

Knowledge and Challenges in the Accessibility Law among PWDs and Building Owners in Dumaguete City: Implications for Effective Implementation

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Abstract. This study assessed the implementation of Batas Pambansa Blg. 344 (BP 344), the Accessibility Law, in Dumaguete City by examining the extent of knowledge and challenges experienced by building owners and persons with disabilities (PWDs). The research aimed to address the gap between policy awareness and practical compliance by examining whether a significant relationship exists between the level of knowledge and the challenges encountered in complying with accessibility requirements. Specifically, it aimed to: (1) determine the extent of knowledge of BP 344 among building owners and PWDs; (2) identify the extent of implementation challenges faced by both groups; and (3) examine the correlation between knowledge and challenges. A descriptive-correlational design was employed using stratified random sampling. A total of 220 validated responses (110 building owners and 110 PWDs) were analyzed using weighted mean and Spearman's rank correlation coefficient. Results revealed that building owners ($\bar{x} = 4.04$) and PWDs ($\bar{x} = 3.98$) had a high level of knowledge on BP 344. However, both groups faced moderate implementation challenges ($\bar{x} = 3.15$ for building owners; $\bar{x} = 3.24$ for PWDs), particularly in areas such as limited technical guidance, financial constraints, and inconsistent enforcement. Spearman's correlation results indicated no significant relationship between the extent of knowledge and the extent of challenges encountered ($p > 0.05$), suggesting that awareness alone does not guarantee effective implementation. The study highlights the need for enhanced technical and institutional support. It recommends the involvement of accredited accessibility consultants, regular monitoring with participation from the Persons with Disability Affairs Office (PDAO), and stronger collaboration between government agencies and stakeholders to ensure inclusive and barrier-free infrastructure. These findings contribute to the refinement of evidence-based policy and the implementation of practical improvements nationwide, as outlined in BP 344.

Keywords: Accessibility Law; BP 344; Building owners; Challenges; Persons with Disabilities.

1.0 Introduction

People with disabilities (PWDs) are constantly exposed to all sorts of challenges and obstacles in their daily lives (Krishnamoorthi et al., 2024). For example, when using public facilities, it is essential to provide PWDs with easy access to ensure they can reach and use these facilities effectively (Pujiyanti, 2023). However, inaccessible infrastructure often excludes individuals with disabilities from fully engaging with their environments (de Velasco Machado & de Oliveira, 2021). According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2024), disability is a

fundamental part of the human experience, impacting roughly 1.3 billion people, equivalent to 16% of the world's population. As outlined in Article 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), the term "persons with disabilities" refers to individuals who experience long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments which, when coupled with societal and environmental obstacles, may restrict their ability to participate fully and equally in society. These global principles establish the foundation for understanding disability not solely as a medical condition but as a social issue requiring inclusive governance, equitable infrastructure, and human rights-based responses.

The ongoing struggles experienced by persons with disabilities (PWDs) in the Philippines highlight the urgency and importance of addressing these issues, especially in light of the country's commitment to fulfilling the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Of particular relevance is SDG 11.7, which aspires to guarantee inclusive, accessible, and safe public spaces for everyone, with a strong emphasis on PWDs. As San Luis (2022) pointed out, the formal acknowledgment of PWD rights in the Philippines began with the issuance of Presidential Decree No. 1509 on June 11, 1978, by President Ferdinand E. Marcos, which established the National Commission Concerning Disabled Persons (NCCDP), and was further strengthened by Batas Pambansa Bilang 344 (BP344), or the Accessibility Law, mandating accessible features in public and private structures. As of October 2024, the National Council on Disability Affairs (NCDA) has recorded 1,847,015 registered PWDs nationwide. Dumaguete City, as the capital of Negros Oriental and a growing center of education, business, and government services, has 869 establishments subject to BP 344 compliance. As of 2024, Provincial Social Welfare and Development Office (PSWDO) recorded a total of 20,143 PWDs in Negros Oriental while 2,358 registered in Dumaguete City, indicating a growing demand for inclusive infrastructure in both public and private establishments.

Despite extensive research on accessibility laws like BP344, gaps persist in understanding the knowledge and awareness of PWDs and building owners. Studies, such as that by Zallio and Clarkson (2021), emphasized that building owners often focus on physical compliance and audits but lack a deeper understanding of accessibility principles, resulting in minimum-standard implementations. Chiluba (2019) found a broader lack of awareness and training on accessibility issues, while Ubani and Sanikpege (2023) focused on urban centers, leaving Dumaguete underrepresented. Furthermore, no known studies have analytically examined the relationship between stakeholders' knowledge and the implementation challenges they face, especially in the context of a mid-sized city, where compliance levels and stakeholder awareness may differ due to local governance capacity, resource availability, or enforcement mechanisms.

