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# A Meta-Synthesis on the Employment of Visually Impaired Individuals in the Philippines

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**Abstract:** *This study provided a meta-synthesis of the difficulties, opportunities, and experiences of visually challenged people seeking employment in the Philippines. The study included 15 of the 343 studies that passed the screening process utilising a set of inclusion and exclusion criteria. The flow diagram for the Preferred Reporting Items for Meta-Analyses and Systematic Reviews was used to organize the chosen papers (PRISMA). We gathered pertinent research articles using the Publish or Perish programme and academic sources like Google Scholar and Scopus. Braun and Clarke's six-step thematic analysis was used in conjunction with constant comparison to identify 15 themes as well as 2 emergent meta-themes. According to the findings, visually impaired people face a variety of employment-related obstacles, including hiring discrimination and a lack of access to opportunities. Their ability to deal with the Philippine employment system has come to depend on their level of education, family support, and access to social assistance. In order to give visually impaired people recognition and more accessible career prospects, it is advised that there is a need for recognition, more training programmes, and enforcement of government rules.*

**Keywords:** *Meta-synthesis, Visual Impairment, Employment*

## I. INTRODUCTION

As fellow citizens of the world, people with disabilities are entitled to the same fundamental freedoms as everyone else, as well as the right to participate completely and equally in society. 2020 (UNESCO). The right to access education, training, culture, and information must be fully realized for every individual with a handicap. To ensure that individuals with disabilities can engage to the fullest extent possible, governments and international organizations must take major action (Sunberg Declaration, 2018). An Act to Promote the Return to Civil Employment and Vocational Rehabilitation of the Blind and Other Handicapped, or RA 1179 in the Philippines. The goal of Section 2 is to promote vocational training for the blind so that they can transition from being helpless to contributing members of society (National Council on Disability Affairs, n.d.). Compared to almost 50% of employed PWDs in metropolitan areas, just 16% of visually impaired PWDs work in rural areas. About 60% of visually impaired people living in rural regions who were unemployed were not looking for work. (Mina, 2013).

According to Bachelet, PWDs are granted the same rights as other citizens (2018). Voting rights, freedom of association, social security, court access, and educational opportunities. It is estimated that 1.44 million Filipinos, or 1.57 percent of the population, are disabled based on the 2010 Population and Housing Census. The age group from 15 to 49 has the highest prevalence of disability. The way in which PWDs, including persons who are visually impaired, are treated in society is one of the problems. But prejudice and social marginalization harm people with impairments. Accessibility to employment, social roles, and education has long been an issue.

Researchers are particularly interested in visual impairment because it is directly linked to impaired functioning, social marginalization, and a high chance of poor social and emotional adaptation. Vision is necessary for movement, sociability, and functioning. People who are visually handicapped are more likely to be unemployed in Europe. They are permanently disabled, belong to a manual socioeconomic class where employment is less satisfying, have less opportunity to gain new skills, are paid inadequately, and do not have paid employment. According to studies from France and the US, people with vision impairment make much less money than their non-disabled counterparts.

According to Brezin MD, Ph.D. et al 2018's study, people without disabilities make five times as much money from their professional activities as people with visual impairments. The majority (62.8%) of visually impaired people in the Philippines are masseurs, who are classified as technicians and associate professionals. The majority of the people with mobility impairments are laborers and unskilled workers (27.9%), representatives of governments and special interest groups (23.5%), and company executives, managers, managing proprietors, and supervisors (Mina, 2013).

According to data, the Philippines does not adequately recognise the visually impaired population in terms of employment, population, and severity of condition. To synthesize research papers on the employment of individuals with visual impairments conducted in the Philippines, this meta-synthesis was created (Mina, 2013).

Equal employment opportunities are guaranteed by the Magna Carta for Persons with Disabilities (National Council on Disability Affairs, n.d.). Giving someone the chance does not guarantee they will have a job. According to a study on visual impairments in Mississippi, the biggest barriers to employment were a lack of job prospects, negative employer attitudes, problems with mobility and transportation, a lack of access to print materials, and problems with adaptive technology and accommodations. (1998, Crudden et al.). Low levels of education, a lack of work experience, opportunities for employment in the community, PWD-friendly facilities, knowledge of relevant policies and programmes, and limited access to assistive technology and services because of functional limitations are non-physical barriers that contribute to the respondents' poor employment outcomes in the Philippines. (Mina, 2017). Disability rights legislation and improvements in accessible technology are crucial for ensuring equal access to employment (Branham & Kane, 2015).

