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SCHOOL OF POST GRADUTE STUDIES

Effect of Vocational Education on enhancing livelihoods for persons with disabilities at the National Vocational rehabilitation Centre (NVRC) in Ndola District of Zambia

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DEDICATION

This study would not have not been accomplished without the help of many other individual. I am therefore, greatly indebted to the following people without whose help, support and encouragement this piece of work would not have been written. First and foremost, I would like to sincerely appreciate and thank my ever-dedicated supervisor Kaputo Chenga Bwalya for her guidance and technical support without which I strongly feel I could not be have done this dissertation.

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DEDICATION

This piece of work is dedicated to my father, Mother and siblings for always being there for me and believing in me.

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Supervisor's Comments:

I recommend/ do not recommend this dissertation for submission for examination (If you do not recommend, kindly provide a written report and attach hereto).

Name of Supervisor: Kaputo M Chenga-Bwalya

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ACRONYMS

GDP	Gross Domestic Product
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PWDs	Persons with Disabilities
PPPs	Public-Private Partnerships
SLA	Sustainable Livelihoods Approach
SMEs	Small and Medium Enterprises
SDF	Skills Development Fund
TVTC	Technical and Vocational Training College
TEVET	Technical Education, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training
UNDP	The United National Development Program
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
7NDP	The Seventh National Development Plan
VRC	Vocational Rehabilitation Centre
VET	Vocational Education and Training

ABSTRACT

The study examined the effect of vocational education on the livelihood of persons with disabilities (PWDs) at the National Vocational rehabilitation Centre Ndola District in Zambia. To achieve this study objectives, a qualitative approach and a descriptive research design were used in order to have a complete and comprehensive examination of vocational education effect on livelihood improvement of persons with disabilities in at NVRC. The approach for obtaining data adopted the qualitative. The results were qualitative and so, it was subjected to qualitative analysis. The population of the study included administrators from the National Rehabilitation Centre, Zambia Agency for Persons with Disabilities under MCDSS the departments of Community Development, members of Organizations for persons with disabilities and vocational education graduates with disabilities. The graduates were drawn from within Ndola who had completed their tertiary education at NVRC.

The results obtained showed that vocational training had a fundamental role to play in enhancing the inclusion, employability, and financial independence of the PWDs. The participants mentioned healthcare access, social support, and many job opportunities. Earning skills such as sewing, information technology, and other trades directly affected the overall quality of life. However, challenges of vocational education for persons with disabilities still persist, encompassing lack of awareness of vocational educational programs, inclusive infrastructure, and financial challenges leaving PWDs at a disadvantage due to logistical challenges, socio-cultural barriers, societal attitudes, and stigmatization.

The findings today call for the necessity of common measure policies on inclusive access while developing resilience for PWDs in various vocational education programs. Recommending addressing the above highlighted challenges, ensuring the government of the Republic of Zambia looks into improving infrastructure, targeted funding for vocational education, training of instructors in special education, and collaborating and partnering with employers on giving job opportunities to persons with disabilities to enhance their livelihood potential in Ndola district.

Keywords: vocational education, persons with disabilities, employability, social inclusion, financial independence, livelihood improvement.

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.0 Introduction

Vocational education plays a vital role in enabling individuals, particularly those with disabilities, to acquire necessary skills for career advancement (MOESVTEE, 2013). Historically, vocational education for people with disabilities in Zambia was based on a charitable model, with exclusion from mainstream education (UN Standard Rules, 1994). Post-independence, the Zambian government recognized the need for specialized vocational education, establishing centers like the Chisamilo Special Education Centre (1967) and the National Vocational Rehabilitation Centre (Chanda, 2000).

In 1994, Zambia ratified the United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, followed by the inclusion of provisions for people with disabilities in the National Policy on Education (1996). The 2000s saw the creation of institutions such as the Miseho Training Centre (1985), which worked alongside NGOs like the Zambia National Association for the Visually Impaired (ZNAVI) to address challenges like poor infrastructure and societal stigma (Mumba, 2007). The Education Act (2011) and National Disability Policy (2012) further emphasized inclusivity, with institutions such as Kabwe and Chawama Vocational Centres expanding their programs (Government of Zambia, 2006).

Despite these advances, challenges persist, including societal attitudes, physical barriers, insufficient training institutions, and high poverty levels (TVTC, 2021). These barriers result in individuals with disabilities facing social exclusion, economic dependency, and psychological challenges (ILO, 2023). International organizations like UNESCO and the ILO have supported vocational education for people with disabilities in Zambia and globally (World Bank, 2013; ILO, 2012).

Recent policy shifts, such as the TEVET National Policy (2020) and Zambia's inclusion in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), reflect efforts to enhance vocational education for persons with disabilities (MOFNP, 2022). Despite improvements, challenges such as segregation in vocational institutions

persist, limiting opportunities for individuals with disabilities (TVTC, 2021). Studies suggest that vocational education can improve income and social integration, but further research is needed to understand the factors involved (Higashida, 2019; Lgei, 2021). The study aimed to explore how vocational education affects the livelihoods of people with disabilities in Ndola, Zambia.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Currently in Zambia, the persons with disabilities live in poverty and generally have unproportionally low levels of technical, vocational, and entrepreneurial skills compared to persons living without disabilities and often resort to street begging as a means of survival. The Zambia Persons with Disabilities (ZAPD) Evaluation report (2019) points out that persons living with disabilities who do not have necessary and relevant technical, vocational, and entrepreneurial skills are more likely to experience a myriad of challenges such as social discrimination and marginalization, poverty, exclusion, low self-esteem and self-worth, and low productivity, to mention but a few.