This study addresses the critical and pressing issue of accessibility for PWDs in Dumaguete City by investigating an often-neglected aspect: the knowledge and awareness of stakeholders, specifically building owners and PWDs, regarding BP344 (The Accessibility Law). The following section outlines the research methodology, including the design, participants, and instruments used, to guide the reader through the structure of this paper. This is followed by a presentation of the results and a discussion of the key findings. The paper concludes with practical recommendations to improve BP 344 implementation and enhance accessibility in Dumaguete City.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Research Design

The study employed a descriptive-correlational research design to assess the knowledge and awareness of building owners and PWDs regarding Batas Pambansa Bilang 344 (BP344), as well as the challenges they encounter in its implementation. A descriptive research design was appropriate for the study, as it aimed to provide a detailed understanding of the situation in Dumaguete City regarding BP344 compliance and awareness. The study employed a correlational design, aiming to establish a connection among the aforementioned variables.

2.2 Research Locale

This study was conducted in Dumaguete City, Negros Oriental—a vibrant urban center recognized as a key economic, educational, and cultural hub in the province. The city is home to a diverse array of public and private establishments, including commercial centers, office buildings, residential complexes, academic institutions, healthcare facilities, hospitality venues, industrial zones, and religious structures. These built environments are subject to national accessibility standards, particularly those outlined in Batas Pambansa Bilang 344 (BP344), also known as the Accessibility Law.

Dumaguete's urban infrastructure is served by various forms of public transportation, including tricycles, jeepneys, and multicabs, making it relatively navigable for the general public. However, despite its reputation for progressive urban development and its growing awareness of inclusive practices, accessibility for persons with disabilities (PWDs) remains a critical issue. Structural barriers and uneven implementation of accessibility guidelines continue to pose significant challenges. Given this context, Dumaguete City presents a highly relevant setting for exploring the level of awareness, experiences, and perspectives of both PWDs and building owners regarding the enforcement and real-world application of accessibility standards mandated by BP344. The city's urban diversity and infrastructural complexity make it a valuable microcosm for assessing the gaps and progress in disability-inclusive development.

2.3 Research Participants

Following Bullen (2022), a minimum sample size of 100 was initially considered sufficient for development-focused research. However, for greater statistical rigor, the study employed a sample of 110 building owners and 110 PWDs. A sample size of 110 respondents is considered sufficient for a descriptive-correlational study, particularly when the goal is to detect a moderate correlation ($r = 0.30$) between variables with acceptable statistical power. According to Hulley et al. (2013), a sample size of 85 participants is adequate to detect a correlation coefficient of 0.30 with a Type I error rate (α) of 0.05 and a Type II error rate (β) of 0.20, which corresponds to a statistical power of 80%. Since 110 respondents exceed this threshold, the study not only meets but surpasses the recommended minimum, thereby providing stronger statistical confidence in the findings and reducing the risk of both Type I and Type II errors. This ensures that the study can reliably explore and describe relationships between variables, making 110 a statistically justifiable and robust sample size for descriptive-correlational research. To ensure representative coverage, proportional stratified random sampling was applied to both groups. For PWDs, population data provided by the Persons with Disability Affairs Office (PDAO) of Dumaguete City identified five key disability categories: Speech, Visual, Physical, Deaf, and Cancer. Proportional allocations were calculated to ensure equitable representation from each group, based on their actual population sizes. The formula used was:

$$n_i = \left(\frac{N_i}{N_{total}} \right) \times n \quad \text{Equation (1)}$$

Where n_i is the required sample size from each category, N_i is the population size of each specific category, N_{total} is the combined population of the five selected categories, and n is the total target sample of 110 respondents. This approach ensured that each disability group was represented in proportion to its actual share of the overall population, enhancing the representativeness and reliability of the findings. Survey distribution was carried out in coordination with the PDAO, the City and Provincial Social Welfare and Development Offices (CSWDO and PSWDO), and selected public and private establishments frequently accessed by PWDs. This facilitated a comprehensive and inclusive data collection process aligned with the study's objectives. The distribution of the number of PWDs per category is shown below:

Category	Population (N)	Sample Size (n)
Speech	359	23
Visual	206	13
Physical	850	52
Deaf	136	9
Cancer	213	13
Total:	1764	110

For building owners, classification categories were based on the Department of Public Works and Highways' (DPWH) quarterly Accessibility Law compliance matrix, including national and local government offices, health units, educational institutions, and private establishments open to the public. The same proportional stratified sampling strategy was used. The categories included:

Category	Population (N)	Sample Size (n)
National Government Agencies	23	3
Local Government Offices	39	5
Government Hospitals/Health Units	1	1
Government Schools	26	4
Private Buildings for Public Use	780	97
Total:	869	110

To achieve the target of 110 building owner respondents, Proportional Stratified Random Sampling was likewise applied, mirroring the approach used for the PWD respondents. Data collection was facilitated through coordination with the Department of Education, the Local Government Unit of Dumaguete City, and primarily the Office of the City Administrator.

2.4 Research Instrument

To facilitate an understanding of the knowledge, awareness, and challenges of building owners and PWDs regarding BP344, the researcher employed a structured questionnaire and an interview guide. These instruments were developed based on prior studies, expert feedback, and existing accessibility standards.

Survey questionnaire. A self-constructed, structured questionnaire was employed as the primary tool for collecting quantitative data. The questionnaire has sections tailored to two distinct respondent groups—building owners and PWDs. It contains a disclosure statement to ensure that respondents provide informed consent. This statement clarifies the study's purpose, guarantees the confidentiality of responses, and secures voluntary participation. Ethical approval was obtained prior to the commencement of data collection.