#### Research Questions

Two review questions serve as the main guiding principles for this study:

- 1) What impact does visual impairment have on a person's day-to-day activities?
- 2) What difficulties do those who are visually impaired face when searching for employment?

## II. METHODOLOGY

### A. Research Design

The data pertaining to the employment access of visually impaired Filipino people in society were synthesized by the researcher using meta-synthesis.

By merging qualitative data, a meta-synthesis seeks to create a fresh perspective of the research field. It supports the creation of new hypotheses and should not be confused with a meta-analysis, which uses quantitative data to assess a theory. It basically generates ideas, including program theories, implementation theories, theories describing why an intervention works or doesn't, as well as hypotheses for future testing or comparison with trial findings (Temple University Libraries, 2022).

The purpose of this study is to collect qualitative data on the challenges, access, and experiences of visually impaired Filipinos. Relevant data will be filtered out in order to raise awareness about the reality of employment opportunities for visually impaired people in the Philippines.

### B. Search Strategy

In the scientific database Publish or Perish, phrases like "employee access," "visually impaired," "Philippines," and "challenges" were used to collect data.

Four searchers examined the data in this study. The initial researcher screened the studies using the vision impairment category for the Philippines, which emphasises employment. The studies were arranged by the studies' publishers, including Taylor & Francis, Elsevier, and Google Scholar, by the second researcher. The next researcher will use the exclusion approach to omit unavailable studies, such as books, full texts, or pertinent articles. All researchers using the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme will then examine any articles that satisfy the review's inclusion and exclusion criteria (CASP). The search strategy will be shown on the Prisma flow chart.

### C. Selection/Inclusion Criteria

The studies included in this review were chosen based on the following criteria: a study involving the employment of visually impaired Filipinos, qualitative research outputs (theses, dissertations, published research articles), 2013-2022 studies, Google Scholar and Scopus databases, reported in English, must qualify using the CASP checklist for quality assessment, and must be peer-reviewed.

### D. Data Analysis: Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis (TA), developed by Clarke et al., was used to handle information in the reviewed paper about the employment of people with visual impairments, obstacles, and opportunities (2015). Researchers used TA to familiarize themselves with the data, code and look for themes, review, name, and define themes, and write the report.

