The *recruitment* process is a lengthy and strategic procedure that helps organizations find potential competent candidates. It involves conducting ongoing research to identify the most suitable employees for the business. Recruitment practices help organizations attract top talent (Peek, 2019). In connection with this, organizations place high value on job analysis and job descriptions, adhering to the required standards for recruitment (Miano, 2019). According to Abbas, Shah, and Othman (2021), HR professionals play a pivotal role in recruitment, beginning with identifying staffing needs and narrowing down applicants to select the most qualified candidates. Afterward, HR professionals narrow down the applications and select the most qualified candidates.

The module Management of Food Service by Priyadharsini (n.d.) outlines four steps in the recruitment process. The first step is determining the vacancy, which involves a detailed analysis of the vacant position. Next, a job analysis is conducted, in which HR describes and specifies the expected standards for the job. Following that, the focus shifts to attracting potential candidates. Priyadharsini (n.d.) emphasizes the importance of attracting the most competent candidates, especially in the food service industry. Lastly, a shortlist of candidates is created.

HRM must explore beyond traditional labor sources and establish recruitment methods that involve and promote candidates, including persons with disabilities (PWDs) (Kalargyrou, 2014; Kalargyrou & Volis, 2014, as cited in Kyprianou, 2020). Businesses that recognize the importance of looking beyond typical candidate sources and appreciate the benefits of diversity and inclusion in the workplace are key to success in the 21st-century economy (Henry, Petkauskos, Stanislawzyk, & Vogt, 2014, as cited in Kyprianou, 2020).

When recruiting PWD candidates in the food service sector, a 2022 report by the National Restaurant Association indicated that employers have partnered with several disability organizations. These organizations assign workers to restaurants, cover the cost of job training, and create training materials specifically tailored for individuals with disabilities.

In this context, a study recommends that HRM explore available government and NGO resources to recruit competent PWD candidates (Kyprianou, 2020).

Selection can be defined as evaluating candidates' qualities, expertise, and experience to reduce the applicant pool and identify the most suitable person for the position. This typically involves conducting interviews and using various tests and assessments to evaluate each candidate. The objective is to recruit individuals with the necessary skills in line with the company's requirements while also adhering to legal requirements regarding Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) (Zulmi, Prabandari, & Sudiro, 2021). A list of selection methods was addressed by Hayes et al., as cited by Schloemer-Jarvis, Bader, and Bohm (2021), which includes personality inventories, work samples, and interviews, all evaluated for their fairness and relevance to the job requirements. However, the research lacks detailed information on most methods, with articles primarily focusing on unstructured interviews, which show mixed outcomes regarding their suitability and relevance (Dela Cruz, 2023).

In comparison, it was discovered that PWDs were selected and recruited based on their abilities and potential, with a focus on adhering to policies promoting inclusivity and equal employment opportunities. Additionally, non-governmental organizations provide effective training and development programs to support the professional growth of employees with disabilities in the Philippines. Similarly, in the United States, employers are required to offer reasonable accommodations to enable qualified workers with disabilities to fulfill essential job functions. This is due to anti-discrimination laws, such as the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, which aims to protect individuals with disabilities from discrimination and ensure equitable opportunities in employment (Iwanaga et al., 2021). However, despite national, regional, and international laws, individuals with disabilities worldwide continue to face barriers to employment (Jimenez, 2023).

Short-term *hiring* helps a company fill a role (Peek, 2019). The process consists of four phases: sourcing, screening, interviewing, and selection. Sourcing involves creating a candidate pool and screening it to select those qualified for interviews. After the interview, offers are given to the chosen applicants (Raghavan, Barocas, Kleinberg, & Levy, 2020). Some employment practices enable online job applications, providing accessibility to individuals with disabilities, particularly those with mobility limitations and visual impairments, through features such as screen readers and keyboard navigation (Oregon Restaurant & Lodging Association, 2023). It is also more cost-effective than hosting interviews in person. Workplace accommodations are often necessary to facilitate effective job performance for individuals with disabilities, including providing written materials in accessible formats and offering flexible work schedules or remote work opportunities (Shrove, 2022).