The content for the building owners' section includes questions related to: (a) Accessibility requirements: Knowledge of minimum accessibility standards mandated by BP344, (b) Legal obligations: Understanding of penalties, compliance responsibilities, and accessibility audits, (c) Challenges faced: Insights into financial constraints, technical difficulties, or lack of local enforcement.

For PWDs, the questionnaire focuses on: (a) Awareness of accessibility rights: Knowledge of BP344, reporting mechanisms for non-compliance, and experiences with accessibility issues, and (b) Challenges in accessibility: Accounts of difficulties with mobility and access to public and private establishments.

The instrument includes Likert-scale items (e.g., 1 = Very Low to 5 = Very High), dichotomous yes/no questions (e.g., "Are you aware of BP344 accessibility features?"), and open-ended questions to gather more nuanced qualitative data. To ensure validity, the questionnaire was reviewed by three experts in accessibility law and disability studies to assess its content and alignment with the study's objectives. A dry run was also conducted with 30 participants to test the reliability of the instrument, and Cronbach's alpha was calculated to verify internal consistency, with an acceptable threshold of 0.70. This process ensures that the items within each section reliably measure the intended constructs.

Interview guide. A semi-structured interview guide complements the questionnaire, providing deeper qualitative insights. For building owners, the guide explores motivations, barriers, and strategies for implementing accessibility features. For PWDs, it delves into their experiences with accessibility and the effectiveness of existing infrastructure.

2.5 Data Gathering Procedure

The research commenced after the integration of feedback and suggestions from the research panel during the proposal defense. Upon approval, a formal letter of request to conduct the study was submitted to the local government of Dumaguete City and other relevant authorities, including the Foundation University Ethics Committee, for clearance and endorsement. Once approval was granted, the researcher coordinated with building owners and organizations representing PWDs to identify and secure participants for the study.

Prior to data collection, the researcher conducted an orientation session with participants, explaining the purpose, significance, and ethical considerations of the study. Informed consent forms were distributed and signed to ensure voluntary participation. The data collection process involved the distribution of structured questionnaires to both building owners and PWDs. The retrieval of the questionnaires occurred immediately after participants completed them to ensure data accuracy and prevent loss of information. Once data collection was completed, responses were tallied and organized using MS Excel for quantitative processing. Statistical analysis, including reliability tests such as Cronbach's alpha and inferential tests, was performed using appropriate software to analyze the relationships and differences in knowledge and challenges faced by building owners and PWDs. The results were then interpreted and presented in alignment with the research objectives.

The tools used by the researcher to analyze data are the following:

Mean. This was used to determine the (a) extent of building owners’ and PWDs’ knowledge of BP 344; (b) extent of challenges faced by building owners in the effective enforcement of BP 344; and (c) extent of challenges faced by PWDs in ensuring the effective implementation of accessibility standards in public spaces and facilities under BP 344.

Spearman's rank correlation coefficient. This was used to identify the degree of relationship between the extent of building owners’ and PWDs’ knowledge of BP 344 and the respective challenges they face in implementing accessibility standards.

Mann-Whitney U test. This was used in identifying the significant difference between the extent of knowledge of the building owners and that of PWDs as regards BP 344.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to the highest ethical standards to ensure the rights, privacy, and well-being of all participants were protected. First, ethical clearance was sought from Foundation University and relevant local authorities, ensuring that the research complied with institutional and national ethical guidelines. Before data collection, respondents were provided with a comprehensive disclosure statement that explained the purpose, scope, and potential benefits of the study. Their informed consent was obtained in writing, explicitly stating that participation is voluntary and that they have the option to withdraw at any point without fear of coercion or repercussions.

To ensure confidentiality, all personal data and responses were anonymized and securely stored. Only the researcher had access to the raw data, which was used solely for this study. Sensitive information, particularly regarding respondents' experiences with accessibility and compliance with BP344, was handled with utmost care to prevent any unintended harm or breach of privacy. Additionally, the study was designed to minimize any potential risks to the participants. The researcher maintained a respectful and non-judgmental approach during all interactions, fostering an environment where participants felt safe and valued. Regular consultations with the Ethics Committee of Foundation University ensured that the research process remained ethically sound and aligned with established protocols.

3.0 Results and Discussion

3.1 Extent of Knowledge of the Building Owners on BP 344

In terms of Accessibility Requirements

The findings in Table 1 demonstrate that building owners in Dumaguete City have a high level of knowledge of accessibility requirements under BP 344 (composite $\bar{x}$ = 4.04), with particularly strong awareness of accessible parking ($\bar{x}$ = 4.25), legal responsibilities ($\bar{x}$ = 4.19), and basic accessibility features such as ramps and handrails ($\bar{x}$ = 4.12). These highly rated items suggest that compliance knowledge among building owners tends to concentrate on visible, structural elements, likely due to their direct integration into building permits and inspections. This observation supports the findings of Bognot et al. (2023) and Manalo-Asay and Abiog-Adriano (2024), whose studies in Guimba and Metro Manila, respectively, also found a similar prioritization of physical features in accessibility compliance.

