

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Social Work Activities Supporting Vocational Training and Employment for Persons with Disabilities in Binh My Commune, Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam

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ABSTRACT

Vocational training and employment support for persons with disabilities (PWDs) are essential solutions for ensuring social security, enhancing self-reliance, and promoting community inclusion. In Binh Mỹ Commune, Ho Chi Minh City, social work has played an important bridging role in facilitating PWDs' access to vocational training programs and employment opportunities appropriate to their capacities. This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys of PWDs with in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, along with document analysis and field observations. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and content analysis, and the effectiveness of social work activities was examined from a rights-based social work perspective and a sustainable livelihoods approach. The findings indicate that vocational training and employment support activities have achieved several positive outcomes, particularly in promoting self-employment and household economic development among PWDs. However, these activities remain constrained by limited resources, a lack of job diversity, and insufficient engagement from the business sector, resulting in unequal access and benefits across different groups of PWDs. Based on these findings, the study proposes several recommendations to enhance the effectiveness of social work interventions in supporting employment for persons with disabilities at the local level.

Keywords: Social work; Vocational training; Persons with disabilities; Employment; Viet Nam

1. Introduction

In the context of post-pandemic economic recovery and the increasingly profound impacts of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, persons with disabilities (PWDs) continue to face significant challenges related to social security and employment. According to the World Health Organization (2024), PWDs account for approximately 15% of the global population and experience unemployment rates two to three times higher than those of persons without disabilities. Employment and sustainable livelihoods are widely recognized as key factors in promoting social inclusion, contributing to improved income, social status, and overall quality

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of life for PWDs ^[1].

Recent studies indicate that vocational training and employment support programs yield positive outcomes when they are designed to develop both technical and soft skills aligned with labor market demands. Such alignment enhances employability, promotes long-term job retention among persons with disabilities (PWDs), and ensures inclusion ^[2]. Research conducted in Canada and several developing countries shows that inclusive vocational training models improve work experience, strengthen self-efficacy, and enhance the economic autonomy of PWDs ^[3-5]. At the same time, intervention effectiveness largely depends on the level of coordination among social services, enterprises, and local authorities, as well as the participation of families and communities ^[6,7].

Several recent studies highlight the pivotal role of social workers in ensuring the sustainability of employment outcomes after intervention ^[8], reflected in their intermediary, advocacy, and case management roles aimed at reducing environmental barriers, enhancing vocational skills, and supporting job retention following training ^{[9], [10]}. These findings underscore the relevance of the ecological systems approach in social work for promoting inclusive employment for PWDs in developing contexts.

In Vietnam, although the legal framework has shifted toward a rights-based and capacity-oriented approach for PWDs, implementation at the grassroots level remains significantly constrained. In socio-economic contexts similar to Vietnam, community-based social work models have demonstrated effectiveness in expanding access to informal employment and self-employment opportunities for PWDs, thereby contributing to sustainable livelihoods ^[11]. The case of Binh My Commune, Ho Chi Minh City, reveals that social work support activities for PWDs remain limited in scope and form, with low service access rates, primarily focusing on individuals with severe disabilities, while many persons with mild disabilities do not meet eligibility criteria for policy benefits. This situation reflects the urgent need to strengthen social work interventions that support vocational training and employment solutions tailored to the local context.

Based on this practical context, research on social work activities supporting vocational training and employment for PWDs in Binh My Commune is of both theoretical and practical significance. It contributes to strengthening local-level scientific evidence and proposes solutions to enhance intervention effectiveness toward inclusive and sustainable employment for PWDs.

2. Literature review and theoretical framework

2.1. Literature review

Persons with Disabilities

Disability is a multidimensional concept influenced by the degree of functional impairment as well as social and environmental contexts. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), disability is not merely a physical or functional impairment but results from the interaction between individual limitations and social barriers. This perspective is reflected in the biopsychosocial model embedded in the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) ^[12]. Such an approach emphasizes the role of environmental conditions and public policies in promoting social participation and labor market inclusion for persons with disabilities (PWDs).

Within the scope of this study, the concept of disability follows the definition provided in the Law on Persons with Disabilities of Viet Nam: “Persons with disabilities are individuals who have impairments in

one or more body parts or experience functional limitations that cause difficulties in work, daily living, and learning” [13].