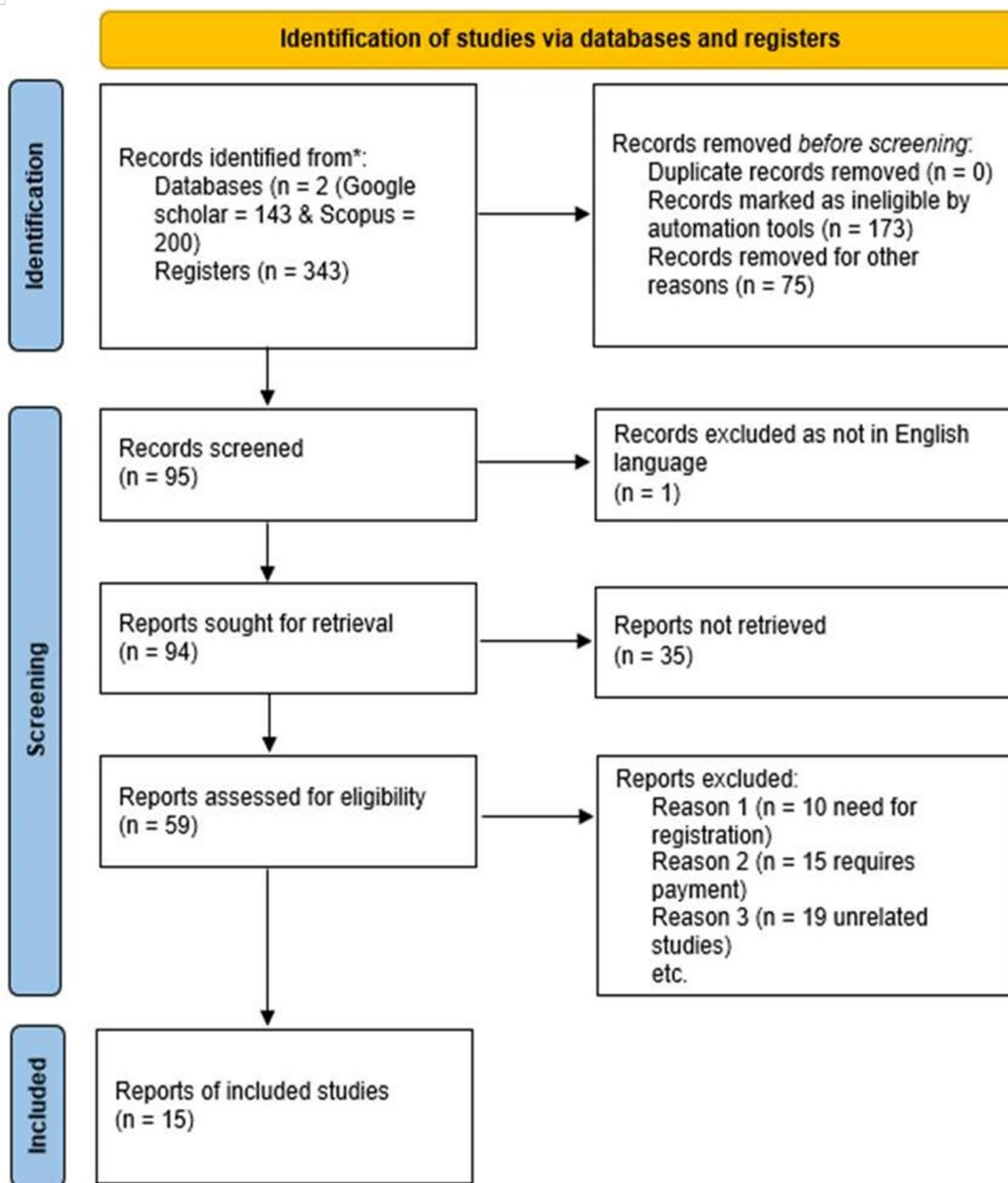


Figure 1. Search strategy utilizing PRISMA

### E. Data Analysis

The chosen data were compared, and Caulfield's theme analysis was used to assess them (2020). The six-step theme analysis guideline was adjusted to fit Clarke and Braun's (2017) research process. The steps were as follows: familiarizing with the research articles or studies where initial codes were made; producing initial codes by compiling data pertinent to each code; searching for themes by gathering relevant data for each theme; reviewing themes by creating a thematic map; defining and naming themes that specify the emerging themes; and producing the report by discussing analysis and study implications.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Eight (8) research journal articles, six (6) theses, and one (1) dissertation were included in the final collection of 15 studies. Institutions in the Philippines (10), as well as on the Western hemisphere, were affiliated with the authors (5). The study's fifteen (15) sources yielded five (5) themes and two (2) emergent meta-themes.

The summary and description of the final group of 15 papers that made up the meta-synthesis are given in Table 1 below.

No.	Authors	Title	Year	Setting	Findings/ Conclusion
1	AP Garcia, SAFde la Vega, MST Giron, SJS Fabito	In two academic communities in the Philippines, there are visual and hearing impairments among working and retired employees with type 2 diabetes mellitus.	2022	Manila, Philippines	Hearing and vision impairments did not significantly link with quality of life. Hearing disability was less common than visual impairment. A decent quality of life was observed by T2DM patients who also had hearing, vision, or dual sensory impairments.
2	CD Mina	Disability-related women's employment statistics in San Remigio and Mandaue City,	2017	San Remigio and Mandaue City, Cebu, Philippines	The quantity and caliber of work for adult women with disabilities were often poor in Mandaue City and San Remigio. The respondents' poor employment outcomes are brought on by a number of factors, including but not exclusive to: PWDs face a variety of problems, including low educational attainment, a lack of job experience, an absence of employment opportunities in the community, functional restrictions and lack of accessibility to adaptive equipment and/or services, physical barriers and an absence of PWD-friendly facilities, and an insufficient understanding of pertinent policies and programmes.
3	AJ Dianito, J Espinosa, J Duran, J Tus	A glimpse at the difficulties PWD students in the Philippines facing with online learning in the midst of the COVID-19 outbreak.	2021	Philippines	During the pandemic, social exclusions against PWD students increased in online learning. For the majority of PWD students, challenges included limited assistive device functionality and poor internet connectivity. PWD students persevered as a result of having a solid support system.
4	AD Agbon, CD Mina	Children with disabilities attending school: San Remigio and Mandaue City,	2017	San Remigio and Mandaue City, Cebu, Philippines	PWD children's difficulty staying in school continues to be a major issue in many developing countries. The Philippines' development goal has always included the need for inclusive education that meets the diverse needs of students. Every development strategy must guarantee that PWD children can attend school often until they obtain the core skills necessary to realize their full potential.