Acceptability and Inclusivity in the Food Service Industry

By embracing diversity, practices positively impact employees, including those with disabilities. Human resource management, in particular, facilitates and supports the employability of persons with disabilities (PWDs) (Khan, Korac-Kakabadse, Skouloudis, & Dimopoulos, 2019). The employment of PWDs has been included in the CSR agenda of some business enterprises, with the intention of enhancing their public image by hiring PWDs. Businesses create more welcoming and supportive environments for employees with disabilities to provide inclusivity and equal access to opportunities and resources in the workplace (Khan et al., 2019). This review provides a comprehensive assessment of the literature on HR practices that potentially foster the acceptability of PWDs in the workforce. Inclusive employment ensures that employees feel valued, welcome,

and included, rather than isolated. An inclusive workplace accommodates all kinds of differences and disabilities, making individuals feel welcome and valued for their contributions. Poses (2019) found that inclusive workplaces provide employees with disabilities the same opportunities for advancement as their co-workers.

Furthermore, employees with disabilities who interact with customers face-to-face in the food services industry are more likely to foster customer loyalty, particularly among customers who prioritize inclusion (Lindsay et al., 2019). Despite the obstacles related to their disability status, PWDs demonstrate a strong focus on customer satisfaction and service. They overcome barriers to build successful, sustainable careers (Doan et al., 2023). Human resources promote a diverse workforce and equal opportunity for PWD employees, ensuring inclusive employment. Career sustainability for PWDs is dynamic and directly linked to their evolving employability in the food services industry (Richardson & McKenna, 2020). Acceptability and inclusivity for all workers, including PWDs, enhance the overall success and reputation of businesses, particularly in the food services industry (De Vos et al., 2020). The following hypotheses were proven during the study: (H1) Recruitment practices have a significant correlation with the acceptability & inclusion of PWDs for employment in the Food Service Industry. (H2) Selection practices have a significant correlation with the acceptability & inclusion of PWDs for employment in the Food Service Industry. (H3) Hiring practices have a significant correlation with the acceptability & inclusion of PWDs for employment in the Food Service Industry.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The researcher employs a descriptive-correlational research design to determine if there is a significant correlation between human resource practices, specifically recruitment, selection, and hiring practices, and the perceived acceptability and inclusion of PWDs in the food service industry. Correlational models allow researchers to identify patterns and associations between independent and dependent variables, offering predictive insights without manipulating the variables directly (Pearl, 2009). This design is appropriate for exploring how inclusive HR practices may influence the integration and acceptance of PWDs in service-oriented environments.

Respondents of the Study

The study focuses on deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals employed in food establishments. This subgroup was purposively selected due to the unique communication challenges they face in customer-facing roles, which are prevalent in the food service sector. Research indicates that deaf individuals often encounter barriers such as limited access to verbal instructions, exclusion from informal workplace interactions, and misconceptions about their ability to perform service tasks (Kuenburg, Fellingner, & Fellingner, 2016).

Sampling Frame and Technique

Respondents were selected using purposive sampling, targeting deaf/hard-of-hearing employees working in food establishments across Manila. The sampling frame included a mix of independent restaurants, mid-sized chains, and quick-service outlets to capture a diverse range of organizational contexts. Establishments were identified through disability advocacy networks, local government employment programs, and referrals from deaf community organizations. Inclusion criteria required that participants be formally employed, have at least three months of tenure, and self-identify as deaf or hard of hearing. To determine the minimum sample size, G*Power 3.1.9.4 was used, considering the model's largest number of predictors and statistical power parameters. Based on an effect size of 0.25, a significance level (α) of 0.05, and a power ($1-\beta$) of 0.80, the

computed sample size was 119 respondents (Hair et al., 2014; Kang, 2021).

Respondent's Profile.

Table 1 presents the demographic breakdown of the 123 respondents. The largest age group was 26–30 years (35.0%), followed by 31–35 years (30.9%), and 36 years and above (20.3%). The smallest group was 21–25 years (13.8%), indicating a workforce skewed toward older age brackets.