Employment and Employment for Persons with Disabilities

According to the Vietnamese Labor Code, employment refers to labor activities that generate lawful income [14]. From the perspectives of social sciences and social work, employment also serves as a means of securing livelihoods, affirming social roles, and fostering community inclusion.

Employment for PWDs is understood as work activities that are appropriate to the type and severity of disability as well as individual capacities, with necessary support and reasonable accommodations to ensure equal employment rights and promote social inclusion [8]. In social work practice, employment support is viewed as a process of facilitation and linkage that enables PWDs to access sustainable employment opportunities, thereby enhancing self-reliance and personal value.

Vocational Training and Employment Support for Persons with Disabilities

Vocational training for PWDs refers to the process of equipping individuals with occupational knowledge and skills suited to their abilities, with the aim of improving work capacity and participation in the labor market. Employment support extends beyond job creation to include workplace adaptation, psychosocial counseling, and follow-up services to support job retention. In the context of Binh Mỹ Commune, an area undergoing rapid urbanization, these activities need to be closely aligned with local socio-economic conditions and on-site employment models that are feasible and sustainable.

Social Work Activities in Supporting Vocational Training and Employment

Social work activities supporting vocational training and employment for PWDs constitute a planned intervention process that involves needs assessment, capacity building, resource mobilization, and the facilitation of access to appropriate employment opportunities. Social workers perform multiple roles, including career counseling, case management, service coordination, and community advocacy. These interventions are implemented through a person-centered approach, aiming to reduce social barriers and promote inclusive and sustainable labor market participation for persons with disabilities.

2.2. Theoretical framework

Rights-Based and Social Inclusion Approach in Social Work

The rights-based approach views persons with disabilities (PWDs) as rights holders with full citizenship rights, among which the right to vocational training and employment is fundamental. From this perspective, social work interventions extend beyond addressing immediate needs to actively challenging and removing institutional, social, and environmental barriers. This approach aims to ensure equal access to opportunities and the full participation of PWDs in economic and social life, thereby enabling them to achieve social inclusion and personal development within the community.

Sustainable Livelihoods Approach in Employment Support for Persons with Disabilities

The sustainable livelihoods approach emphasizes strengthening the assets and resources of PWDs, including human, social, and financial capital. In social work practice, this approach guides vocational training and employment support activities toward the creation of long-term and stable livelihood opportunities that are aligned with individuals’ living conditions and the broader context of rapid urbanization in Binh Mỹ Commune. By focusing on sustainability and adaptability, this framework supports the economic empowerment and long-term well-being of persons with disabilities.

2.3. Research objectives

This study aims to examine the current status of social work activities in supporting vocational training and employment for persons with disabilities in Binh Mỹ Commune. Analyze persons with disabilities' perceptions of the effectiveness of vocational training and employment support services, with attention to differences by age and educational level. Assess the contribution of social work interventions to sustainable livelihoods and labor market inclusion for persons with disabilities.

3. Research method

3.1. Research design

This study adopts a mixed-methods research design, integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive assessment of social work activities supporting vocational training and employment for persons with disabilities (PWDs) in Binh Mỹ Commune, Ho Chi Minh City. This approach enables the measurement of overall trends while also capturing the lived experiences and barriers faced by relevant stakeholders.

3.2. Document analysis

Document analysis was employed throughout the study to develop the theoretical foundation and analytical framework. Sources included legal documents and policies related to persons with disabilities, thematic reports on social security and employment at the local level, and relevant national and international studies. The selective synthesis of these materials helped to establish the theoretical basis and identify research gaps at the grassroots level.

3.3. Questionnaire survey

The quantitative study was conducted through a survey of 207 persons with disabilities (PWDs) residing in Binh My Commune. The sample size was determined based on three considerations: (1) Statistical power analysis aimed at estimating means and comparing groups (gender, level of disability, employment status), assuming a medium effect size ($d = 0.4-0.5$), $\alpha = 0.05$, and power = 0.80. The minimum required sample size was approximately 150–200 observations. The final sample of 207 met this requirement and allowed for stable descriptive analysis at the commune level. (2) Local population size: according to the commune's official list, the number of PWDs of working age is in the several hundreds; thus, a sample exceeding 200 represents substantial coverage for a small-scale community study. (3) Comparison with similar studies: community-level surveys on employment among PWDs in Vietnam and other middle-income countries typically use sample sizes ranging from 150 to 300 [7,8]. Therefore, the sample of 207 ensures comparability. Purposive sampling based on the local administrative list was employed to ensure diversity in characteristics and accessibility of information. The sampling frame was derived from the official list of PWDs managed by the commune's socio-cultural officer. Stratified purposive criteria included: (i) gender; (ii) working-age group; (iii) type and severity of disability; (iv) employment status (employed/unemployed/self-employed); and (v) level of access to social work services. Within each stratum, participants were invited based on voluntary participation and communication ability, ensuring coverage of diverse experiences related to vocational training and employment. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale to measure levels of access to, and evaluation of, vocational training and employment support activities. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The measurement scale demonstrated good reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.852.

