

VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND JOB-SEEKING FOR ETHNIC YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES: KEY SOCIAL DETERMINANTS

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Abstract

Objectives. Ethnic minority youth with disabilities have been experiencing multi-challenges in maintaining their wellbeing and social integration. This study was designed to capture the status of ethnic minority youth with disabilities' vocational training and job placement. Importantly, it analyzed different social influential factors this group has to encounter in the process of being included in the community.

Materials and methods. This study employed a mixed method of both quantitative and qualitative approaches. A triangulation data collection strategy was used to generate a broad range of information. It included a survey of 76 ethnic youth with disabilities, qualitative in-depth interviews of six ethnic youth with disabilities and six local officers, and two group discussions among the youth with disabilities and support staff.

Results. The key findings show the challenging status of this vulnerable group and their limited involvement in vocational training and fewer opportunities in job seeking. Important social determinants, such as psychosocial problems, limited support from family, lack of accessibility to information, and social support system limitation, including local social services, have been identified as main obstacles for ethnic minority youth with disabilities.

Conclusions. Ethnic minority youth with disabilities in Vietnam have experienced multi-social challenges that hinder their personal development and often are excluded from many social activities, including vocational training and job placement. In order to support them, it is vital to provide an appropriate support service system in solving their psychosocial challenges as well as the development of policies that support the families' livelihood and sustainable development.

Keywords: ethnic minority youth with disabilities, vocational training, job-seeking, social determinants.

Introduction

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, adopted by the United Nations (UN) on June 13, 2006, provides 45 articles covering many of the rights of persons with disabilities, including the rights of equality and non-discrimination (Article 5), right of accessibility (Article 9); right to life (Article 10); right to access to justice (Article 13); right to live independently and being included in the community (Article 19); right to respect for home and the family, right to education (article 24), right to work (Article 27). These rights should be fulfilled through the principles of equal opportunity, respect for differences and acceptance of people with disabilities; the ability to access opportunities, participate fully, effectively and integrate into society (UN, 2006). Vietnam has shown its commitment to the right of persons with

disabilities (PWDs) by the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2014 and the International Labour Organization (ILO) convention on employment for workers with disabilities in 2019 (ILO, 2019), and the issuing of many laws and legal document to support PWDs. However, PWDs have been still vulnerable to socio-economic changes locally and globally (Ministry of Home Affairs and United Nation Fund Population Agency [UNFPA], 2019; Palmer et al., 2015; United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs [UNDESA], 2020; United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2017; United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund [UNICEF], 2013). The most recent statistics show that is about 6.2 million PWDs aged two and over (accounting for 7.06% of the total population), of which nearly 29% are severely disabilities (Social Protection Department [SPD], 2020), and women with disabilities living in the rural area are at the highest prevalence (Central Population and Housing Census Steering Committee, 2020). Ethnic minority youth with disabilities are among the most vulnerable groups, and they are facing multi difficulties, including access to vocational training, receiving adequate support in job seeking and start-up (Central Population and Housing Census Steering Committee, 2020; General Statistics Office [GSO], 2010; Huỳnh, 2017; Ministry of Home Affairs and UNFPA, 2019). Hence, it is essential to conduct a study to find out different social determinants that have negatively impacted the lives of ethnic minority youth with disabilities (EMYWDs). This study was designed to capture the status of EMYWDs' vocational training and job placement. Importantly it analyzed different influential factors this group had to encounter in the process of being included and integrated into the community.

Literature review

Literature shows that ethnic minority youth and youth with disabilities have experienced many difficulties and challenges in their social integration, education, vocational training, and job-seeking (Crawford, 2012; UNICEF, 2013; Ministry of Home Affairs and UNFPA, 2019). Pandey and Agarwal (2013) point out that young people with disabilities face many changes and challenges as they transition to adulthood. Especially for those who are already involved in different social welfare systems, it is even more profound. Problems of young people with disabilities may arise concerning social, professional and recreational roles affecting their life, self-esteem, and feelings of hope. Employment for young people with disabilities is also only 1/3 lower than that of those without disabilities.