	Gideon Lasco Christian Edward L. Nuevo Marie Lauren P. Nolasco Ferlie Rose Ann N. Famaloan Josephine R. Bundoc Donna Sabel S. Capili Raoul Bermejo	Narratives of Parents of Children with Disabilities in the Philippines: "It's as if I'm the One Suffering"	2022	Davao City and Tagum City Philippines	<p>For many parents, adjusting to a child's impairment is a difficult and prolonged process, but it is one that is eventually followed by some respite and eventual adaptability.</p> <p>People with disabilities frequently face obstacles in the areas of health, finances, education, and social interaction. Their positive religious outlook, which aids them in making sense of their handicap, enables them to overcome these challenges. Family resilience also depends on the health care system and social networks.</p>
6	J Alexander Shaw, Deborah	Understanding CRPD	2017	Philippines	<p>The majority of visually impaired persons are limited to a few low-status, low-paying occupations. Most government programmes aimed at improving the employability of people with disabilities (PWDs) only focus on low-wage, service-oriented professions like massage therapy and other types of vocational training. The media continues to portray people with disabilities as unproductive citizens who want government assistance.</p>
7	Gold, and Karen Wolffehn Paul Cruz	Implementation in the Philippines			<p>Compared to almost 50% of employed PWDs in metropolitan areas, just 16% of visually impaired PWDs work in rural areas. In fact, in the rural area, 60% of visually impaired people who were unemployed did not seek jobs. Others claimed there is no work available for them, while some of them claimed they are too bashful to go out and socialize. However, the group of visually impaired people depends heavily on income from both salaries and self-employment. In particular Metro Manila cities, the majority of visually impaired responders who are DPO members work as masseurs.</p>
8	Mina, Christian D. Tabuga, Aubrey D.; Mina, Christian D.; Reyes, Celia M.; Asis, Ronina D.; Datu, Maria Blesila G.	The Case of Metro Manila and Rosario, Batangas in the Philippines' Employment of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs)	2013	Metro Manila and Rosario, Batangas	<p>Results of the 2010 Field Survey on Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) in Rural Philippines, Rosario, Batangas</p> <p>Homes with PWDs who are visually impaired claimed to be receiving support from at least one OFW in just over 44% (10 out of 23) of the cases. The average amount given to individuals who are blind is PHP5,083, whereas the amount given to those who have various disabilities is only PHP42. A significant share of the population who are visually impaired are people without a job or a business. Out of ten respondents who said they had a vision impairment, six (60%) are either unemployed or not in the labour force. They have an unemployment rate of 18.2% and a non-economic activity rate of 40.9%. Most employed responders with visual impairments are</p>

					<p>completely blind.</p> <p>If masseuse is the most popular job among blind or visually impaired respondents in Metro Manila, then farmer or farm worker is the most preferred job in Rosario, Batangas.</p> <p>The occupations that are open to respondents who are blind or visually impaired, however, are limited to technicians/associate experts, plant and machine technicians, farmers/forestry workers/fishermen, transactions workers, and unskilled laborers workers.</p> <p>Furthermore, no visually impaired people work for the government.</p>
9	Madeline Dumaua-Cabauatan, Sylwyn C.	The technical education and skills development	2018	Philippines	<p>Opportunities are available for a range of students, trainees, and learners through the</p>
	Calizo Jr., Francis Mark A. Quimba, and Lachmi C. Pacio	authority's online program of e-education in the Philippines.			<p>Tesda Online Program (TOP). This includes those who suffer from sight impairments and other particular disabilities.</p> <p>The accreditation and certification of the TOP show that the Filipino worker has acquired advanced abilities in global competency.</p>
10	N.N. Sze, Keith M. Christensen	Access to the city's transport system for people with disabilities	2017	United States, United Kingdom, and Hong Kong	<p>In the long run, accessible transportation that is inclusive of the requirements of people with disabilities can contribute to improved quality of life and community inclusion.</p> <p>Accessible public transportation influences the safety, security, and enjoyment of travelers with impairments such as visual impairment, hearing impairment, and restricted mobility.</p> <p>Route direction, a clear indication of bus stops, clear and large signage, and a timetable in large type all provide accessibility for people with visual and auditory impairments. These were discovered to have had a favorable impact on the accessibility of the particular handicap mentioned.</p>
11	Ana Patricia Marques	Global economic productivity losses from vision impairment and blindness	2021.	Global	<p>According to the degree of the ailment, employment rates for blindness and moderate to severe vision impairment (MSVI) vary.</p> <p>Data on the employment of people with visual impairment from various nations suggests progress. Since employment is a crucial component of economic growth, including people with vision impairment in the workforce will increase productivity.</p>