Table 1. Profile of the Respondents

Age	Frequency (N-123)	Percent
21-25 years	17	13.8
26-30 years	43	35.0
31-35 years	38	30.9
36 years and above	25	20.3
Job Position		
Service Crew/ Crew	51	41.5
Food Server/Server	36	29.3
Kitchen Staff Steward/Assistant	14	11.4
Cashier	6	6.5
Full Time Barista/ Bartender	6	4.9
Senior Associate	3	2.4
Runner	2	1.6
Management Trainee	1	.8
Assistant Cook	1	.8
Back of House	1	.8
Company Affiliation		
Caravan Food Group Inc / Elait / Over dough	30	24.4
Jollibee	17	17.1
Shakey's / Gold Medal food	13	10.6
The Coffee Bean and Tea Leaf	13	10.6
Buko ni Frutas/Fruitas	10	8.1
Zark's Burgers	7	5.7
Jamaican Patty	6	4.9
Subway	5	4.1
Mcdonalds	4	3.3
Pizza Hut	4	3.3
Tomato Cannon	3	2.4
Greenwich	3	2.4
Max's	2	1.6
Burgeritto	1	.8
Yellow cab	1	.8
Llaollao	1	.8
Johnny's Kitchen	1	.8
Goldilocks	1	.8
Total	123	100

In terms of job position, the majority were service crew members (41.5%), followed by food servers (29.3%). Other roles included kitchen staff (11.4%), cashiers (6.5%), and baristas/bartenders (4.9%). Specialized roles such as senior associate, runner, and management trainee accounted for smaller proportions, suggesting that most deaf employees occupied front-line service roles.

Company affiliation data revealed that Caravan Food Group Inc. (Elait/Overdough) employed the largest share of respondents (24.4%), followed by Jollibee (17.1%), Shakey's/Gold Medal Food (10.6%), and The Coffee Bean and Tea Leaf (10.6%). The remaining respondents were distributed across various chains and franchises, indicating a concentration of employment in a few dominant companies.

Instrumentation

The researchers utilized a self-constructed survey questionnaire as the primary data collection instrument. It was divided into three sections: demographic profile, assessment of recruitment/selection/hiring practices, and evaluation of workplace acceptability and inclusion. Items were developed based on policies and guidelines from the National Council on Disability Affairs. To ensure validity, the instrument underwent face and content validation by three experts in HR, food service, and research methodology. The Research and

Publication Department of Colegio de San Juan de Letran also reviewed it. Following expert recommendations, a pilot test was conducted with 20 non-respondents to assess clarity, consistency, and reliability. The instrument yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.956, indicating excellent internal consistency (Nunnally, 1978).

Data Collection.

The data collection process was conducted in accordance with approved research protocols and institutional standards. Prior to implementation, the study was reviewed and validated by the Research and Publication Department of Colegio de San Juan de Letran to ensure methodological rigor and procedural compliance. The survey data were collected using a structured questionnaire administered through Google Forms. Distribution was carried out through a hybrid approach: the survey link was shared electronically with the food services sector's target respondents, and printed copies were also distributed face-to-face to ensure broader accessibility and participation. Respondents were given adequate time to complete the survey at their convenience. Consent forms were provided to both participating establishments and individual respondents prior to data collection, ensuring that participation was voluntary and informed. The survey instrument included a brief overview of the study's purpose, instructions for completion, and assurances regarding the use and handling of responses. Upon completion of the survey period, all responses were compiled, cleaned, and organized for statistical analysis using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Data were coded and stored securely, and any personal or confidential information was used exclusively for research purposes. All data were systematically disposed of following analysis, in accordance with institutional data handling protocols and the provisions of the Data Privacy Act of 2012.

Statistical Treatment of Data

The researcher employed appropriate statistical tools to analyze the data collected in this study. The following procedures were used:

Frequency counts and percentages were utilized to describe the demographic profile of the respondents, including variables such as age, gender, and years of service.

Weighted means and standard deviations were computed to determine the central tendency and variability of responses across the key constructs. The weighted mean allowed for the differential importance of data values, providing a more nuanced interpretation of the respondents' assessments of biophilic design, employee well-being, and workplace efficiency.

Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient (Pearson's r) was applied to examine the statistical relationships between recruitment, selection, and hiring practices and the acceptance and inclusion of persons with disabilities (PWDs) in the food service industry. This analysis identified the strength and direction of associations among the variables under investigation.

Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to ethical principles that prioritized the dignity, autonomy, and rights of persons with disabilities (PWDs), in alignment with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD, 2006). Recognizing the heightened risk of social exclusion and discrimination, the research design incorporated safeguards to ensure voluntary participation, informed consent, and data confidentiality.