Moreover, the authors analyze programs and policies often overlooked in advocacy initiatives and employment plans as most of these policies target only adults with disabilities. There are also not many designed programs based on youth with disabilities' social, psychological, educational and economic needs. In a report on disabilities education, UNESCO (2017) firmly states that children and young people with disabilities are the most excluded. Poverty is identified as both the cause and effect of disability. A study conducted by Crawford (2012) in the US and UK shows that unemployment among youth with disabilities in both countries is high. However, it appears to be improving in the US thanks to efforts in finding ways to link youth with disabilities to the job market, such as establishing liaisons with potential employers. Besides, there is a difficulty due to the higher rate of school dropout among youth with disabilities.

Furthermore, there is still a significant gap in institutions and stakeholders' coordination mechanisms supporting the transition from school and school to work, especially transition planning. Therefore, employment is crucial for youth with disabilities to maintain a good standard of living for themselves and their families and a vital deterrent affecting their chances of full

participation in society. Crawford (2012) again presents that young people with disabilities are often at a disadvantage in finding formal work and jobs because they do not have access to education or vocational training, or unqualified instructors or unavailable training programs. Consequently, lack of education and skills training places young people with disabilities at a competitive disadvantage in finding suitable jobs. Besides, social stereotypes and stigma between many employers, colleagues and the public make it difficult for young people with disabilities to access vocational training and employment.

Similarly, research shows that ethnic minorities have lower professional, technical and professional qualifications than workers in the majority group across many countries. One of the leading causes is the difference in education. Additionally, some groups also reduce job opportunities due to geographical location, such as in rural, remote areas with poor infrastructure and limited accessibility to non-farm jobs.

In Viet Nam, the number of young people aged 15 to 29 is 22.48% of the total population (equal to 22 million people) (Central Population and Housing Census Steering Committee, 2020). Of which there are about 451.000 young people (aged 18-40) with disabilities (about 2.05%) (GSO, 2018). Unemployment is seen as a leading problem that needs to be addressed. The youth unemployment rate in the third quarter of 2020 is 7.24%, 4.2 times higher than the adult population's unemployment rate (people aged 25 and over). The proportion of young people who are unemployed and not participating in study or training at the same period is 12.9%, equivalent to 1.35 million people. Furthermore, it is 4.8 percentage points higher for young women than that of young men (GSO, 2020).

The situation of youth with disabilities is also critical. This group also faces difficulties in pursuing their wellbeing and social integration due to limited access to vocational training and job placement support. Their education is often lower than persons without disabilities because of the unavailability of appropriately trained teachers and prejudice of vocations attached to them (Ministry of Home Affairs and UNFPA 2019). Young persons with disabilities (aged 16-29) are with a much lower percentage of literacy (55.74%) than persons without disabilities (79.43%) (GSO, 2018). Hence, the rate of young people and people with disabilities participating in the labour market is relatively modest, with only 15.02% of PWD aged 15-17 and 46.3% aged 18-40. They are also suffering from discrimination and not being encouraged to enter the workforce (Ministry of Home Affairs and UNFPA, 2019; Palmer et al., 2015). Also, the limited belief in persons with disabilities' capacity and self-reliance is another barrier (Palmer et al., 2015). The national survey on PWDs shows that about 55% of the respondents say employers do not want to hire workers with disabilities. This survey finds other considerable causes that become a significant barrier to PWDs' job seeking, raking the second and third include being unable to work (18.48%) and having a disability (14.07%) (GSO, 2018). Ethnic minorities have experienced the same challenges. Limited knowledge, skills, working capacity and adaptive capacity are the main barriers for the ethnic minority to work in industrial and formal sectors. Underemployment, especially among young people, is rising (Nguyễn et al., 2012).