Table 1. Knowledge of the Building Owners on BP 344 in terms of Accessibility Requirements (n=110)

Indicators	Mean	Interpretation
1. requirements for providing accessible parking spaces as mandated by BP344.	4.25	VH
2. legal responsibilities of building owners to ensure accessibility for PWDs as outlined in BP344.	4.19	H
3. specific accessibility features required by BP344, such as ramps, handrails, and accessible restrooms.	4.12	H
4. accessibility features for all types of disabilities, including mobility, vision, and hearing.	3.87	H
5. penalties for non-compliance with the accessibility requirements set by BP344.	3.81	H
Composite	4.04	H

Note: 4.21–5.00, Very High (VH); 3.41–4.20, High (H); 2.61–3.40, Moderate (M); 1.81–2.60, Low (L); 1.00 – 1.80, Very Low (VL)

However, relatively lower scores for knowledge on accessibility features for all types of disabilities ($\bar{x}$ = 3.87) and penalties for non-compliance ($\bar{x}$ = 3.81) reveal key knowledge gaps. These areas highlight a limited understanding of inclusive design and enforcement consequences, which issues are underscored by Andersson (2021), who emphasized the continued shortfall in awareness and training beyond physical mobility.

In terms of Accessibility Audits and Assessments

Table 2 illustrates that building owners possess a “high” extent of knowledge regarding accessibility audits and assessments by BP344, with a composite weighted mean of 3.96. Among the indicators, the highest score is recorded on the importance of consulting with accessibility experts to ensure the building passes BP344 audits ($\bar{x}$ = 4.05), followed closely by the use of audit results to guide improvements ($\bar{x}$ = 4.04), and the belief that buildings meet standards after undergoing accessibility assessments ($\bar{x}$ = 4.01). These results suggest that many building owners are not only aware of the importance of accessibility audits but also actively incorporate their findings into facility planning and development.

Table 2. Knowledge of the Building Owners on BP 344 in terms of Accessibility Audits and Assessments (n=110)

Indicators	Mean	Interpretation
1. importance of consulting with accessibility experts to ensure building passes BP344 accessibility audits	4.05	H
2. improvements to my building are based on the results of an accessibility audit or assessment.	4.04	H
3. building meets the accessibility standards set by BP344 after undergoing an audit or assessment.	4.01	H
4. potential penalties for not complying with the accessibility requirements identified in an audit.	3.36	H
Composite	3.96	H

Note: 4.21–5.00, Very High (VH); 3.41–4.20, High (H); 2.61–3.40, Moderate (M); 1.81–2.60, Low (L); 1.00 – 1.80, Very Low (VL)

These results are supported by Ferri (2025), who explained that understanding accessibility requires more than familiarity with legal standards; lived experiences and practical evaluations must shape it. Ferri emphasized that accessibility audits should not only verify compliance with technical specifications but must also assess how spaces function for actual users, particularly persons with disabilities. This perspective aligns with the observed emphasis among building owners on consulting experts, conducting user-centered assessments, and utilizing audit results to enhance facility accessibility beyond minimum requirements. On the other hand, the lowest-rated item is awareness of potential penalties for failing to comply with audit findings ($\bar{x}$ = 3.36). Although still within the “high” range, this suggests that while building owners are proactive in understanding and implementing accessibility features, fewer are fully informed of the legal consequences associated with non-compliance identified through audits.

In terms of Legal Obligations and Responsibilities

Table 3 illustrates that building owners possess a “high” level of knowledge regarding their legal obligations and responsibilities under BP344, with a composite mean of 4.02. The highest-rated indicators include the awareness that BP344 mandates legal obligations for building owners to ensure accessibility for PWDs ($\bar{x}$ = 4.26), and the importance of implementing the necessary legal requirements in buildings to accommodate PWDs under BP344 ($\bar{x}$ = 4.25), both interpreted as “very high.” These findings suggest that building owners are well-informed about the legal mandate for accessibility, which must be integrated into the planning, design, and operation of built environments.

Table 3. Knowledge of the Building Owners on BP 344 in terms of Legal Obligations and Responsibilities under the Law (n=110)

Indicators	Mean	Interpretation
1. BP344 mandates legal obligations for building owners to ensure accessibility for PWDs.	4.26	VH
2. importance of implementing the necessary legal requirements in my building to accommodate PWDs under BP344	4.25	VH
3. complying with BP344 improves the inclusiveness and accessibility of my establishment.	4.09	H
4. legal process involved if a PWD files a complaint against my building for non-compliance.	3.78	H
Composite	4.02	H

Note: 4.21–5.00, Very High (VH); 3.41–4.20, High (H); 2.61–3.40, Moderate (M); 1.81–2.60, Low (L); 1.00 – 1.80, Very Low (VL)

This result reinforces the findings of Baker (2021), which suggest that under accessibility laws such as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Fair Housing Act (FHA), building owners have non-delegable legal responsibilities to ensure their facilities are accessible to individuals with disabilities. Also rated “high” are the knowledge that complying with BP344 improves the inclusiveness and accessibility of establishments ($\bar{x}$ = 4.09). However, lower ratings are noted in the legal process involved if a PWD files a complaint against their building for non-compliance ($\bar{x}$ = 3.78). While still within the “high” range, these findings suggest some gaps in procedural familiarity despite an overall strong awareness of legal obligations. Conversely, Ndlovu (2021) argued that societal structures, including physical and institutional environments, are often still designed around the idea of the “normal” and the “able,” leading to the exclusion of persons with impairments. This indicates that although knowledge among building owners in this study appears high, broader societal attitudes and infrastructures still

reflect a lack of deep understanding and commitment to accessibility principles, highlighting a potential gap between knowledge and genuine inclusive practices.

