

Paralympics: Spheres of Recognition for PWDs in the Philippines

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Abstract: *My aim in this paper is to explore ways making Paralympics as venues for recognition of the most vulnerable sector of the country, the persons with disability. In this paper, I argue that the PWDs are one of the most marginalized and disenfranchised social classes in the country that have been subjected to several forms of injustice and misrecognition and, thus, the most that they could do is to struggle for the recognition of their rights and privileges as co-equal Filipino citizens. Recognition is a vital need of every human person, especially to the differently abled. Using Honneth's theory of the struggle for recognition, I will attempt to show that by participating in Paralympics, Filipino PWDs are able to gain self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem, which are necessary for achieving self-realization and autonomy.*

Keywords: Recognition, Honneth, Filipino PWDs, Paralympics, Social Justice

1. Introduction

In this paper, I will first discuss the current social conditions of the PWDs in the Philippines. This will show that the persons with disabilities have been victims of various forms of disrespect or misrecognition by the society such as discrimination, abuses and exploitation despite the implementation of Republic Act 7277 or the Magna Carta for Disabled Persons in the Philippines. These experiences of disrespect or misrecognition among the PWDs motivate them to struggle for the recognition of their rights and privileges. Second, I will discuss briefly Honneth's theory of the struggle for recognition. This is purposely to illustrate that recognition is necessary both for self-realization and maintaining a just society [1]. For Honneth, recognition in three spheres namely, love, rights and solidarity provides the subject the basic self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem [2]. These three forms of practical relation-to-self, according to Honneth, are prerequisites for one's self-realization. And third, I will attempt to show how Paralympics become spheres of recognition for PWDs in the Philippines. I argue that Honneth's concepts of practical relation-to-self could be attained by participating in different games and Para sports. Thus, engaging the PWDs in various games and sports activities is a way of giving them due recognition as full-fledged members of the society and their autonomy.

1.1 Objectives of the study

- 1) Discuss the current social conditions of the PWDs in the Philippines; and,
- 2) Explore ways making Paralympics as spheres of recognition for Filipino PWDs.

2. Literature Review

As defined in the Philippines' RA 7277 or the Magna Carta for Disabled Persons, PWDs refer to those suffering from constraints or lack of capability of performing different activities within the range considered normal for a human being [3]. These constraints in doing activities according to RA 7277 are results of the individual's mental, physical or

sensory impairment. In the same way, UN Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) in 2006 defines PWDs as those individuals with long-term mental, physical, intellectual and sensory impairments. Because of these deficiencies for UNCRPD, may hinder PWDs to exercise full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others [4]. In the Philippines, the 2010 data of the National Statistics Office (NSO) Census of Population and Housing showed that out of 92.1 million Filipinos, 1.4 million or 1.5% of Filipino populace are persons with disabilities [5]. Considering the definition of UNCRDP and RA 7277, the NSO data translates that in this developing country, 1.4 million of Filipino citizens are restricted to fully and effectively participate in the activities of the affairs of the society and thus, it is expected that the Philippine government should give these PWDs due recognition.

It is an undeniable fact in the country that despite the implementation of RA 7277 and UNCRDP in the Philippines, many PWDs have still experienced forms of disrespect from other abled sectors in the country. Take for instance the results of 2006-2012 monitoring done by the Philippine Deaf Resource Center (PDRC). Since 2002 to 2012, PDRC recorded different forms of abuses against the PWDs particularly deaf women. These abuses include homicide, child abuse, physical injuries, theft and sexual abuses. Among these forms of disrespect, as for PDRC, rape is the most common against the deaf Filipino women. In fact, PDRC reported that one out of every three deaf women is sexually abused [6]. PDRC data revealed that rape case happened in the victim's own residence, with neighbors and close family members being the most common offenders. In the same report, PDRC noted further that since 2002 to 2012, most of the gender-based violence cases against deaf women remain unsolved, or worst were dismissed due to lack of access to some legal means as well as the wide lack of accommodations in the preliminary and investigative aspects. Clearly, PWDs particularly the women are the most vulnerable to exploitation and human rights abuses.