Materials and methods

This study employed a mixed method of both quantitative and qualitative approaches. A triangulation data collection strategy was used to generate a broad range of information. It included a survey of 76 ethnic minority youth with disabilities, qualitative in-depth interviews of 6 ethnic minority youth with disabilities and six local officers, and two group discussions among the youth with disabilities and support staff. This study utilized purposeful sampling selection for the

sampling, bringing rich and deep data for the inquiry (Padgett, 1998; Patton, 2002). All accessible 76 ethnic minority youth with disabilities were recruited with an introduction of community staff. Of which there is 52.7% male and 47.3% female youth (41.7% with movement disabilities, 23.6% with hearing and speaking disabilities, 12.5% with mental health disorder and intellectual disabilities, and 9.7% blind). Six staff working in service supporting agencies, including provincial, district and ward government officers, leaders of vocational training institutions, and staff from Youth Unions, Women's Association were selected via snowball approach. Quantitative data were processed via SPSS, and qualitative data from in-depth interviews and group discussions were transferred in the form of Microsoft Word documents, then imported into NVIVO 11 program for theme coding and analysis. The study has relevant ethical approvals.

Results

Current situation of ethnic minority youth with disabilities

The study result reveals that the studied ethnic minority youth with disabilities' education level is very low, with 41.3% of them did not attend school/did not finish primary education. Only 6.7% graduated from high school, and 1.3% held vocational training diplomas. This posited them in a disadvantaged situation to further study for vocational training. This is also presented by the high proportion of untrained professional qualifications (accounts for 59.2%).

Consequently, the unemployment of this ethnic minority youth with disabilities occupied the highest percentage (25.3%). Only 22.7% worked in factories/workshops, followed by 21.3% working in agriculture. A tiny percentage of them worked as artisans/traders (5.3%) and civil servants (1.3%).

Regarding marital status, the majority of them were never married (78.8%), and only more than 1/6 of them were married (16.7%). Less than 5% of them were divorced (3.0%) and widowed (1.5%). These young people with disabilities lived in difficult conditions, with 31.6% from poor households and 40.8% from near-poor households. More than 1/5 (22.4%) lived in average income families and 3.9% in well-off households. Difficult living conditions have created many gaps to prevent ethnic minority youth with disabilities from accessing education, vocational training, employment, and fully participating in the local socio-economic activities.

The status quo of ethnic minority youth with disabilities' vocational training and job placement

There was 59.1% of the studied youth had never attended any vocational training programs. Results from in-depth interviews provided clear explanations. First, it was the barrier of health conditions. One female 19-year-old with movement disabilities stated,

My health is not good. I have difficulty moving. So without support, I could not attend the training course.

From the perspective of the Youth Union representative, the main reason was the not-in-readiness of youth with disabilities and their family, he said,

Youth with disabilities in the area do not participate in vocational training. Even though they are motivated or persuaded, they and their family do not understand. I have explained

that by attending vocational training, then they can get a job. As a result, they can earn extra income. However, I cannot convince them at all. (26 years old female staff)

Second, it was a shortage of training institutions and relevant vocational programs for ethnic minority youth with disabilities. One commune officer said,

Because there is no vocational training institution in my locality, young people have a reason not to go to vocational school." (33 years old male community officer)

Another added:

Currently, there are no vocational training institutions available for disabled youth. There are not many vocational training programs suitable for ethnic minority youth in the area. (30 years old male community officer)

Third, unavailable job-seeking opportunities after graduating from the vocational training program were influential factors in attending vocational training. Moreover, both of the studied youth and local staff confirmed that the employers were not interested in hiring persons with disabilities even though government policy supports enterprises/factories in tax reduction if they have workers with disabilities.

There are not many jobs and careers for people with disabilities locally. So, I do not know what to do. (19 years old female with hearing disabilities)

There is no suitable job because there is no vocational training that I can take. So, no one wants to provide me with a job. (29 years old male with movement disabilities)

In addition, the community peoples' limited awareness and discrimination against persons with disabilities also added more challenges for ethnic minority youth with disabilities. One stated,

There is still much stigma in the community. People often say that people like us can not do anything. We are useless, so we should not be allowed to have vocational training. Furthermore, the employers did not want to hire us because we could not meet their requirements. (29 years old male community authority)

Among the 40.9% of respondents who have attended vocational training, 98% of the selected manual labour vocation (sewing, haircut, machine repair, construction), only 2% enjoyed intellectual labour vocation (informatics, accounting, design). Ethnic minority youths with disabilities themselves did not have a particular educational background and physical health barriers, so they mainly chose manual jobs with short study time. Nearly half of them attended short-term vocational training (less than three months); 45.2% attended training from 3 to 6 months, and only 3.2% went to 18 months training programs.