3.4. In-Depth interviews

Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews with working-age persons with disabilities, family members, and local social work officers. Participants were recruited using purposive sampling until data saturation was achieved. Interview data were transcribed verbatim and analyzed thematically to elucidate psychological, social, and institutional barriers to accessing vocational training and employment.

3.5. Data analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, mean values, and standard deviations, were employed to summarize sample characteristics and assess participants' levels of access to vocational training and employment support services. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to examine differences in participants' evaluations of support activities across key sociodemographic variables, such as age and educational attainment. Statistical significance was determined at the 0.05 level. Qualitative data obtained from in-depth interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis. The analysis followed a systematic coding process, including familiarization with the data, identification of initial codes, development of themes, and refinement of thematic categories. To enhance the credibility and robustness of the findings, qualitative results were triangulated with quantitative data, allowing for a more comprehensive interpretation of patterns, similarities, and divergences in participants' experiences and perceptions.

3.6. Ethical considerations

The study adhered to established ethical principles, including voluntary participation, confidentiality, and respect for the rights of persons with disabilities. All participants were fully informed of the study's objectives and procedures and were assured of their right to refuse participation or withdraw from the study at any stage without any negative consequences.

4. Findings

4.1. Employment status of the study participants

Persons with disabilities (PWDs) are considered a vulnerable population that requires targeted support through inclusive development policies to ensure their right to work and social inclusion. Although the National Program to Support Persons with Disabilities for the period 2021–2030 sets specific targets for vocational training and job creation, practical implementation reveals a substantial gap between policy objectives and actual outcomes ^[15].

Survey findings indicate that the proportion of unemployed PWDs accounts for 54.6%, exceeding the employment rate of 45.4%, which reflects significant barriers to labor market access. The main challenges include limited vocational skills, a lack of diversity in suitable job opportunities, and insufficient awareness among some employers regarding the work capacity of PWDs. Notably, employment placement services remain extremely limited, with only 6.7% of PWDs receiving support to access appropriate jobs. Workplace environments also show a low level of accommodation, as evidenced by the very small proportion of PWDs benefiting from flexible working hours (3.35%) and receiving reasonable support from employers (approximately 4.5%). In addition, a lack of family support continues to be a critical barrier affecting both labor market participation and job retention among PWDs ^[16].

In terms of employment stability, the findings reveal that the majority of employed PWDs work in the informal labor sector, with 83.6% having no formal labor contracts. Employment is predominantly

concentrated in household-based work (54.6%) and self-employment (29.0%), while the proportions working in the private enterprise sector (14.0%) and the public sector (2.4%) remain very low. These patterns indicate limited access to formal employment opportunities. This finding is consistent with international studies showing that PWDs in developing countries are largely engaged in informal employment, resulting in unstable income and limited social protection [17,18]. Such evidence underscores the urgent need to strengthen social policies and social work interventions aimed at facilitating the transition of PWDs toward more stable and sustainable forms of employment.

4.2. Social work activities supporting vocational training and employment for persons with disabilities in bình mỹ commune, Ho Chi Minh City

In recent years, persons with disabilities (PWDs) have been identified as a priority group within Viet Nam’s social security system, as reflected in the formulation and implementation of various policies and support programs aimed at safeguarding their rights and improving the quality of life of PWDs and their families. The legal and policy framework for social assistance for PWDs has gradually been strengthened in an inclusive direction, combining direct support with the mobilization of family and community roles. These efforts have contributed to enhancing PWDs’ access to social resources and supporting their gradual empowerment and social participation within the development process.