Another form of disrespect is the discrimination of the PWDs. In a study conducted by Christian Mina, a research associate at the Philippine Institute for Development Studies

(PIDS) entitled *Employment of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) in the Philippines: The Case of Metro Manila and Rosario Batangas in 2013* showed a higher unemployment rate among PWDs in the rural areas of the country [7]. According to Mina, some of these unemployed PWDs or economically inactive members are still looking for a job they could fit in, while most of these PWDs are discouraged by their parents and other family members to land a job. Moreover, Mina argues that pessimism and lack of self-esteem that resulted in feelings of shyness and lack of self-confidence to interact with other people, hinder these economically inactive PWDs to get into the mainstream employment.

Disenfranchisement or the denial of PWDs' right to participate in the affairs of the state is a very obvious form of disrespect. In 2015 census, The PWDs have felt disappointed with the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) for not including in the population census the crucial information that about PWDs. Carmen Zubiaga, acting executive director of the National Council on Disability Affairs (NCDA) argues that the PSA's action of not consulting the NCDA and PWD sector in the 2015 population census is an absolute denial of rights of persons with disabilities [8]. Zubiaga reiterated the importance of inclusion of differently abled persons in the census as part of accomplishing our obligation stated in 2006 UNCRPD where the Philippines is one of its signatory states. Moreover, Zubiaga argues further that the non-inclusion of crucial data on PWDs in the national statistics creates problem in achieving national development planning and implementation that is inclusive of PWDs.

Discrimination is another form of disrespect on PWDs. In an article by Adam B. Morrell, a correspondent from SunStar Davao City entitled *Infiesto call for equality for PWD athletes* stated that James Infiesto, president of Philippine Sports Association for the Differently Abled (Philspada) Davao City chapter, is calling the Philippine Sports Commission (PSC) for the equal treatment of PWDs like any regular national athletes. Infiesto argues that PWDs athletes were not given equal recognition and amount of incentive compared to the regular-abled athletes. Infiesto noted that when a PWD athlete wins a gold medal in the Asean sports event, she only receives an incentive of P 150,000.00 while regular-abled athletes enjoy P 300,000.00 in winning Southeast Asian Games gold. Clearly, as Infiesto argues further, a 50 percent less in the amount of incentive means that the Filipino Paragames athletes were not given equal importance by the politician and sport leaders in the Philippines or so to say, the PWD athletes are treated 50% less as an athlete than the regular-abled athletes [9].

The above discussions showed that PWDs in the Philippines are victims of different human rights abuses, discrimination and disenfranchisement. Again, all these forms of injustice among the differently abled Filipinos happened despite the enactment of local and international policies on PWDs. Because of these experiences of injustices, the PWDs felt frustrated and disappointed and, thus, these negative feelings motivate them to struggle for the recognition of their rights and privileges as co-equal members of the Philippine society. This is where Axel Honneth's theory of the struggle

for recognition is relevant. For Honneth, the experiences of being socially humiliated, disrespected or being denied recognition brought to the subject negative feelings such as social shame, losing of one's self-worth and indignant. Because of these negative feelings, as Honneth argues, become the driving force for the afflicted subjects to struggle for the recognition of their rights as full-fledged members of the society [10]. In this context, I argue that Honneth's theory of recognition may provide theoretical basis in understanding the plight of the PWDs and in exploring ways on making Paralympics as arena of recognition for PWDs in the Philippines.

In the Philippines, there were some instances where the PWDs have staged their flight for equality in various forums across the country. Let me present some of these actual struggles for recognition. In 2012, a group from Autism Society of the Philippines and other PWDs marched towards the House of Representatives in Manila to express their sentiments and to call the lawmakers for the passage of House Bill 6079 or an Act declaring Filipino Sign Language as the National Sign Language of the Filipino Deaf and the official language of government in all transactions involving the Deaf, and mandating its use in schools, broadcast media, and workplaces [11]. The said house bill if enacted into law will provide the deaf members of the country the recognition of their cultural and linguistic identity as stated in the 2006 UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Another form of struggle that PWDs have staged was when the members of Disabled People's Organizations (DPOs) in Cebu City call for President Duterte's attention to help stop employment discrimination in the country on June 24, 2016. The group of PWD demands for the implementation of RA 7277 or the Magna Carta for Disabled Persons particularly in giving the differently abled Filipinos equal opportunities for suitable employment, incentives and compensation. Moreover, the group demands the government for support on education and equal access on social services [12].