3.2 Extent of Knowledge of the PWDs on BP 344

In terms of Accessibility Audits and Assessments

Table 4 presents that PWDs have a generally “high” level of knowledge of the accessibility requirements under BP344, as reflected in the composite mean of 3.94. The highest-rated indicator is the awareness of their legal rights regarding access to public and private facilities ($\bar{x}$ = 4.09), followed closely by the perceived effectiveness of BP 344 in promoting equal ($\bar{x}$ = 4.08). These findings indicate that PWDs are aware of the fundamental rights afforded to them under the Accessibility Law and recognize its role in creating inclusive spaces.

Table 4. *Knowledge of the PWDs on BP 344 in terms of Accessibility Requirements (n=110)*

Indicators	Mean	Interpretation
1. legal rights provided to PWDs regarding access to public and private facilities.	4.09	H
2. effectiveness in promoting equal access for PWDs in Dumaguete City.	4.08	H
3. specific accessibility features required such as ramps, handrails, and accessible restrooms.	4.04	H
4. importance of complying with its accessibility standards	3.88	H
5. buildings or facilities that are non-compliant with accessibility requirements.	3.58	H
Composite	3.94	H

Note: 4.21–5.00, Very High (VH); 3.41–4.20, High (H); 2.61–3.40, Moderate (M); 1.81–2.60, Low (L); 1.00 – 1.80, Very Low (VL)

This is supported by the study of Astuti et al. (2021), who revealed that the majority of persons with disabilities are knowledgeable about accessibility laws, primarily due to their participation in organizations of PWDs and exposure to legal literacy initiatives. Respondents also demonstrate “high” knowledge of specific accessibility features such as ramps, handrails, and accessible restrooms ($\bar{x}$ = 4.04), as well as the necessity of compliance with BP 344 standards ($\bar{x}$ = 3.88). These responses suggest that PWDs possess a solid understanding of the technical aspects and provisions of the law that aim to reduce physical barriers. In support, Ubani et al. (2023) noted that architectural barriers, such as sidewalks not designed for wheelchair users and doorknobs unsuitable for individuals with muscular atrophy, can severely limit access. Their findings affirm that understanding and implementing accessibility features, such as ramps and accessible restrooms, are crucial to enabling the mobility and safety of persons with disabilities, thereby supporting the respondents’ strong knowledge of accessibility requirements.

However, the lowest-rated item, although still within the “high” range, is knowledge of non-compliant buildings or facilities ($\bar{x}$ = 3.58). This indicates a potential information gap in identifying establishments that fall short of BP344 standards, possibly due to limited public data or a lack of feedback mechanisms. Conversely, Osuagwu and Nwoguji (2023) emphasized that disability issues continue to face challenges due to low rates of awareness, limited educational sensitization, and poor knowledge in contemporary society, particularly in Nigeria. Their findings suggest that, despite the presence of legal frameworks, persons with disabilities may still encounter difficulties in recognizing and addressing accessibility violations without strong public education and consistent exposure to accessibility issues, highlighting a potential gap between knowledge and application.

In terms of Accessibility Audits and Assessments

Table 5 reveals that PWDs exhibit a “high” level of knowledge of accessibility audits and assessments, as shown by the composite mean of 3.87. The highest-rated indicators include the purpose of conducting accessibility audits in public and private buildings ($\bar{x}$ = 4.00), the importance of regular monitoring and review of accessibility features ($\bar{x}$ = 3.95), and the role of assessments in ensuring compliance with BP344 standards ($\bar{x}$ = 3.92). These findings indicate that PWDs understand the relevance of systematic evaluation processes in upholding accessibility standards.