However, in the areas of vocational training and employment, policy implementation remains limited in effectiveness. The proportion of PWDs participating in vocational training and securing employment after training remains low and is largely concentrated in self-employment, while opportunities to access enterprise-based employment particularly in medium- and large-scale enterprises are still very restricted. The study findings indicate that the overall level of support for vocational training and employment for PWDs reached only a mean score of 2.84, reflecting a substantial gap between policy objectives and actual implementation outcomes in the study area. Most employed PWDs continue to engage in low-skilled, unstable jobs with limited income, which undermines their capacity for self-reliance and sustainable livelihood improvement. (See *Table 1*).

From a rights-based perspective, the extent to which PWDs can exercise their right to work and access employment support services remains at a moderate level. This suggests that existing programs and services have not yet ensured equitable access nor adequately responded to the diversity of needs and capacities among PWDs. As a result, the level of social inclusion in the employment domain remains constrained, highlighting the need for more comprehensive and responsive social work interventions to promote inclusive and sustainable employment outcomes.

Table 1. Participants’ Assessment of Vocational Training and Employment Support Activities for Persons with Disabilities

No	Activities	Mean	SD
1	Career guidance and vocational training support	2.73	0.98
2	Job placement in small production units and household businesses	2.66	1.01
3	Microcredit support for self-employment	3.03	1.08
4	Counseling and support for household economic development	2.92	1.02
	Overall mean	2.84	1.02

Note. Mean scores are based on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = very poor; 5 = very good).

Preferential credit support for persons with disabilities (PWDs) was evaluated at an above-average level (M = 3.03); however, the effectiveness of implementation remains uneven, as the majority of beneficiaries rated this support as only average or low. Access to credit has contributed to job creation, income generation,

and reduced dependence on family members, particularly among persons with physical disabilities. Nevertheless, its overall impact remains limited due to the lack of integration between credit provision, vocational training, and labor market demand. This finding is consistent with recent studies indicating that microcredit programs for PWDs are effective only when integrated with financial management training, business counseling, and sustainable livelihood support [19-22].

Despite the substantial allocation of state resources for vocational training and employment support for PWDs, implementation outcomes remain disproportionate to policy intentions. Limitations in program scale, the relevance of training content, and persistent barriers related to educational background, psychological factors, and access to information continue to constrain opportunities for sustainable employment among PWDs.

Qualitative interview data further illustrate these findings. As one male participant with a physical disability (aged 37) explained: *“Not all persons with disabilities are eligible for loans; eligibility depends on individual circumstances. If a person meets the criteria, local officers provide detailed guidance on loan purposes, loan amounts, interest rates, and administrative procedures. For those facing difficulties, officers offer support with the required paperwork.”*

Support for household economic development has been implemented by local authorities and relevant agencies to facilitate access to employment and livelihood opportunities. However, this activity was rated only at a moderate level by PWDs ($M = 2.92$). Through coordination among the Division of Culture and Social Affairs, the Vietnam Bank for Social Policies, and local organizations and enterprises, PWDs are supported in accessing credit and engaging in small-scale production or business activities based on their capacities. Nonetheless, the effectiveness of these interventions remains limited and has not fully realized their potential to increase income, reduce family dependence, or promote social inclusion. Previous studies emphasize that household economic development counseling yields sustainable outcomes only when designed in a personalized manner, tailored to specific household livelihood contexts, and accompanied by technical support throughout implementation [22], [24]. In addition, weak linkages between counseling services, financial support, and market access significantly undermine the impact of livelihood interventions for PWDs at the community level [22].

This reality is reflected in the experiences of older PWDs. A 62-year-old male participant with a physical disability shared: *“I am better off than some others whose health has declined more severely. I can occasionally do light gardening or help my children, but I am no longer strong enough for regular work. My children live nearby but struggle financially themselves. I now receive a monthly social assistance allowance of 975,000 VND. Although it is not much, it helps cover basic needs. Many others in the neighborhood are also in difficult situations but do not qualify for this support.”*

From a sustainable livelihoods perspective, preferential credit and household economic development support should be implemented through integrated models that combine resource provision, livelihood counseling, and continuous accompaniment. Such an approach is essential to strengthen economic self-reliance and long-term livelihood sustainability for PWDs. However, current social work interventions remain limited, particularly in transforming initial support into stable employment and lasting social inclusion.