In one of a forum held in Manila on July 5, 2017 titled "State of the People's Health under President Duterte", organized by the Health Alliance for Democracy and Coalition for People's Right to Health (CPRH), many Filipino PWDs have articulated their demands for equality on health services. Alex Mendoza, a member of Quezon City Federation of Persons with Disability, clamored that some government officials were even worse of hearing than a real deaf. Some of these government leaders haven't showed concerns to the interests of needy PWDs. In fact, as Mendoza argues, many Filipino PWDs are deprived of their right to medical assistance [13]. Thus, because of poverty and lack of medical attention, many PWDs conditions are becoming worse instead of improving.

The aforementioned narrative are purposely to show that the PWDs feelings of frustration and indignation brought about by their experiences of disrespect drive them to struggle for the recognition of their rights and privileges as co-equal members of the Philippine society.

2. Research Methodology

In the first phase, this study made use of hermeneutic and descriptive methods in presenting the social conditions of PWDs as well as Honneth's spheres of recognition. In the second phase, actual interviews were done in order to get the impressions, observations and experiences of the PWDs on Paralympics. And, in the third phase, critical-analytic method was employed in the application of Honneth's theory of recognition in making Paralympics as spheres for PWD's recognition.

3. Results and Discussions

3.1 Honneth's Theory of Recognition

In the succeeding section, I will briefly sketch Honneth's theory of recognition particularly his concepts of love, rights and solidarity. This is to show the importance of recognition in these three spheres in one's self-realization.

Axel Honneth is an incumbent director of the Institute for Social Research, also known as the Frankfurt School. In his seminal work entitled *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*, Honneth argued that one's self-realization as free individuated person is dependent on the development of her self-confidence, self-respect, and self-esteem. For Honneth, disrespect or misrecognition of individual's demands for recognition causes frustration, disappointments and the experiences of injustice [14]. These experiences of injustice, as Honneth argues, are concrete evidences that the modern society is doing injustice to people. Thus, it is by way of giving full recognition of the individuals' deep-seated claims and expectations that they are able to achieve autonomy [15].

3.1.1 The Sphere of Love

Love in Honneth's theory of recognition is the primary sphere of mutual recognition and a precondition for participation in the public life of a community. For Honneth, the sphere of love refers to a strong emotional bond between the significant others which include parent-child relationship, friendship and even romantic or erotic love for lovers [16]. The sphere of love begins with the mother and child relationship. Honneth adopted Winnicott's object-relation theory. In his theory, Winnicott discussed the holding phase, an important stage in child's development. In this stage, the baby experienced the physical holding by the mother thus, she experienced maternal care, learn to develop her dependence to her mother and feels the basic sense of protection of her parent [17].

As child grows, she learns to become independent and start recognizing the objects on her environment. In this stage, the child recognizes these transitional objects as an intermediary between the self and her environment. For Honneth, child's interaction with these transitional objects which happens during playtime, in the absence of her mother, the child develops enough trust in the continuity of her mother's maternal love and care. Because of the trust in the continuity of her mother's love, the child gains her self-confidence and learns to develop her capacity to be independent. Honneth argues further that all the love relationships are driven by the

recollection of the mother and child relationship since the experience of satisfaction of needs during the early stages of child's life makes the individual desire to merge with others. Thus for Honneth, it is through recognition of others that the child is able to learn her independence and capacity to merge with others [18].

3.1.2 The Sphere of Right

Recognition in the sphere of right allows a person to realize her capabilities as a full-fledged member of the society. Being recognized as a full-fledged member of the society, the individual is treated as co-equal with all other members of the society and thus, enables her to participate in the decision making, legislation and in other matters that affect the interests of the general public. Honneth believes that legal system in the modern society is founded on the idea of free and equal persons' rational agreement and thus, everyone is expected to adhere to these social norms.

Honneth argues that recognition in juridical sphere hinges on the principle of universal equality for all individuals. In legal recognition, Honneth stresses two things: that as rational beings, we have to be aware of our legal obligations vis-à-vis other rational subjects; and, that we have to understand that in the community of human subjects, right are always applicable [20]. Thus, in the experience of legal recognition, one is guaranteed with equal opportunity to participate in the will-formation processes as well as in the equal distribution of society's resources. For this reason, one is granted with self-respect which enables her to realize her personhood as full-fledged member of the society.

3.1.3 The Sphere of Solidarity

Honneth's concept of solidarity is commonly described as coming up together of individuals with the goal of gaining self-esteem. Solidarity can also be considered as forming a small community within a community. In this small community formed, everyone shares common concerns, interests and values. Also, in solidarity, the value of each member is given importance because of her contribution to the welfare of community or of the group. Honneth is convinced that the nature of a good and just society is where individuals are given the opportunity for self-realization. It would be a society with shared values that match with needs of its members and, thus, all members are given equal opportunity to gain self-esteem.