Table 5. *Knowledge of the PWDs on BP 344 in terms of Accessibility Audits and Assessments (n=110)*

Indicators	Mean	Interpretation
1. role of accessibility audits in ensuring that public spaces meet the needs of Persons with Disabilities.	3.77	H
2. responsible agencies for conducting accessibility assessments in Dumaguete City.	3.68	H
3. importance of identifying and reporting accessibility issues that may require an audit and assessment.	3.67	H
4. necessary improvements in buildings that do not meet <i>Accessibility Law</i> standards.	3.67	H
5. accessibility audits are conducted to assess a building's compliance.	3.59	H
6. recent accessibility audits or assessments that have been conducted in Dumaguete City.	3.45	H
Composite	3.64	H

Note: 4.21–5.00, Very High (VH); 3.41–4.20, High (H); 2.61–3.40, Moderate (M); 1.81–2.60, Low (L); 1.00 – 1.80, Very Low (VL)

This result is supported by Fulgar (2023), who postulated that despite the early enactment of accessibility legislation in the Philippines, the implementation and enforcement of accessibility features remain inconsistent and inadequate. Fulgar asserted that many public and private spaces still lack accessible facilities due to the absence of continuous monitoring and enforcement mechanisms. This observation aligns with the respondents' high recognition of the importance of regular audits and assessments to ensure accessibility compliance. Similarly, Awang (2023) noted that persistent physical barriers, such as the lack of ramps and inadequate signage in healthcare facilities, often result from poor auditing practices and insufficient monitoring. Awang's study in Malaysia highlights that the effectiveness of accessibility laws greatly depends on rigorous evaluation and audit processes, which resonates with the PWDs' understanding reflected in this table. Furthermore, the lowest-rated items, such as familiarity with specific audit tools or ($\bar{x} = 3.72$) and knowledge of who is authorized to conduct audits ($\bar{x} = 3.67$), still fall within the "high" range but suggest gaps in technical familiarity.

In terms of Legal Obligations and Responsibilities

Table 6 shows that PWDs in Dumaguete City have a "high" level of knowledge of the legal obligations and responsibilities mandated under BP344, as reflected in the composite mean of 3.81. The highest-rated indicator is the awareness that public spaces must adhere to accessibility standards as a legal requirement ($\bar{x} = 4.07$), followed by knowledge of the legal rights given to PWDs for equal access to public and private facilities ($\bar{x} = 4.06$), and that building owners and operators have legal obligations to ensure accessibility for PWDs ($\bar{x} = 4.03$). These findings indicate a strong understanding among PWDs that BP344 establishes legally enforceable standards of accessibility across public and private spaces.

Table 6. Knowledge of the PWDs on BP 344 in terms of Legal Obligations and Responsibilities under the Law (n=110)

Indicators	Mean	Interpretation
1. public spaces must adhere to accessibility standards as a legal requirement.	4.07	H
2. legal rights given to PWDs for equal access to public and private facilities.	4.06	H
3. building owners and operators have legal obligations to ensure accessibility for PWDs.	4.03	H
4. penalties and legal actions that can be taken against non-compliant establishments.	3.58	H
5. government acts against building owners who do not comply	3.53	H
Composite	3.81	H

Note: 4.21–5.00, Very High (VH); 3.41–4.20, High (H); 2.61–3.40, Moderate (M); 1.81–2.60, Low (L); 1.00 – 1.80, Very Low (VL)

Correspondingly, The Asia Foundation (2021) emphasized that a significant barrier to disability-inclusive development is the lack of public awareness and understanding of the rights of persons with disabilities. Their findings stressed the necessity of continued rights education to ensure that PWDs are empowered to claim their entitlements under existing laws. However, the lowest-rated indicators relate to knowledge of the penalties and legal actions that can be taken against non-compliant establishments ($\bar{x} = 3.58$), and government actions against ($\bar{x} = 3.53$). While still within the "high" category, these lower scores indicate that PWDs understand their rights and the obligations of others, but there is a lesser degree of familiarity with specific legal procedures and enforcement practices.

Krahn et al. (2015) also posited that while awareness of accessibility rights has improved, the actual implementation and inclusion of PWDs in mainstream systems remain inadequate, creating persistent challenges in achieving full participation and equitable access. Similarly, Munthali et. al. (2019) found that despite the existence of protective laws, significant challenges persist for PWDs, such as the high costs of care, inaccessible facilities, and barriers to essential services. These issues highlight that knowledge of legal rights does not automatically translate into full accessibility or the effective enforcement of those rights, reinforcing the need for stronger implementation and support mechanisms.

3.3 Extent of Challenges Faced by Building Owners on the Effective Enforcement of BP344

Table 7 shows that building owners in Dumaguete City experience a "moderate" level of challenges in implementing BP344, as shown by the composite mean of 3.33. The highest-rated indicator is the need for better coordination between the government and building owners to improve the enforcement of BP344 ($\bar{x} = 3.53$). The second-highest indicator is the limited space and structural constraints of buildings ($\bar{x} = 3.41$), which also falls under the "high" verbal description. According to Amoah et al. (2023), significant challenges persist in adapting older or historically designed buildings to modern accessibility standards, often due to physical limitations, high retrofitting costs, and complex renovation requirements. This concern aligns with local responses that point to older and space-restricted structures as significant barriers.