Regarding career guidance and vocational training, although these activities have received attention from local authorities, satisfaction levels among PWDs remain low ($M = 2.73$). This reflects a misalignment between training content, delivery methods, and the actual needs of learners. Training programs largely focus

on a narrow range of traditional or low-skilled service occupations, revealing a substantial gap between vocational training objectives and effective linkage to labor market demand.

Qualitative interviews indicate that vocational training content is often generic and insufficiently adapted to individuals' health conditions and specific types of disability. One participant noted: "*Vocational classes are offered, but the trades taught are not suitable. Even after completing the training, it is difficult to find a job because enterprises are unwilling to hire.*"

Social workers also acknowledged that current vocational training programs are primarily based on available resources rather than individualized needs assessments, which significantly limits their effectiveness.

Previous studies have shown that vocational training and job placement support for persons with physical disabilities continue to face systemic barriers. These include the limited number of PWDs receiving formal vocational training, the predominance of short-term informal skill transmission, and insufficient recognition of the importance of career counseling, vocational training, and employment creation for PWDs. In addition, vocational training institutions specifically serving PWDs remain scarce and lack both organizational capacity and program quality. Short training durations, low educational attainment, limited work skills, and low self-confidence further hinder job retention after training, particularly among persons with physical disabilities [25,26].

These findings are consistent with recent international research demonstrating that vocational training programs for PWDs in developing countries often lack individualization, are weakly aligned with labor market needs, and involve minimal engagement from employers, resulting in limited post-training employment outcomes [27], [19,20]. Moreover, insufficient soft skills, work experience, and post-training transition support have been identified as key factors increasing the risk of unemployment or re-employment among persons with physical disabilities [28], [22].

Employment support activities received the lowest evaluation among all surveyed domains ($M = 2.66$), with only 15.0% of respondents perceiving them as effective, while nearly half rated them as ineffective. Both quantitative and qualitative data indicate that this is largely due to weak linkages between support programs and actual employer demand, as well as recruitment requirements that exceed the adaptive capacity of PWDs. This situation reflects a passive approach to employment support, characterized by limited job diversity and a lack of sustainable career pathways.

Although the Law on Persons with Disabilities provides incentives for enterprises to employ PWDs, the proportion of PWDs receiving vocational training and securing stable employment at the local level remains low, particularly among persons with physical disabilities. Constraints related to education, vocational skills, and work competencies significantly narrow employment options, forcing many PWDs to accept unstable, low-income jobs with limited benefits and little opportunity for upward mobility. Recent studies suggest that small enterprises often lack the resources, knowledge, and motivation to implement reasonable workplace accommodations, thereby reducing the effectiveness of job placement initiatives for PWDs [27], [22].

Nevertheless, positive outcomes do exist. As one 42-year-old woman with a physical disability shared: "*Thanks to support from the local government, I was able to attend a sewing training course. After completing the course, I received assistance to purchase a sewing machine and open a small tailoring shop at home. Neighbors introduced customers to me, and now my monthly income is about 4 -5 million VND. Although it is not high, it allows me to support myself without relying on others.*"

In practice, vocational training and employment support activities for persons with disabilities (PWDs) in Binh My Commune remain largely short-term in nature, primarily oriented toward self-employment and livelihood generation, and have not yet produced a clear transition toward sustainable employment within the formal labor market. The current implementation model tends to focus more on providing initial resources (short-term training courses, small loans) than on developing long-term professional competencies and building connections with enterprises. This situation reflects a common feature of employment programs for PWDs in many developing countries, where rights-based and inclusive employment approaches have not yet been fully institutionalized, resulting in a gap between policy objectives and implementation outcomes at the grassroots level.

Overall, participant assessments indicate that current employment support activities for PWDs meet only part of the requirements related to rights protection, social inclusion, and sustainable livelihood development. Therefore, social workers need to strengthen their roles in policy advocacy, needs-based service design, and long-term livelihood integration in order to enhance both the effectiveness and sustainability of employment support programs for persons with disabilities.

4.3. Participants’ evaluation of social work activities supporting vocational training and employment for persons with disabilities by age group and educational level

The results of the one-way ANOVA indicate that there were no statistically significant differences in persons with disabilities’ (PWDs) evaluations of most social work activities supporting vocational training and employment across different age groups, with the exception of microcredit support for self-employment.