3.1.4 Disrespect: Moral Grammar for PWDs to Struggle for Recognition

As previously shown, Honneth's three spheres of recognition namely, love, rights, and solidarity requires approval and recognition from other people and the society in general. It simply means that in a society like the Philippines, everyone should provide a sense of respect on the rights of every free Filipino. Thus, one should treat the other as co-equal member of the society. Yet, as we can see, the experiences of injustice among the PWDs, the country's considered most vulnerable sector, proves that the Philippine society in some instance doing unfair to most of its differently abled citizens. For Honneth, these forms of disrespect or injustice hamper the subject to attain self-actualization. Now, I will discuss how forms of injustice deter the Filipino PWDs to achieve self-realization.

First is in the sphere of love, where one gains self-confidence. Honneth argues that the experience of physical abuse such as rape or torture prevents the person to have access to her psychological and physiological needs. As a result, the subject loses trust in her own capacity and to other persons. In the case of rape and physical abuses among PWDs particularly women and children, the victims lose their trust to themselves and to the people that surrounds them. As we have seen, the data shows that most of the cases of human rights abuses happened inside the home of the victims and the culprits are their close relatives. In our Filipino values, we regard our home as our safest zone. It is a place of peace, security and comfort. Moreover, we regard our family members, father, brothers, uncle and cousins as our close allies and confidant who can defend us. Yet, for some PWDs who were victims of physical abuses, their best allies and safest zone become their dangerous place of evil. Having been experienced such misrecognition PWDs feel disappointment, frustration and self-doubt.

Second is the sphere of right, where one is able to gain self-respect. According to Honneth, the denial of one's rights as a full-fledged member of the society is also a form of disrespect and, thus, prevents one to attain self-realization. The experience of being socially ostracized, as Honneth argues, brings to the subject the feelings of social shame since their normative expectations from the society were not provided. The PWDs in the Philippines have high hopes in the enactment of RA 7277 or Magna Carta for Disabled Persons and the UNCRPD. They believe that these laws will provide them equal opportunity and access in employment, education, health, participation in elections and other social aspects, like any abled citizens in the country. Despite these laws, PWDs still are not recognized as full-fledged members. As we have seen, discrimination among PWDs are still prevalent in the country which was manifested by the lack of equal access to employment, exclusion of crucial data on PWDs in the 2015 census, and unequal treatment among the Paralympic Filipino athletes. Because of these experiences of disrespect, the PWDs feel inferior and neglected social class in the country.

Third is the sphere of solidarity where one gains self-esteem. This sphere gives emphasis in giving recognition on the value and contribution of the individual to the community. For Honneth, solidarity is closely related to sympathy where everyone in the group shares same interests, values and concerns. Like in the sphere of love and rights, failure to receive recognition in solidarity couldn't lead to one's self-realization. As a result, one feels social devaluation or self-pity. For PWDs, social acceptance and treating them as co-equal with other abled Filipinos are necessary for them to feel their value in the Philippine society. These will only be attained by way of giving them equal opportunity to express themselves and do the things they want to do as any abled Filipino does. Yet, because of marginalization and disenfranchisement, the PWDs feel that they are useless, ashamed and indignant.

Clearly, the denial of PWDs deep-seated claims and expectations brings negative feelings to them and thus, they struggle for the recognition of their rights and privileges as co-equal members of the Philippine society.

3.2 Para Sports as spheres of recognition for Human Person

In the above discussions, recognition in the spheres of love, right and solidarity provides an individual self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem, which are necessary in order for a person to achieve self-realization. But because of the experiences of disrespect, of being denied recognition, PWDs are hindered in attaining their normative expectations and autonomy. As a result, they feel frustrated, disappointed, ashamed, angered and even self-pitied. For this reason, PWDs need a venue or arena, where they can freely express themselves and be recognized so that they could have the access for self-realization. In this sense, I will attempt to show how Para sports are venues where the PWDs could develop their self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem.

Various scholars in sports science and philosophy of sports in not so distant past have viewed sports as important in the development one's psychological, emotional, physical and intellectual well-being. Among these scholars are Allen Guttmann (1978), Sigmund Loland (2002), and Wivi Anderson (2015).