Informed consent was facilitated through accessible formats tailored

to participants' communication needs, including plain language forms, visual aids, and supported decision-making protocols (Lindsay, Cagliostro, & Carafa, 2019). Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without penalty. Given the sensitivity of disability-related data, a comprehensive data protection plan was implemented. All personal identifiers were removed through pseudonymization, and data were stored in encrypted, password-protected files. Access was restricted to the principal investigator and authorized personnel only. These measures complied with the Philippine Data Privacy Act of 2012 and were guided by international standards such as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (Kulkarni & Gopakumar, 2022). The study also acknowledged the ethical imperative to avoid tokenism and ensured that PWDs were not merely subjects of inquiry but active contributors to knowledge production. Ethical review and approval were secured from the institutional ethics of Colegio de San Juan de Letran committee prior to data collection.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The assessment of recruitment, selection, hiring, and inclusion practices was conducted using mean scores and standard deviations, as summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Mean Scores of the Assessment of Recruitment, Selection and Hiring

Recruitment	Mean	Std Deviation	Descriptive Remarks
Recruitment	3.6280	.43108	Strongly agree
Selection	3.5886	.41945	Strongly agree
Hiring	3.6049	.40768	Strongly agree
Acceptability and inclusion	3.4217	.60148	Strongly agree

Note: 1.00–1.75 = Strongly Disagree 1.76–2.50 = Disagree 2.51–3.25 = Agree 3.26–4.00 = Strongly Agree

The descriptive summary reveals that all assessed dimensions received mean scores within the "Strongly Agree" range, indicating generally positive perceptions of inclusive HR practices among deaf and hard-of-hearing employees in food establishments. Recruitment practices scored the highest (mean = 3.6280), reflecting strong agreement with inclusive efforts at this stage. This suggests that companies offer equal opportunities to PWD applicants based on qualifications and provide the same terms, conditions, benefits, and incentives. The recruitment results indicate that food establishments actively engage in inclusive employment practices for PWDs. The hiring (mean = 3.6049) and selection (mean = 3.5886) functions also received strong support. These findings highlight the posting of detailed job descriptions, including essential functions for PWDs, indicating strong support for transparency in job advertisements and assistance with interpreters during the screening and evaluation process.

On the other hand, the acceptability and inclusion category had a slightly lower mean (3.4217), although it still indicates strong agreement. This finding suggests that the food establishments recognize PWDs' right to work in an inclusive and accessible environment. However, there is greater variability in responses, indicating differing views on specific inclusion measures, as reflected in the standard deviations, which suggests moderate consistency in responses. Inclusion practices showed the greatest variability (.60148). The results reflect positive perceptions of the establishments' employment policies and practices, fostering inclusion and preventing discrimination against PWD employees.

PWD employees. These results align with Johnson and Joshi (2021), who emphasized that inclusive recruitment is a foundational driver of

organizational diversity. Their study found that establishments adopting inclusive recruitment practices were more likely to maintain inclusive selection and hiring processes—a pattern consistent with the strong correlation ($r = .749$) observed between recruitment and selection in the present study. However, contrasting perspectives are offered by Adams and Thomas (2019), who argued that inclusive recruitment does not always translate into equitable selection and hiring. Their research identified persistent biases in the selection process that hindered PWDs from advancing to employment. This discrepancy suggests that while recruitment may set the tone for inclusion, organizational context and decision-making practices significantly influence outcomes.

Moreover, Kulkarni and Gopakumar (2022) emphasize that while recruitment and selection are essential for PWD inclusion, post-hiring efforts such as training and workplace accommodations are crucial for ensuring long-term inclusion. This aligns with the moderate correlations between recruitment, selection, hiring, and acceptability and inclusion practices, suggesting that fostering true inclusivity requires actions beyond hiring alone. Despite this, Perez and Murphy (2022) argue that post-hiring initiatives—such as continuous disability awareness training, workplace accommodations, and supportive organizational culture—are more important for creating an inclusive work environment than recruitment, selection, or hiring. They suggest that the moderate correlation between recruitment and inclusion practices ($r = .442$) in our study supports this view, indicating that while recruitment influences inclusion, additional factors are necessary for true inclusivity.

Correlation between the recruitment, selection, and hiring practices and the acceptability and inclusion of PWDs for employment in the food service industry is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Correlation Analysis

Variable	Recruitment	Selection	Hiring	Acceptability and Inclusion
Recruitment	1			
Selection	.749**	1		
Hiring	.703**	.777**	1	
Acceptability and Inclusion	.442**	.434**	.538**	1

Note: Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed), $N=123$ for all variables.