12	Tomas Boman, Anders Kjellberg, Berth	Opportunities for employment of people with various disabilities	2015	Sweden	Work ability and employability are related. While work capacity depends on the nature of the impairment. This demonstrates how the type
	Danermark, Eva Boman				of disability that can affect a person's employability is related to their job capacity.  The employment prospects that one can obtain will depend on the type of handicap. But education is now equally crucial for landing a job. primary education and a rise in work possibilities.
13	Alexander Shaw, DeborahGold, and Karen Wolffe	Visually Impaired Youths' Employment-Related Experiences: How Are These Youths Faring?	2007	Canada	As expected, the patients with low vision were blind people had a significantly increased chance of working for cash and keeping working for pay. According to other findings, employment rates are falling among those who are blind, as opposed to those with low eyesight. It is necessary to look into this result's underlying relevance in more detail. It is conceivable that blind people find it more difficult to find employment than people with vision impairment. People who are blind may encounter more challenges than those who have low vision because their disability is more evident to potential employers and attitudes are a barrier to employment.
14	Jasmin Ambiong	Employment of People with impairments in the Philippines	June 21, 2021	Philippines	The majority of visually impaired people are employed as musicians, masseuses, or contact center agents. In the Philippines, the unemployment rate is a problem for both the disabled community and the general populace. The International Labor Organization reports that in the Asia-Pacific region, the rate of unemployment for individuals with disabilities frequently surpasses 80% and is twice that of the general population. The Republic Act 7277 or also known as Magna Carta for Disabled Persons, and the Republic Act 10524 mandate that a minimum of one percent of all posts in all government offices, corporations, and agencies be set aside for people with disabilities. Private companies with over 100 employees are urged to reserve at least 1% of all positions for individuals with impairments. Numerous local administrations and commercial entities continue to violate these laws.



15	Edward C. Bell, Ph.D., Natali a M. Mino	Employment Results for Adults Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired	2015	USA, Ruston	People who are legally blind or visually handicapped have historically had high unemployment rates in the US. However, many blind or visually impaired people have been able to find fulfilling careers with good income. The employment rate for those who are totally blind or visually impaired was 37%, which would be identical to past research, according to survey results. Results show that there is still a gender wage disparity, with women making far less money annually than males. Improved work outcomes are associated with higher levels of education. The results of employment also appeared to be influenced by rehabilitation-related variables. Additionally, those who received training using the Structured Discovery methodology had a higher likelihood of finding employment and earning more money. People who used a white cane and read braille on a weekly basis had a higher chance of finding a job and making more money than those who did not.
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One of the largest obstacles facing those who are blind or visually impaired is access to jobs. The biggest barrier preventing people with visual impairments from finding meaningful employment is social stigma. As a result, the majority of them land in low-paying positions. Nevertheless, despite this unfair treatment from society, the majority of them receive assistance from their various support networks, including their families (Kayama et al., n.d., 2019).

Meta-theme: Barriers

The problems and difficulties faced by those who are visually impaired are described in this category. Ten (10) of the fifteen (15) studies, the most of which are from the Philippines, revealed that visually impaired people face several difficulties and impediments in the workplace.

1) *Sub-theme 1: Discrimination in Hiring*

In every country in the globe, the employment rate for those who are blind or visually impaired is below a third, which is a global problem (Humanity 2015:5). People with disabilities are still portrayed in the media as unproductive members of society who need help (Cruz, 2017, pp. 26-35). Thus, most visually impaired individuals are confined to low-paying jobs. Some of them indicated that they are too shy to socialize with others. Other factors that contribute to these individuals' unemployment include low education levels, a lack of; work experience, employment opportunities in the community, and PWD-friendly facilities. In addition, limited access to assistive technology and services is limited due to functional limitations and low awareness of pertinent policies and programs. (Mina, 2017).