Specifically, no significant differences were observed among age groups in the evaluation of career guidance and vocational training activities ($F = 0.103$; $Sig. = 0.958$). This finding suggests that the limitations in the implementation of vocational training programs are largely universal and have not been differentiated according to the age characteristics of beneficiaries. Similarly, the activity of job placement support in small production units and household businesses did not show statistically significant differences across age groups ($F = 1.002$; $Sig. = 0.393$), reflecting limited accessibility and effectiveness of employment support that remains relatively uniform regardless of age.

In contrast, statistically significant differences were found in the evaluation of microcredit support for self-employment across age groups ($F = 2.838$; $Sig. = 0.039$). Middle-aged and older PWDs tended to rate this form of support more positively, as it aligns better with their needs and capacities for self-generated livelihoods in contexts where access to formal employment is constrained. Conversely, younger PWDs expressed lower levels of satisfaction with microcredit support, reflecting barriers related to limited work experience, entrepreneurial skills, and the ability to effectively utilize financial resources.

Regarding household economic development counseling, no statistically significant differences were identified across age groups ($F = 0.504$; $Sig. = 0.680$). This result suggests that counseling content remains largely generic and insufficiently tailored to the specific needs and characteristics of different stages of the working life cycle, thereby limiting its overall effectiveness for diverse age groups of PWDs. (See **Table 2**)

Table 2. Differences in Participants’ Evaluation by Age Group (ANOVA)

No	Activity	df (between, within)	F	P
1	Career guidance and vocational training support	(3, 202)	0.10	0.958
2	Job placement support in small production units and household businesses	(3, 202)	1.00	0.393

3	Microcredit support for self-employment	(3, 202)	2.84	0.039*
4	Household economic development counseling	(3, 202)	0.50	0.680

Note. $p < 0.05$. *Source.* Authors' survey data.

The ANOVA results indicate that age has not been adequately integrated into the design of employment support activities for persons with disabilities, with the exception of microcredit support for self-employment. This finding reflects the absence of a life-course approach, despite substantial differences in livelihood needs and capacities across age groups. Accordingly, employment support programs should be diversified by age, with greater emphasis on vocational training and job placement for younger persons with disabilities, alongside enhanced financial support and household livelihood assistance for middle-aged and older groups. From a social work perspective, these findings underscore the critical role of social workers in conducting individualized needs assessments and facilitating age-appropriate resource linkage across the working life course.

Further one-way ANOVA analyses reveal that educational attainment has a significant effect on participants' evaluations of most vocational training and employment support activities, with the exception of microcredit support for self-employment. Specifically, statistically significant differences were observed across educational groups in perceptions of career guidance and vocational training ($F = 3.664, p = 0.003$). Persons with disabilities who attained higher levels of education reported more positive evaluations, likely due to their greater capacity to access information, engage in career planning, and participate effectively in training programs.

Similarly, significant differences by educational level were found in job placement support within small production units and household businesses ($F = 4.223, p = 0.001$), as well as in household economic development counseling ($F = 3.542, p = 0.004$). These findings highlight the role of education in transforming support interventions into tangible employment outcomes. Persons with higher educational attainment tend to demonstrate stronger adaptability, communication skills, and job retention capacity, whereas those with lower educational levels are more likely to access informal, low-skilled, and unstable employment.

In contrast, microcredit support for self-employment did not exhibit statistically significant differences across educational groups ($F = 1.904, p = 0.095$). This suggests that microcredit represents a relatively universal livelihood strategy for persons with disabilities in contexts characterized by limited access to formal employment, regardless of educational attainment. However, this apparent uniformity also implies a potential risk of suboptimal credit utilization in the absence of complementary support mechanisms, such as financial counseling and household economic management assistance. (See **Table 3**)

Table 3. Differences in Participants' Evaluation of Vocational Training and Employment Support Activities by Educational Level (ANOVA)

No	Activity	df (between, within)	F	P
1	Career guidance and vocational training support	(5, 201)	3.66	0.003*
2	Job placement at small production units and household businesses	(5, 201)	4.22	0.001*
3	Support for small loans to create self-employment	(5, 201)	1.90	0.095
4	Consultation and support for household economic development	(5, 201)	3.54	0.004*

Table 3. (Continued)

Note. $p < 0.05$. Source. Authors' survey data.