The results reveal statistically significant correlations among all variables, indicating strong interrelationships between inclusive HR practices and perceived workplace inclusion for PWDs. All correlations are significant at the 0.01 level, indicating strong associations between these variables. Recruitment and selection are highly correlated ($r = .749$), suggesting that establishments with inclusive recruitment practices are also likely to have inclusive selection processes. Recruitment is also strongly correlated with hiring ($r = .703$), indicating that effective recruitment strategies often lead to more inclusive hiring practices. A moderate correlation is observed between recruitment and acceptability and inclusion ($r = .442$), suggesting a relationship, though not as strong as with selection and hiring. Selection strongly correlates with hiring ($r = .777$), reflecting the alignment between these two employment processes.

Acceptability and inclusion show moderate correlations with recruitment ($r = .442$), selection ($r = .434$), and hiring ($r = .538$), indicating that while these processes influence inclusivity, they are not as tightly connected as the recruitment, selection, and hiring stages are to each other. These results underscore the interconnectedness of recruitment, selection, and hiring processes in fostering a more inclusive work environment for PWDs. As highlighted by Zulmi (2021), inclusive management practices—such as adherence to disability inclusion principles, supportive communication, flexible work arrangements, and accessible physical environments—play a critical role in fostering

equitable workplaces. Moreover, compliance with national disability laws and policies reinforces the legitimacy and sustainability of these practices. Acceptance and support, communication, flexibility, work-family culture, workload, and workplace physical circumstances were all factors that implicated the management of individuals with disabilities.

The findings of the study corroborate those of Kyprianou's (2020) study, which emphasizes the importance of Human Resources leveraging government and NGO resources to recruit qualified candidates with disabilities effectively. Furthermore, the selection and recruitment of PWDs were based on their abilities and potential, reflecting a clear commitment to adhering to policies that promote inclusivity and equal employment opportunities. However, Richardson and McKenna (2020) cautioned that while Human Resources advocates for a diverse workforce and equal opportunities for PWD employees, including inclusive employment within the food services industry, the sustainability of careers for PWDs is dynamic, tied to their evolving employability and workability. Persistent weak links between recruitment, selection, hiring practices, and inclusion suggest that equal opportunities for PWDs are not fully realized after hiring, highlighting a significant gap in employment practices. This study's moderate correlations between hiring and inclusion ($r = .538$) support this view, indicating that while inclusive hiring practices are foundational, they must be complemented by post-employment initiatives—such as disability awareness training, mentorship, and accommodations—to ensure sustained inclusion. These findings align with broader literature advocating for a holistic approach to disability inclusion that extends beyond recruitment and hiring alone.

Barriers to Employment of PWDs

Table 4 presents the results of the multiple-response checklist designed by the researchers to identify perceived barriers to employment for persons with disabilities (PWDs). Respondents were allowed to select all applicable items based on their personal experiences and beliefs. The advantage of using multiple-response questionnaires is their ability to efficiently capture respondents' views and attitudes without limiting their rights to provide accurate responses. They also provide insights into data analysis strategies. As Santos (2000) noted, multiple-response questionnaires are effective tools for capturing nuanced perspectives without restricting respondents' ability to provide accurate and comprehensive feedback.

Table 4. Identified Barriers to Employment of PWDs

Barriers for Employment	Frequency*	Percent*
1. Misconceptions regarding the capabilities of PWDs to work	32	26%
2. Negative attitudes of employers	46	37%
3. Social exclusion due to physical impairments	30	24%
4. Absence of providing assistive technology or devices (ex., Hearing Aid)	18	15%
5. Inadequate modifications to existing facilities to make them readily accessible and usable by employees with disabilities.	25	20%
6. Not modifying work policies or workplace rules specifically for individuals with disabilities.	15	12%
7. Misconceptions about the costs versus return on investment of integrating PWDs in the workforce.	21	17%
8. Often offered to do menial work.	15	12%
9. Limited Job Opportunities.	78	63%
10. Lack of access to training and seminars.	56	46%

Note: *Multiple response

The data outlines the barriers to employment faced by persons with disabilities (PWDs), as perceived by respondents. The most significant

barrier is limited job opportunities, reported by 63% of respondents, highlighting the scarcity of roles available to PWDs in the food service industry and reflects systemic exclusion from mainstream employment channels. Following this, lack of access to training and seminars (46%) suggests that professional development pathways for PWDs remain insufficiently supported.