Allen Guttmann in his book entitled *From Ritual to Record: The Nature of Modern Sports* argues that modern sports indicate seven characteristics such as secularism, equality of opportunity to compete and in the conditions of the competition, specialization of roles, rationalization, bureaucratic organization, quantification, and the quest for records. Guttmann has noted that modern sports provide equality in two senses: first, everyone is given an equal opportunity to compete; and second, modern sports provide same conditions of competition for all contestants. For Guttmann, in modern sports participants in games and contests express their autonomy at same time their dependence in their teammates [21]. Thus, through sports, players are able to realize their self-autonomy and shared value of cooperation.

Another scholar on philosophy of sport is Sigmund Loland. In his book entitled *Fair Play in Sport: A Moral Norm System*, Loland argues that sport is an arena for human flourishing because of its physical, ethical, psychological and moral benefits to players. For Loland, sports and games enable one to realize her potential for moral agency hence training and actual competition should enhance athlete's responsibility for performance. In this context, it is the goal of sports and games to provide an equal opportunity for all participants to show their capabilities in playing the game in an equal level and conditions [22]. Thus, sports are spheres where one exhibits human excellence.

Wivi Andersen, also a scholar on sports science has provided a deeper understanding of sports as spheres for one's self-actualization. In her paper entitled "Love, Rights, and Solidarity: Sports' Potential for Recognition", she argues that sport occupies a central role in the modern society [23]. For Andersen, Honneth's recognition in spheres of love, rights and solidarity can be realized in sports. Hence, making sport as a potential arena for one's recognition.

The discussions of the mentioned scholars in sports science and philosophy of sports are worthy of acknowledgment for they were able to expound sports and by showing their relevance to the players and to society. However, their works have only provided theoretical basis or concepts of sports as an important venue for one's recognition. Their studies have not provided concrete realities, the actual struggle for recognition of the vulnerable classes of society, such as the persons with disabilities, in particular, the Filipino Paralympic players. As mentioned earlier, this study aims to explore ways of making sports as domain for recognition of PWDs in the Philippines.

3.3 Paralympics: Arena of recognition for Filipino PWDs

In the previous section, I have discussed the importance of sports in society as well as its potential sphere where one could be able to achieve self-realization. In this section, by applying Honneth's concepts of recognition, I will attempt to show how sports and games become spheres of recognition for the marginalized and often disenfranchised social class in the Philippines, the PWDs.

3.3.1 Achieving Self-Confidence in Sports

In Honneth's sphere of love, he argues that during play time, which child's interaction to transitional objects to other kids happens, the child is able to generate enough trust in the continuity of her mother's care. This means that during playtime, the child still feels the maternal care, though her mother is not with her anymore. Because of this 'trust in the continuity of mother's care', the child as Honneth argues develops her independence and learns to discover herself, her capacity, abilities and begins to trust herself. Let me now cite some studies that will help provide empirical verifications of Honneth's claims and relate them to the PWDs.

First, in a study conducted Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth (MCCY) of Singapore on disability sports, results have shown that PWDs who took part in sports over the years affirmed that the field of sport brings people together from all walks of life. Moreover, MCCY argues that PWD athletes found that sports have helped them to build stronger relationships with their family, friends, and colleagues [24]. Second is the result of the study conducted by Roy J. Shephard, who is a scholar on medical studies. According to RJ Shephard, sports, recreation and fitness programs are recommended to those with physical disabilities. Through these activities, as Shephard argues, the patient gains psychological developments such as improvements of mood state, reduction of anxiety, increase of self-esteem and greater self-efficacy [25]. This proves that sports provide basic self-confidence to the differently abled person.

In my interview with Joben Hautea, a Filipino PWD diagnosed with cerebral palsy, shared that he too has experienced inferiority and feelings of exclusion from his community like any other Filipino PWDs. Because of his condition, Joben's parents didn't allow him to do even simple household chores. He was not allowed to go to school alone or even to stroll around their community without person assisting him. This is for the reason that his parents were afraid that something bad may happen to him

anytime or he gets bullied by others. Likewise, Joben's teachers and his classmates, after knowing his conditions, treating him like an outcast in their school. Because of this, Joben was not allowed to perform tasks in several school programs and always ends up seating at the corner of his classroom. For Joben, at his young age, he was treated unfairly, he was hampered on doing things he wanted to do which resulted in feelings of depression and anxiety.