Table 7. *Extent of Challenges Faced by Building Owners on the Effective Enforcement of BP344 (n=110)*

Indicators	Mean	Interpretation
1. need for better coordination between the government and building owners, as it could significantly improve the enforcement of BP344	3.53	H
2. limited space and structural constraints of my building, make it difficult to implement accessibility features	3.41	H
3. difficulty of retrofitting older buildings to meet BP344 accessibility requirements.	3.37	M
4. lack of technical guidance from authorities, which poses difficulties in implementing BP344 standards	3.35	M
5. lack of awareness among building owners about the specific requirements of BP344	3.25	M
6. difficulties in obtaining the necessary permits for renovations to comply with BP344	3.23	M
Composite	3.33	M

Note: 4.21–5.00, Very High (VH); 3.41–4.20, High (H); 2.61–3.40, Moderate (M); 1.81–2.60, Low (L); 1.00 – 1.80, Very Low (VL)

Moderately rated indicators include the difficulty of retrofitting older buildings ($\bar{x} = 3.37$) and lack of technical guidance from authorities ($\bar{x} = 3.35$). Carlsson et al. (2022) supported this observation, emphasizing that although accessibility norms are increasingly acknowledged in legal frameworks, practical implementation often lags during actual planning and construction stages. This leads to overlooked accessibility needs and complicates retrofitting efforts in the future. The lack of awareness among building owners about the specific requirements of BP344 ($\bar{x} = 3.25$) and the difficulties in obtaining the necessary permits for renovations ($\bar{x} = 3.23$) highlight gaps in technical education and bureaucratic efficiency, underscoring the need for more coordinated and streamlined compliance processes. Mindell et al. (2025) noted that systemic barriers, such as unclear policies, institutional delays, and inconsistent application of accessibility laws, often leave building owners uncertain about compliance requirements, thereby further exacerbating implementation gaps.

3.4 Extent of Challenges Faced by the PWDs on the Effective Implementation under Accessibility Law

Table 8 reveals that PWDs in Dumaguete City encounter a “moderate” level of challenges in the effective implementation of the Accessibility Law, with a composite mean of 2.78. The highest-rated item is that PWDs are not adequately consulted in the planning and development of public spaces to ensure accessibility ($\bar{x} = 3.05$). This finding signifies that despite legal provisions, participatory approaches involving PWDs are still insufficient.

Table 8. *Extent of Challenges Faced by the PWDs on the effective implementation under Accessibility Law (n=110)*

Indicators	Mean	Interpretation
1. PWDs are not adequately consulted in the planning & development of public spaces to ensure accessibility.	3.05	M
2. limited public campaigns/initiatives that address the importance of accessibility for PWDs in Dumaguete City.	2.82	M
3. public spaces and government buildings in Dumaguete City do not comply with accessibility standards due to weak enforcement of BP 344.	2.78	M
4. accessibility standards under Accessibility Law are not consistently implemented in recreational areas and parks.	2.73	M
5. local government is not effectively enforcing the law in public spaces, private establishments and facilities.	2.67	M
6. private establishments in Dumaguete City do not adhere to accessibility standards.	2.65	M
Composite	2.78	M

Note: 4.21–5.00, Very High (VH); 3.41–4.20, High (H); 2.61–3.40, Moderate (M); 1.81–2.60, Low (L); 1.00 – 1.80, Very Low (VL)

This observation is supported by Awang (2023), who reported that in Malaysia, weak consultation with PWDs and poor accessibility auditing practices result in persistent barriers in public environments. Awang emphasized that ensuring meaningful participation of PWDs in planning processes is critical for achieving genuinely inclusive and accessible spaces. Moreover, respondents identified moderate challenges related to the non-compliance of public spaces and government buildings with accessibility standards due to weak enforcement ($\bar{x} = 2.78$), as well as inconsistent implementation of accessibility features in recreational areas and parks ($\bar{x} = 2.73$). Wazani et al. (2021) similarly noted that when accessibility is not prioritized in urban planning and when community awareness is low, PWDs encounter significant barriers that limit their ability to engage fully in social, cultural, and recreational activities. Additionally, challenges related to ineffective enforcement by local governments in both public spaces and private establishments ($\bar{x} = 2.67$ and $\bar{x} = 2.65$, respectively) further highlight systemic gaps. Fulgar (2023) found that despite the early enactment of accessibility laws in the Philippines, enforcement remains inconsistent, and public education campaigns on accessibility rights are often lacking, resulting in continued barriers for persons with disabilities.

3.5 Relationship between Variables

Table 9 presents the relationship between the extent of knowledge of building owners and PWDs as regards BP344 and the respective challenges they face in implementing accessibility standards. Using Spearman’s Rank-Order

Correlation at a 0.05 level of significance, the findings show that there is no significant relationship between the extent of knowledge and the challenges faced in implementation for both groups. For building owners, the correlation coefficients (r) for knowledge of accessibility requirements (0.041, $p = 0.675$), accessibility audits and assessments (0.028, $p = 0.772$), and legal obligations under the law (0.011, $p = 0.904$) are all statistically insignificant. Similarly, for PWDs, the correlations for knowledge on accessibility requirements (0.028, $p = 0.772$), accessibility audits and assessments (0.083, $p = 0.392$), and legal obligations under the law (0.020, $p = 0.842$) also indicate no significant relationships.