Negative employer attitudes (37%) also emerged as a significant concern, indicating that workplace culture and implicit biases continue to hinder inclusive hiring. Misconceptions about PWD capabilities (26%) and social exclusion due to physical impairments (24%) further highlight the role of societal stigma and environmental barriers in limiting employment access.

Other notable barriers included the absence of assistive technologies (15%) and inadequate modifications to workplace infrastructure (20%), pointing to the need for improved accommodations and accessibility measures. Additionally, misconceptions about the financial implications of hiring PWDs (17%) and the tendency to assign them menial tasks (12%) reflect persistent stereotypes and undervaluation of PWD contributions.

These findings suggest that despite legal frameworks and advocacy efforts, significant challenges remain in achieving equitable employment for PWDs. Stereotypes about productivity, reluctance from management and coworkers, and customer biases continue to shape the employment landscape for individuals with disabilities.

The results are consistent with Aroonsrimorakot et al. (2020), who emphasized that PWD applicants in the labor market have historically faced challenges because “disability is often associated with social stigma or social disapproval in the labor markets” Similarly, Jahan and Holloway (2020) observed that “stigma stems from prejudice or from the belief that persons with disabilities are less productive than their non-disabled counterparts.” In contrast, Cheausuwantavee and Keeratipanthawong (2021) noted increased global awareness of PWD capabilities, as recognized in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, promoting inclusive policies to address employment issues and foster more inclusive societies.

Strategic Interventions

The findings of this study highlight the positive feedback on recruitment, selection, and hiring practices in food establishments regarding persons with disabilities (PWDs) in food service establishments. While these practices demonstrate promising strides toward inclusivity, further strategic interventions. These include Awareness and Training, Retention Strategies, Supportive Work Environment, Accessible Recruitment Channels, and Commitment to Inclusion.

Awareness and Training

Diversity Training. Implement training programs for hiring managers and staff to raise awareness about disabilities and inclusivity. Shen, Tang, and D’Netto (2020) highlight that diversity training improves attitudes toward PWDs and marginalized groups, reducing unconscious bias and attrition. Such programs ensure PWD candidates are fairly evaluated, creating welcoming workplaces that value qualifications over stereotypes.

Career Development Opportunities. Allow PWDs to receive free skills training from TESDA and NCDA and give them job positions in municipalities or barangays to have a stable income. Such programs lead to higher job satisfaction and retention. Kulkarni and Gopakumar (2022) emphasize that organizations that invest in the career

development of PWD employees see improved retention and long-term success.

Mentorship Program. Mentorship programs are critical in helping new hires with disabilities transition into the workforce. These programs provide guidance, advice, and support, making the integration process smoother for PWD employees. Lindsay, Cagliostro, and Carafa (2019) found that mentorship programs significantly improved job satisfaction and retention among PWDs, as employees felt more supported.

Accessible Recruitment Channels

Partnerships with Organizations. Collaborate with organizations specializing in job placement for individuals with disabilities, such as the Public Employment Service Office (PESO). PESO provides resources and information on best practices for inclusive hiring and recruiting, helping organizations develop effective strategies. They offer training programs to prepare PWDs for employment, equipping them with necessary skills and enhancing their employability. PESO can assist in advocating for policies that support the employment of PWDs, creating a more favorable environment for inclusive practices in organizations. Also, PESO can facilitate job matching by connecting employers with qualified PWD candidates, ensuring a better fit for both parties. This partnership with PESO makes fostering inclusive workplaces for PWDs in organizations vital.

Online Accessibility. The establishment needs to ensure that job postings and application processes are accessible on websites, such as Project Inclusion PWD Philippines accounts on Facebook. Von Schrader, Malzer, and Bruyère (2019) found that ensuring job postings and application portals are fully accessible to individuals with disabilities greatly increases the number of PWD applicants.

Assistive Technology Hearing Aids, adapted telephones, wheelchairs, magnifiers, etc., are assistive technologies that the company can utilize during the employment process for PWD applicants. Cheausuwantavee & Keeratipanthawong (2021) emphasized that assistive technology and devices help PWDs perform job functions effectively and efficiently and increase their self-esteem.