Regarding job seeking, the number of ethnic minority youth with disabilities who have ever looked for jobs accounted for 46.7%. The jobs that young people with disabilities looked for are mainly manual labour (96.3%). The location that they went to find jobs mainly located in different districts (42.9%). This reflected that young people with disabilities had to seek vocational

training in other locations and look for work far from the living area because there were very few suitable jobs available for them. In their district, only one small private workshop was capable of vocational training and provided jobs for graduates. Explanations from in-depth interviews somehow revealed the situation.

Difficulties from vocational training conditions because there is no suitable job, no financial support, no information about apprenticeship, so I do not know where to start. (19-year-old female youth with movement disabilities)

A representative from the local Youth Union commented:

The vast majority of young people with disabilities have low education levels, even illiterate, and jobs for young people with disabilities are essential. However, they are still very vague and undetermined what kind of job they can do. (26 years old male staff)

It is apparent that apprenticeship and job seeking are closely related. If this young group attended a vocational program, they would have a better chance of finding a job. However, the low apprenticeship rates and difficulties from employment in the locality limit young people with disabilities to access to work.

Key influential social determinants to ethnic minority youth with disabilities accessibility to vocational training and job seeking

Personal challenges

In-depth interviews and group discussions with ethnic minority youth with disabilities indicate that this group had to experience many psychosocial difficulties. First, they often felt inferior about their health and conditions. Many of them shared that they had to encounter psychosocial problems.

The most significant difficulty for me is that I neither believe in myself nor the people around me. (30-year-old female Thai minority with movement disabilities)

I was afraid I could not do it. The surrounding community also stigmatizes me, and they think I am worthless. My determination is still not high. I am often discouraged and not self-confident, not actively looking for a job. I want to receive support, encouragement and recognition from people around me. (29 years old male Muong minority with hearing disabilities)

I find it difficult because I have a disability that makes me too difficult to walk. Sometimes I feel self-inferiority because of my disability and family situation. My mom is very old, and my father died a long time ago. (35 years old female Thai minority with movement disabilities)

This reflects that these young people often felt not optimistic about themselves and did not trust their ability. They need to be provided appropriate counselling and support to change their perspectives.

Family support

Culturally, families play a vital role for their members in Vietnam. Hence, families' support gives ethnic minority youth with disabilities positive motivations and financial and psychosocial support in vocational training and job seeking. However, the research results reveal that this young group has had little family support. The highest rate of families' support in both vocational training and job-seeking was on the psychosocial aspect. However, it was only above 1/4 of the respondents (26.7% and 31.3%, respectively). Other support directly related to these two activities was very modest with a little above 10% and even very small, like only 3.3% of respondents receiving financial support from their families. (Table 1)

Table 1

Families' support

	Families' support in vocational training		Families' support in job placement		
	Yes (%)	No (%)	Yes (%)	No (%)	
Introduced to vocational training institutions	10.0	90.0	Introduced to employers	10.9	89.1
Provided information about vocational training programs	3.3	96.7	Provided information of employers	12.5	87.5
Provided psychosocial support	26.7	73.3	Provided psychosocial support	31.3	68.8
Financial support	3.3	96.7			

Local staff also found that sometimes families became a barrier to supporting ethnic minority youth with disabilities. One local official said,

Families do not want their children to attend vocational schools. They think that if the child has a disability, he/she is still alive, he/she is fortunate enough. Therefore, they do not want their children to work hard. Moreover, their family economic conditions are harsh, so they are afraid that they cannot afford their children's studies. Alternatively, some families abandon their children in the worse cases and do not take care of them. (33 years old male community staff)

This is echoed by a youth with disabilities.