Table 9. Extent of Knowledge of the Building Owners and PWDs on BP344 and their Respective Challenges

Variable	r_s	p	Decision	Remark
Building Owners' Knowledge on:				
Accessibility Requirements	0.04	.675	Fail to reject H_{o1}	Not significant
Accessibility Audits & Assessments	0.03	.772	Fail to reject H_{o1}	Not significant
Legal Obligations & Responsibilities Under the Law	0.01	.904	Fail to reject H_{o1}	Not significant
PWDs' Knowledge on:				
Accessibility Requirements	0.03	.772	Fail to reject H_{o1}	Not significant
Accessibility Audits & Assessments	0.08	.392	Fail to reject H_{o1}	Not significant
Legal Obligations & Responsibilities Under the Law	0.02	.842	Fail to reject H_{o1}	Not significant

Note: Spearman's Rank-Order Correlation (r_s) at 0.05 Level of Significance; $n = 110$

These results suggest that having a thorough understanding of accessibility requirements, legal responsibilities, and audit processes does not necessarily alleviate the challenges encountered in ensuring compliance with the law. In other words, challenges in implementing accessibility standards may persist regardless of the stakeholders' level of knowledge and expertise. This suggests the influence of other external barriers, including structural limitations, limited funding, or unclear policies. The Asia Foundation (2021) noted that, although laws and knowledge of rights exist, a general lack of systemic support mechanisms and a prevailing charity-based approach often limit the practical realization of disability rights. This supports the present findings that knowledge alone does not eliminate challenges. Similarly, Munthali et. al. (2019) maintained that despite the existence of protective laws for persons with disabilities, significant issues such as costs of care, inaccessible facilities, and service barriers continue to impede full societal participation. This observation resonates with the study's findings, reinforcing that external structural and systemic barriers remain major obstacles even when individuals possess adequate legal knowledge.

3.6 Difference between the Extent of Knowledge of the Building Owners and PWDs on BP 344

Table 10 presents the results of the Mann-Whitney U Test used to determine if there is a significant difference in the extent of knowledge of building owners and that of PWDs regarding BP 344.

Table 10. Difference between the Extent of Knowledge of the Building Owners and PWDs on BP 344

Areas	Median		U	p	Decision	Remark
	Bldg. Owners ($n=110$)	PWDs ($n=110$)				
Accessibility Requirements	4.05	4.00	5898.5	.749	Fail to reject H_{o2}	Not significant
Accessibility Audits & Assessments	4.00	3.83	5122.5	.050	Reject H_{o2}	Significant
Legal Obligations & Responsibilities Under the Law	4.00	3.89	5382.0	.159	Fail to reject H_{o2}	Not significant

Mann-Whitney U Test at 0.05 Level of Significance

For accessibility requirements, the computed p -value is 0.749, which is greater than the 0.05 level of significance. This indicates no significant difference between the knowledge of building owners and that of PWDs in this area. For legal obligations and responsibilities, the p -value is 0.159, also greater than 0.05, suggesting no significant difference in knowledge between the two groups. However, for accessibility audits and assessments, the p -value is 0.050, indicating a significant difference, with building owners showing greater knowledge compared to PWDs. This finding aligns with the study of Astuti et al. (2021), which showed that while many PWDs have gained awareness of accessibility laws through disability organizations and advocacy campaigns, technical knowledge related to audits and assessment processes may remain limited. However, it is important to consider that Ndlovu (2021) argued that marginalization and limited participation of persons with disabilities are often the result of infrastructural and systemic barriers rather than a lack of capacity or knowledge. This suggests that with appropriate support systems, empowerment initiatives, and inclusive training, PWDs could potentially match or even exceed the technical knowledge levels of other stakeholders in accessibility assessments.

4.0 Conclusion

This study revealed that both building owners and persons with disabilities (PWDs) in Dumaguete City possess a high level of knowledge regarding the provisions of Batas Pambansa Bilang 344 (BP344), particularly those related to accessibility features, legal obligations, and audit processes. However, notable gaps remain in understanding enforcement mechanisms, inclusive design beyond mobility impairments, and knowledge of non-compliant establishments. Based on these findings, it is recommended that local governments and relevant agencies implement regular accessibility audits, intensify information campaigns on BP344 enforcement, and promote capacity-building initiatives for inclusive design awareness. Furthermore, establishing accessible reporting channels for non-compliance may empower PWDs to engage in rights-based monitoring. This study is limited by its focus on a single urban area and the use of self-reported data, which may be subject to response bias. Future research should consider longitudinal approaches to monitor knowledge and compliance trends over time, or comparative analyses across cities to uncover regional implementation disparities. Integrating compliance verification alongside self-reported knowledge would also enhance the robustness of future studies. The findings contribute to the literature on policy implementation and the social model of disability by highlighting how awareness is often centered on visible structural compliance rather than inclusive, user-centered design. Practically, these insights may inform policy reform by urging a shift from compliance-based practices to participatory, disability-inclusive governance. Ultimately, strengthening awareness and implementation of accessibility laws contributes to the Philippines' progress toward achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals, particularly those addressing reduced inequalities (SDG 10), inclusive infrastructure (SDG 11), and equitable access to services (SDG 4).

5.0 Contributions of Authors

Author 1: conceptualization, data gathering, data analysis

Author 2: data analysis, data gathering

Author 3: proposal writing, data gathering

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7.0 Conflict of Interests

This study has no conflict of interest of any sort.

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