Commitment to Inclusion

Equal Opportunity. The organization should commit to providing equal employment opportunities to all individuals, regardless of disability status, through recruiting, hiring, and selecting PWD applicants based on qualification. Miller, Sabat, and Wilkerson (2020) found that companies with formal equal opportunity policies have significantly improved hiring outcomes and higher employee satisfaction among PWD employees, as these policies ensure consistent and fair treatment.

Diversity and Inclusion Goals. Establish specific goals and policy interventions for hiring and retaining disabled employees. Stone and Colella (2019) found that organizations that establish clear goals for recruiting and retaining PWDs see better results in terms of both the quantity and quality of PWD hires, as well as improved retention.

Create Disability-Focused Employee Resource Groups (ERGs). ERGs provide a supportive space for PWD employees, facilitating peer support and amplifying voices around needed policies. Allocating budgets to these groups and recognizing ERG contributions as valuable work (rather than unpaid volunteerism) reinforces company commitment to inclusion. ERGs can also assist in gathering feedback for continuous improvement in disability inclusion efforts (Kanarys).

Cultivate an Inclusive Culture: To reduce stigma, encourage understanding, and create an inclusive environment where employees

feel comfortable disclosing disabilities, implementing an employee storytelling initiative will help. This approach is mentioned by organizations like the Disability:IN and the Job Accommodation Network, which encourage companies to normalize discussions about disability by sharing personal stories and experiences.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the understudied gaps in recruitment, selection, and hiring practices concerning the workplace acceptability and inclusion of food establishments in Manila, Philippines. Results from the quantitative analysis indicated a strong correlation between recruitment, selection, hiring, and acceptability and inclusion practices regarding persons with disabilities (PWDs), such as providing equal opportunities to PWD applicants based on qualifications, also supporting equitable selection processes. Similarly, establishments with effective recruitment strategies often demonstrate more inclusive hiring practices. The study strongly endorses policies and practices that foster inclusion and prevent discrimination against PWD employees. Furthermore, in addressing the stigma and discrimination faced by PWDs in the food service industry, this study proposed strategic interventions to improve the recruitment, selection, and hiring processes for persons with disabilities, advancing inclusivity and equity in employment practices.

Implications of the Study

The practical and managerial implication of the study is providing the food service industry with a proposed strategic intervention to create a more inclusive working environment by developing an inclusive recruitment, selection, and hiring process that benefits both PWDs and the organization. Implementing strategic interventions aimed at inclusivity may positively influence the hospitality industry by fostering a more supportive and diverse workforce. Awareness and training programs, such as diversity and mentorship initiatives, could help reduce unconscious biases and improve job satisfaction, contributing to lower turnover rates. Accessible recruitment channels, including partnerships with organizations like PESO and accessible online portals, enable companies to attract a broader range of candidates, potentially enhancing recruitment effectiveness. Additionally, a commitment to inclusion—through equal opportunity policies and specific diversity goals—may create a fairer environment that benefits employees and customers, gradually strengthening the industry's reputation for inclusivity and adaptability.

Meanwhile, the study's results imply that although food establishments are generally supportive of inclusive hiring, there is a gap in providing PWD employees with consistent career development opportunities. To address this, establishments could implement targeted mentorship programs and career advancement workshops to support PWD employees' long-term growth. Initiatives such as mentorship pairings to help new PWD hires navigate their roles, along with leadership training and skill-building programs tailored for PWDs, encourage professional growth. By fostering a supportive work environment through these strategies, establishments may improve job satisfaction and retention among PWD employees and build a more inclusive workplace culture overall.

Limitations and Future Research

The study focused on deaf/hard-of-hearing employees, which limits the generalizability of findings across other disability groups. Future research should explore the experiences of individuals with physical, intellectual, and psychosocial disabilities to provide a more comprehensive understanding of inclusion in the food service sector.

Additionally, the study is limited to Manila and by expanding the scope to other geographical areas would offer broader insights into geographical variations in inclusive employment practices. Future researchers should also explore other sectors within the hospitality industry for a more comprehensive understanding of the HR practices. Furthermore, the quantitative nature of the study also limited the depth of respondent perspectives thus, future research should incorporate qualitative or mixed method approaches to capture richer, more nuanced data on PWD experiences, organizational culture, and policy implementation.

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