The findings confirm that educational attainment is a critical differentiating factor in persons with disabilities' (PWDs) access to and benefits from employment support activities, consistent with recent international studies. Research published after 2020 indicates that PWDs with lower educational levels are more likely to be confined to the informal labor sector, have limited access to quality vocational training, and face greater difficulties in sustaining stable employment ^{[19], [29]}. In contrast, career guidance and job placement programs have been found to be more effective for PWDs with at least secondary education, whereas those with lower educational attainment require more individualized and long-term support approaches ^{[27], [20]}. These findings are aligned with the present study, which shows that the effectiveness of career guidance, job placement, and household economic development counseling is significantly influenced by educational level. From a social work perspective, this underscores the necessity of an education-stratified approach, combining foundational skills training for lower-educated PWDs with strengthened labor market linkages for those with higher educational attainment.

The ANOVA results indicate that educational attainment significantly differentiates evaluations of the effectiveness of career guidance, job placement support, and household economic counseling for persons with disabilities (PWDs). This effect reflects four main mechanisms: (1) Individuals with higher education levels have better access to and processing of information, enabling them to benefit more from the same services; (2) Stronger capacity for self-advocacy (confidence, communication, negotiation skills) helps sustain employment; (3) A stronger foundation of adaptive vocational skills facilitates more effective participation in training and occupational transitions; (4) Education serves as a signal to employers regarding competence and capacity for workplace integration, thereby expanding access to formal employment opportunities. Thus, educational attainment influences benefits both directly and through market-related behaviors, potentially exacerbating inequality if "one-size-fits-all" interventions are applied. Programs should therefore be stratified according to capacity and contextual factors. These findings suggest that the study conducted in Binh My Commune may offer analytical insights transferable to other peri-urban or rapidly urbanizing communes due to three shared characteristics: (i) transitional economies in which PWDs tend to engage in self-employment or household economic activities; (ii) limited grassroots-level social work services (rated at an average level); and (iii) clear educational stratification that reproduces opportunity gaps in employment. However, statistical generalization is not implied. In areas with higher levels of industrialization and service-sector development, intervention outcomes may be more favorable. Therefore, careful consideration of local context is necessary when applying these findings elsewhere.

5. Discussion

The findings indicate that vocational training and employment support activities for persons with disabilities (PWDs) in the study area remain largely compensatory and short-term in nature, with limited orientation toward sustainable employment and integration into the formal labor market. This finding reflects a common characteristic of disability employment policies in many developing countries, where support programs continue to be strongly influenced by traditional social welfare models, while rights-based and inclusive employment approaches have not yet been fully institutionalized and still require the integration of digital skills components ^[30]. A study by Lee and Kim (2023) in South Korea shows that social work interventions involving coordinated collaboration between families and enterprises result in job retention rates more than 40% higher than those achieved through stand-alone training programs ^{[19], [28], [22], [31]}.

The low evaluation of job placement activities in small production units and household businesses indicates limited effectiveness in labor market linkage, particularly within the informal economic sector.

Numerous studies have shown that in developing countries, the primary barriers to employment for PWDs are not physical impairments but rather *inaccessible infrastructure* and *employer prejudice* [32]. In addition, small enterprises often lack financial resources, legal knowledge, and organizational capacity to implement reasonable accommodations for workers with disabilities, leading to reluctance in recruitment and job retention [27], [20], [29]. This helps explain why, despite the existence of incentive policies, the proportion of PWDs employed in the formal business sector remains low.

By contrast, small-scale credit support for self-employment is evaluated more positively, reflecting a common livelihood strategy among PWDs in low and middle-income countries. In contexts where access to formal employment remains limited, self-employment and household economic development become adaptive livelihood strategies for PWDs [33,34]. However, international research also cautions that self-generated livelihood models often face high risks, unstable income, and limited scalability if they are not accompanied by integrated support in financial management skills, market-oriented counseling, and long-term follow-up [35], [22]. These findings suggest that financial assistance alone is unlikely to produce sustainable livelihoods without complementary capacity-building interventions.

Regarding career guidance and vocational training, the moderate evaluation levels reported by PWDs indicate that existing programs lack sufficient flexibility to accommodate diversity in educational attainment, types of disability, and functional capacity. Recent studies emphasize that vocational training for PWDs is only truly effective when it is individualized based on functional capacity assessments, integrates soft skills training, and involves meaningful participation of employers from the program design stage [20], [35], [22]. The absence of such linkages reduces the likelihood of successful transition from training to employment, particularly for PWDs with lower educational levels.