However Joben's negative feelings suddenly change when he started to love volleyball. For Joben, playing volleyball reduces his stress, depression and anxiety. Moreover, he has learned to establish friendship to his fellow PWDs and other individuals. Together with his fellow PWDs and with the strong support of local government of Iloilo City, they have organized a sports league for the differently abled players. This activity gathers differently abled persons from all over the city. Every week they undergo trainings on proper ball handling, ball setting and spiking techniques to help them improve their volleyball skills. According to Joben, volleyball is where he can express himself freely; knowing and developing his full potentials, as a player and as a person. Also in playing, Joben learns to associate with other PWDs and enjoys each other's company. For Joben, playing volleyball while on wheel chair is difficult, needs extra effort and entails a lot of practice. Yet for Joben, his determination, patience and trust to his capacities, makes him successful in his undertakings. Because of these, after playing and winning the game, Joben feels the fulfillment and confidence that he can do what other abled people do.

Joben's personal sharing simply manifests how sports allow him to trust in his capacities, be independent and responsible person. This is exactly what Honneth means that trust is very important for an individual to achieve self-confidence. Again for Honneth, trust in the continuity of mother's care happens at play. Through sports, a player can attain what Honneth calls 'practical relation-to-self'. This means that by playing, athletes are able to know themselves, their strengths and weaknesses, and their capacity to be alone. In a country where Filipino PWDs have experienced physical and emotional abuses, it is through sports that make these differently abled Filipino victims gain recognition. Thus, Para sports are spheres where Filipino PWDs learn to know themselves, develop their full potentials, and gain self-confidence.

3.3.2 Achieving Self-Respect in Sports

Honneth's recognition in the sphere of right enables one to realize her capacities as a full-fledged member of the society. Having recognized as full-fledged member entitles one to be treated as co-equal with all other members and participate freely in the rational discourse in the public sphere or in the society's will formation and legislation. Honneth is convinced that social norms and universal laws in the modern society are product of the free and rational agreement of all its members, which means that modern law hinges from the principle of universal equality for all individuals. For this reason, being recognized as legitimate member of the society, an individual is granted the society's protection of her human dignity and thus, that individual has the assurance that her claims are recognized. In this manner,

the interaction between subjects in the legal sphere as Honneth argues, grants the individual self-respect.

The PWDs, which is considered as the vulnerable members of the society, are granted legal recognition by joining in sports activities. In an article entitled *The Paralympic Games and the Promotion of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, Sir Philip Craven, president of the International Paralympic Committee, argues that Paralympics have been instrumental in changing the negative beliefs regarding disability. For Craven, Paralympics become sphere of recognition on the rights of PWDs particularly in countries where the games are held [26].

Craven cited the 2008 Paralympics in China where sports become a factor in recognizing the rights of the PWDs as equal members of society. Paralympics promote global awareness of persons with disabilities such as their needs, capabilities and rights as PWDs. According to Craven, the People's Republic of China and its people became sensitive in the needs of the PWDs after winning the bid to host the 2008 Paralympics. China, being one of the countries who signed in the UNCPRD, spent millions of dollars for their infrastructure projects that provide accessibility for PWDs in their country. For instance, the Chinese government has installed elevators and wheelchair ramps in various sections of Great Wall and the Forbidden City (Imperial Palace). Now, according to Craven, PWDs in China have improved their social status, gain respect and attention from the Chinese government and its people.

In the past, according to Adeline Dumapong-Ancheta, first Filipino bronze medalist in powerlifting during the 2000 Sydney Paralympic, disabled athletes in the Philippines have treated unfairly as compared to those abled athletes. Adeline argues that PWDs are not part of Philippine Sports Commission (PSC) programs particularly, in terms of funding the training of Paralympic athletes and benefits that they could get as national athlete. However, for Adeline, the implementation of RA 9064 or the Athletes' Incentives Act of the Philippines has provided some kind of appreciation and recognition for Filipino Para athletes [27]. In RA 9064, Filipino athletes in Paralympics received equal incentives and benefits like what the abled athletes are receiving. Moreover, training and sport programs are enhanced to further develop the potentials of Filipino PWDs in sports.

As we know, UN CRPD upholds the rights of the PWDs for equal access on all state's social service, which include participation in sport and recreation. As stated in the section 30 of this international convention, each member state which includes the Philippines, should ensure that PWDs are given equal access to all sporting and recreational activities and thus, the State should encourage and promote the participation of the PWDs in the mainstream sports.