My family does not want me to go to work because they are afraid I have to work hard. Moreover, they think that I cannot do anything when I am like this. (25 years old female with movement disabilities)

For young people, they also explained that the family economic condition has dramatically contributed to their situation. A 29 male shared,

Support from family is significant to us. With family material and spiritual support, we will be motivated to find a job. Nevertheless, because my families are so poor, I do not know where to begin. (29 years old male with movement disabilities)

My family is poor, but people do not throw me away. They support me if they can, but they cannot afford to support me for vocational training with our difficult economic situation. Actually, they do not want me to work because they fear that I have to work hard. They think there is nothing for me to do. (28 years old female with movement disabilities)

In short, families' support for ethnic young people with disabilities remains a big challenge for them to overcome other difficulties accessing vocational education and job seeking.

Local organizations and authorities

Several critical local stakeholders have supported ethnic minority youth with disabilities in their locality. They include local authorities and social service providers/social workers, a local association for persons with disabilities, the Youth Union, non-governmental organizations.

Local authorities and service providers

Table 2

Support from local authorities and service providers

	Local authorities (%)		Local service providers (%)	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
<i>Support in vocational training</i>				
Introduced to vocational training institutions	40	60	13.3	86.7
Provided information about vocational training programs	6.7	93.3	3.3	96.7
Paperwork support	50	50	6.7	93.3
Tuition fee support	6.7	93.3	6.7	93.3
Financial support in travelling. DSA	6.7	93.3	10	90.0
Provided free training materials	3.3	96.7	3.3	96.7
Provided psychosocial support	3.3	96.7	3.3	96.7
<i>Support in job seeking</i>				
Introduced to employers	28.1	71.9	21.9	78.1
Provided information of employers	45.3	54.7	31.3	68.8
Provided support on paperwork	50	50	25	75

	Local authorities (%)		Local service providers (%)	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
	Provided psychosocial support	17.2	82.8	26.6

Table 2 presents that EMYWDs received support from local authorities the most in paperwork for vocational training and job-seeking (both at 50%). The least received support from local authorities was psychosocial support (only 3.3% in vocational training and 17.2% in job-seeking). Another financial support for vocational training was still minimal, ranging from 3-7%. While the support from local service providers such as community social service officers/social workers seemed very limited in vocational training from 3.3% to 13.3%. Noticeably, the psychosocial support was the most concerning because this is considered one of these staff's crucial tasks, with only 3.3% saying yes they received it.

Community social organizations

The support from other community organizations explains how much support ethnic minority youth with disabilities have received from these critical community stakeholders. (Table 3)

Table 3

Support from community social organizations

	A local association of persons with disabilities (%)		Youth Union (%)		Non-governmental organizations (%)	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
<i>Support in vocational training</i>						
Introduced to vocational training institutions	66.7	33.3	6.7	93.3	3.3	96.7
Provided information about vocational training programs	60.0	40.0	6.7	93.3	6.7	93.3
Paperwork support	13.3	86.7	0	100	3.3	96.7
Tuition fee support	53.3	46.7	0	100	6.7	93.3
Financial support in travelling, daily support allowance	66.7	33.3	0	100	6.7	93.3
Provided free training materials	53.3	46.7	0	100	3.3	96.7
Provided psychosocial support	60.0	40.0	13.3	96.7	6.7	93.3
<i>Support in job seeking</i>						
Introduced to employers	53.1	46.9	21.9	78.1	14.1	85.9
Provided information of employers	46.9	53.1	17.2	82.8	6.3	93.8
Provided support on paperwork	35.9	64.1	10.9	89.1	3.1	96.9
Provided psychosocial support	50	50	15.6	84.4	10.9	89.1

Interestingly, studied groups have received more support from the local association of persons with disabilities in vocational training and job-seeking, with the highest percentage in

vocational training and financial support in travelling and daily support allowance during their vocational training (both at 66.7%). They also attained psychosocial support and information of vocational training via this organization (60%). In job-seeking support, this group has gained higher support than other social organizations (Youth Union and non-government organizations) and even higher than local authorities and social service providers ranged from nearly 36% to 53.1%. In comparison, the support from Youth Union and non-government organizations was somehow limited from 0% to 15.6% and from 3.3% to 10.9%, respectively.