On the other hand, the possibility of employment is decreased by the severity of visual loss, as well as by the existence of a second impairment or sickness (Douglas et al. 2009, Slade and Edwards 2015). Thus, visually impaired are restricted to the following occupational categories: technicians/associate professionals, plant and machine operators/assemblers, farmers/forestry workers/fishermen, trades/related workers, and laborers/unskilled workers (Tabuga et al., 2017) this is because many employers believe that visually impaired people are ineligible for employment or are only eligible for low-status jobs (Raulstone et al., 2014, pp. 237-243).

2) *Sub-theme 2: Limited Access to Opportunities*

Medical, economical, educational, and social obstacles come with having a disability. (Lasco and others, 2022). Employees at medical facilities, including health service providers, frequently discriminate against and harbor prejudices towards those who have disabilities. For those with disabilities, the likelihood of poverty as well as the rates of employment, education, and health are all higher. People with steady jobs may nevertheless make less money than those without disabilities, even when they have the financial resources to support a disability.

Discrimination towards Filipinos with disabilities has also been a problem. (Buenaobra, 2011). Their access to government services and educational possibilities is therefore restricted, and their social, political, and individual rights are not recognised. Additionally, the majority of government initiatives to increase the employment of people with disabilities (PWDs) exclusively concentrate on low-paying, service-oriented jobs like massage therapy and other kinds of vocational education. (Mina, 2013). As a result, the majority of visually impaired persons work as contact center agents, masseuses, or musicians.

Meta-theme: Coping Mechanism

This category highlights the many support systems used by visually impaired people and how those systems influence how they live their daily lives, as shown by the theme analysis. Three (3) out of fifteen (15) people highlighted how the various support systems were able to boost their spirits despite how challenging their circumstances were.

### 3) *Sub-theme 3: Educational Attainment*

Those with vision impairment have faced numerous challenges, particularly during the pandemic. PWDs face a variety of difficulties, including limited access to assistive technologies and the internet. Despite the fact that this prevents them from learning, they continue to do so because of the overwhelming support they receive from those around them (Dianato, 2021).

The fact that far fewer people with visual impairments have a college education than those without disabilities is an additional important factor to take into account. Despite the reality that higher education is strongly associated with employment, only a small proportion of people with visual disability have a college degree. These findings emphasize the significance of obtaining a college degree for individuals with visual impairment (McDonnall & Tatch, 2021).

### 4) *Sub-theme 4: Family Support*

Parenting disabled children is a challenging and drawn-out process. Among the difficulties they cite are money, schooling, health care, and society, which restricts opportunities to children who are blind. However, the family has been able to deal with and overcome difficulties because of their religious convictions and flexible viewpoint. (Lasco et al., 2022).

A visually impaired person's quality of life can be impacted by parental involvement as they attempt to cope with their disability. Getting several types of assistance can dramatically improve success and the standard of living for those who are blind or have vision impairments (Bambara, et al.).

### 5) *Sub-theme 5: Community Services*

The challenge of implementing inclusion is still something that developing nations must deal with. In the Philippines, those with impairments have reduced access to high-quality education. The community still needs to pay attention to and reinforce the lack of programmes and activities. This issue has an impact on how to meet the requirements of PWD children and give them the skills they need to find work. (2017) (Agbon & Mina).

Positively, accessible public transportation has made it simpler for blind people to function normally. As a result, they feel satisfied, safe, and secure. Route maps and large, clear signage have been added to accessible public transit to help those with disabilities. These enhanced their physical environment and increased their opportunities for community engagement. (2017) Sze and Christensen.

## IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Social prejudices towards those who are blind or visually handicapped continue to be the biggest obstacle to finding good work. They are shown to be unproductive contributors to society. Visually handicapped people felt like they lived in a physically inaccessible environment because of their limited opportunities.

They encounter several difficulties, especially when it comes to their education. They struggle to get a proper education because they have little access to assistive technology and government help. Optimism and community resources have helped people with vision impairment learn to deal with social and personal challenges.

In order to give visually impaired people recognition and more accessible career prospects, it is advised that there is a need for recognition, more training programmes, and enforcement of government rules.

Governmental organisations like the National Council on Disability Affairs might put the IRR of RA 10754 into effect, assisting every Filipino citizen with disabilities (National Council on Disability Affairs, 2009).

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