Long before the 2007 UN CPRD, the Philippines have been recognizing the rights of PWDs by encouraging them to participate in the mainstream sports and other recreational activities. In fact, in a study conducted by Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS), PWDs have been part in the annual Philippine National Games. The students with disabilities were included in the national school based

sports competition which is called PalarongPambansa. Also, according to PIDS, the Philippine Sports Association of Differently-Abled (PHILSPADA) was organized to provide support on the needs of the disabled Filipino national athletes. Furthermore, in 1998, the Deaf Sports Philippines was organized in order to empower Filipino deaf through sports. Because of the support from various sectors in the country, several Filipino Para athletes have won medals in the international sports competitions [28].

The above discussion showed that through sports, PWDs are given recognition particularly those rights as stipulated in the international laws. Through Para sports activities, there was a growing public awareness on the conditions of PWDs in the country and thus, abled Filipinos learn to appreciate the capabilities of the PWDs and respect their rights as co-equal members of the Philippine society.

3.3.3 Achieving Self-Esteem in Sports

Honneth's recognition in the sphere of solidarity enables one to gain self-esteem. Solidarity, as Honneth argues, is a term used to describe the normative behavior of the oppressed individuals "coming up together" and share common concerns, values and interests. In this context, sports could be a potential sphere where PWDs share common values, interests and concerns which allows a differently abled person gains self-esteem.

Sport is ideal for fostering social interactions regardless of personal background [29]. By bringing persons with the same disabilities, it may help foster friendship and develops one's self-worth [30]. According to Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport and Physical Activity, through sport, one may enhance self-esteem by having positive image of her physical body as well as skills and abilities that will be developed. One feels positive relation to self or self-worth through the recognition of family, friends, teammates that is in effect of one's engagement in sport activities [31]. This concept is applicable to the vulnerable sector of society, the PWDs. Sport contributes in one's improvement of self-esteem, self-concept, social awareness, and emotional control [32].

According to Ruben Tortola, Jr., a deaf pastor and a basketball player from Iloilo City, he experienced discrimination and exclusion from various people even his relatives. Because of his disability, he finds difficulty in getting a job; in trouble interacting with authorities especially during emergency situations; and, having hard time in communicating with medical personnel. Despite these negative experiences, Ruben finds comfort with his fellow PWDs in playing basketball.

By participating in sports activities, Ruben has developed his skills and become a best player in ball game. For Ruben, playing basketball makes him feel included in society. This is because as Ruben argues, basketball makes him feel 100% included and appreciated. Playing with his fellow deaf persons, Ruben feels secured since they have common language that makes them understand each other easily. Also, for Ruben, basketball is a sphere for PWDs like him to be open with each other in sharing their experiences,

interests and values. Thus, sports are fields where PWDs can unite and gain friends who can understand them.

Through sports activities, particularly the team sports, enable each Para athlete to appreciate her value in a team because of mutual recognition with her teammates. Paralympics become the place where PWD athletes can openly share their interests and even their life experiences. Moreover, as one team, every player learns to trust each other's capacity and play as one in order to achieve their goal of winning the competition. Because of these positive experiences in games and sports, the feelings of being included and given value in a team, PWD athletes are able to gain their self-esteem.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

The various instances of injustice among Filipino PWDs simply prove that these differently abled citizens are truly vulnerable and thus, should be given due recognition by the Philippine society. This means that PWDs should be treated co-equal with other members of the society by giving them equal access to the different government services, employment, utmost respect of their dignity and human rights. Hence, the government has to implement RA 7277 and the state's responsibilities in UNCRPD in full extent. Moreover, the Philippines should consider PWD's important roles in nation building and promote an inclusive PWDs government programs.

In this article, employing Honneth's theory of the struggle for recognition, I have presented sensible arguments and concrete experiences of Para athletes to prove that sports are spheres of recognition for PWDs in the Philippines. Honneth's theory has shown importance of recognition to all human persons, which include those who are abled and those with disabilities, in order for them to achieve self-actualization.

In this study, it is obvious that I have put emphasis on Paralympics as one of the areas for PWD's recognition. However, I am convinced that in the modern society, there are many fields where marginalized individuals, particularly the PWDs, are given opportunity to express themselves and thus, gain their self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem.

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