Even though it seems support from community social organizations has given a positive signal for EMYWDs, it is still not as expected, with the highest rate of nearly 70%. There should be more work to do to enhance the community support system.

Social policies

On a scale from 1-7 (one is of minor importance and seven is the most important), EMYWDs considered social support policies a significant factor with a mean of 6.35. EMYWDs themselves are vulnerable in many aspects, and with their difficult social-economic situation, social policies to support them in vocational training and finding jobs are incredibly crucial. Even though the government has paid much attention to the development of social support policies, its enactment is still limited.

First, many studied participants responded that they could not access adequate information about current social policies they could benefit from. A 23 female youth said,

Due to my poor health that makes me difficult to travel. Also, I do not have any information about policies, so I do not think I need vocational training.

Alternatively, a 22-year-old man with movement disabilities shared that he did not fully understand the policies for job placement.

State and local programs and policies are not fully accessible. There are still many issues that I do not understand. Additionally, I do not know where and whom I should ask from the beginning.

Second, the participant also analyzes that the impact of policies is not as expected.

I know there are many policies, but those policies have not created much impact on us. There are still many people who cannot find jobs. (29 years old male with movement disabilities)

Accessing preferable capital to start a business or to open a factory still faces many difficulties. After vocational training, they cannot find a job, and the salary is mainly unstable. Employers are also not ready to hire workers with disabilities. (34 years old male commune People's Committee official)

Moreover, implementing social policies at the local level has encountered challenges by the limited awareness of people and the necessary condition for implementation, such as the availability of local budget or enterprises that can hire EMYWDs.

Discussions

Facing similarly disadvantaged situations as ethnic minority persons with disabilities worldwide, EMYWDs in Vietnam have experienced multi-social challenges that hinder their personal development and often are excluded from many social activities, including vocational training and job placement. Due to their low social-economic situation, their right to access vocational training is limited. The majority of the studied participants responded that they could not afford vocational school either because they could not access governmental and local financial support or their own families. Consequently, if they cannot have a vocation, they can hardly find a job.

The study has identified vital social determinants that impacted EMYWDs in both vocational training and job seeking. First, it is the personal psychosocial difficulties that decrease the EMYWDs motivation. This is added by the family and community low awareness about their potential as well as stigmas about their disabilities. This should be addressed by promoting social work services in public education and counselling. Second, families' support within their economic situation is the limitation of families' support even though families play an essential role in helping EMYWDs. This is related to social policies that should be taken into account policies that support the families' livelihood and sustainable development. Third, community authorities and service providers should fully function in carrying out local support programs for EMYWDs. Interestingly, only community association for persons with disabilities has positively influenced EMYWDs compared to other local organizations. For EMYWDs, these supports are valuable in helping them attain vocational training and job placement. Hence, the local government needs to consider a better strategy in promoting their involvement. Lastly, it is necessary to enhance the implementation of social policies at the local level so that EMYWDs can be easily accessible to what they can benefit from.

Conclusions

EMYWDs have been facing multi-social deterrents and suffering from different challenges in the process of social, cultural, political, and economic integration worldwide. This study advocates for a holistic and ecosystem model of supporting EMYWDs, starting from providing social work services to enhance their capacity, address their self-esteem and encourage the family's involvement. It then suggests establishing accessible social support services, such as general education, health care and rehabilitation, information, etc. It is essential to provide comprehensive social policies and programs, particularly vocational training and job placement. EMYWDs need to be provided with a barrier-free environment to reach full development and contribute to society by the involvement of different stakeholders. This ensures their wellbeing, successful social integration and achievable personal fulfilment.

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