The study also demonstrates that educational attainment is a key differentiating factor in both access to and perceived effectiveness of employment support activities, consistent with international research since 2020. Reports by the ILO (2021) and WHO & World Bank (2022) confirm that PWDs with lower educational attainment are more likely to be trapped in the informal labor sector, have limited access to vocational training programs, and experience difficulties in sustaining stable employment. Similarly, Schur et al. (2020) and Bonaccio et al. (2022) argue that career guidance and job placement programs tend to deliver clearer benefits for PWDs with at least secondary education, whereas those with lower educational levels require mentoring-based, long-term support models closely linked to local livelihood contexts.

The findings are consistent with international trends indicating that sustainable employment for persons with disabilities (PWDs) depends simultaneously on individual factors (education, skills) and structural factors (support services, local labor market conditions). Stand-alone vocational training tends to be less effective if it is not linked to job placement support and workplace accommodations. PWDs with lower levels of education are more likely to engage in informal or self-employment, similar to observations in Binh My Commune. Overall, the study provides grassroots-level evidence on the role of educational attainment and the local social work system in supporting employment for PWDs in peri-urban areas undergoing urbanization.

From a social work perspective, these findings underscore the necessity of an integrated, life-course-based approach to employment support for PWDs. Social workers play a pivotal role in assessing individual needs, mobilizing and coordinating resources, providing career counseling, and monitoring employment integration processes. Recent studies highlight that the active involvement of social workers contributes to higher job retention, reduced risk of recurrent poverty, and enhanced social inclusion among PWDs [22], [34]. Therefore, strengthening the professional capacity of the social work workforce and promoting intersectoral

collaboration are critical conditions for shifting from welfare-oriented support models toward inclusive and sustainable employment frameworks for persons with disabilities.

Limitations of the Study

As the study was conducted in a single locality, the findings primarily reflect the local socio-economic, service, and cultural context; therefore, caution is needed when generalizing to other settings. In addition, the analysis did not differentiate by type of disability, which may have “flattened” differences in support needs, access capacity, and benefits derived from smartphone use across groups, thereby reducing the contextual fit of intervention design. These limitations suggest directions for future research, including multi-site comparative studies and analyses disaggregated by disability type, combined with qualitative approaches to better capture experiential differences and enhance the practical applicability of findings.

6. Conclusion and policy implications

6.1. Conclusion

This study has clarified the current status and effectiveness of vocational training and employment support activities for persons with disabilities (PWDs) in the study area, thereby identifying structural limitations in the existing policy approaches and implementation mechanisms. The findings indicate that current support interventions remain largely compensatory and short-term, and have not yet facilitated a sustainable transition from training to stable employment and integration into the formal labor market. In particular, the effectiveness of career guidance, job placement, and household economic counseling activities is significantly influenced by the educational attainment of PWDs, reflecting substantial disparities in access to and benefits from employment support programs. The study also reveals that self-employment supported through microcredit is a common and relatively positively perceived livelihood strategy among PWDs. However, without complementary supports such as technical assistance, financial management training, and long-term follow-up, these livelihood models are unlikely to be sustainable and remain highly vulnerable to risks. Furthermore, the labor market linkage role of support programs, especially within the informal sector and small enterprises, remains limited due to barriers related to awareness, resource constraints, and the lack of inclusive working conditions. From a social work perspective, the findings highlight the need for an integrated, individualized, and life-course-based approach to employment support for PWDs. Strengthening the role of social workers, together with enhanced intersectoral and multi-stakeholder collaboration, is crucial to shifting from a welfare-oriented support model toward promoting inclusive and sustainable employment for PWDs in the context of inclusive development.

6.2. Policy implications

Based on the study findings, improving the effectiveness of vocational training and employment support for persons with disabilities requires a shift toward a more flexible, beneficiary-centered policy approach. Support programs should be tailored to disability type, educational attainment, and functional capacity, while being more closely aligned with actual labor market demands. In addition, financial support for self-employment should be integrated with technical assistance, livelihood management, and long-term follow-up to ensure sustainability. In this context, the role of social workers, along with intersectoral and multi-stakeholder collaboration, is crucial for promoting inclusive employment and advancing the principle of inclusive development, ensuring that no one is left behind.

Author Contributions

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest

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