In concurrence with this, Razak (2015) notes that persons with disabilities who have not acquired any form of vocational education are often failing further behind the rest of the population as regards to community participation, career success progression, and engagement in gainful economic activities, and as a matter of consequence, poverty levels are high among them, and this further worsens their social status as it deepens significantly their poverty and social marginalization. Therefore, it becomes very important that persons living with disabilities should acquire necessary and relevant technical, vocational, and entrepreneurial skills in their lifetime, particularly when they are still young.

It is against this background that in 1977, the Vocational Rehabilitation Center (VRC) came up with provision of rehabilitation and skills training to persons with disabilities. The Zambian government came up with the first inclusive education policy in 1996 with the initiative of the right to education for persons with disabilities. The Technical Education, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training (TEVET) Act, 1998. In 1989

Zambia ratified the ILO Convention 159 on Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities.

However, the aforementioned interventions have not yield positive results, as there are persons living with disabilities who are still grappling with poverty, unemployment, social discrimination and marginalization, and low community or social participation. Mubanga (2016) notes that persons with disabilities both in rural and urban Zambia are not actively engaged in economic and social activities in their respective communities. This leads to high unemployment rate, and limited participation of people living with disabilities in the Labor market (Mubanga: 2016). Therefore, if the current situation is not given much attention, it has the potential to retrogressively impact national development, as the majority of persons with disabilities will be left behind due to their lack of necessary and relevant vocational and entrepreneurial skills to enable them to participate meaningfully and actively in national development.

Therefore, this study sought to evaluate the impact of vocational education on the improvement of the livelihoods of persons living with disabilities in Ndola district on the Copperbelt province of Zambia in the bid to enhance and improve their living conditions.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to evaluate how vocational education affects the quality of life for people with disabilities in Ndola district, Copperbelt Province, Zambia.

1.4 Objective of the Study

This study was guided by the following objectives:

1.4.1 Main objective

To examine the effect of vocational education on the livelihoods of persons living with disabilities at the National Vocational Rehabilitation Centre in Ndola District, Copperbelt Province, Zambia.

1.4.2 Specific Objectives

1. To ascertain the kind of skills and knowledge acquired by the people living with disabilities from vocational education in Ndola District, Copperbelt Province, Zambia.
2. To establish the contribution of vocational education in establishing social networks among individuals with disability at NVRC in Ndola district, Copperbelt Province, Zambia
3. To find out whether vocational education helps to improve the employability of persons living with disabilities in Ndola District, Copperbelt Province, Zambia.
4. To assess whether vocational education improves the accessibility of people living with disabilities to basic needs and social services in Ndola District, Copperbelt Province, Zambia.

1.5 Research Questions

1. What kind of skills and knowledge do the people living with disabilities acquire from enrolling into vocational education in Ndola District, Copperbelt Province, Zambia?
2. To what extent does vocational education contribute to establishing or strengthening social networks among persons with disabilities?
3. Does vocational education contribute to improving the chances of employment among persons living with disabilities in Ndola District, Copperbelt Province, Zambia?
4. Does vocational education improve the accessibility to basic needs and social services of people living with disabilities in Ndola District, Copperbelt Province, Zambia?

1.6 Significance of the Study

It is hoped that the study findings may bring more insight on vocational education as regards the improvement of the living standards of persons with disabilities. Further, the study is expected to expand on the knowledge already available on the contribution of vocational education to livelihoods of persons with disabilities in Zambia.

Furthermore, it may be used as a reference point for instructors in colleges and vocational training centres, respectively, in their delivery of vocational education services to persons with disabilities. It is also hoped that this study may spur further research as regards the provision of vocational education to persons with disabilities.

1.6 Scope of Study

Ndola district is the third largest city in Zambia in terms of size and population, with a population of 627,503 CSO (2022). The city is known for its economic and social landscape based on industrial activity, mining, and commerce, sectors in which people with disabilities are often underrepresented. The district has one of the oldest vocational institutions called the National Vocational Rehabilitation Centre (NVRC), established in 1967. Aimed at providing specialized vocational training and rehabilitation services for individuals with disabilities, Vocational Rehabilitation Centre (1977). Ndola also provides an opportunity to assess national policies if they are being applied, as it holds the provincial office for the Zambia Agency for Persons with Disabilities under the Ministry of Community Development.

1.8 Definition of Key Terms and Concepts

1. **Livelihood**

It comprises capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources), and activities for a means of living (Chambers and Conway: 1991).

2. **Persons with disabilities**

These are people living with either one or more combination of the following permanent physical, mental, intellectual, or neuro-impairments (Pillai, 2016).

3. **Vocational Education**

Vocational education is a form of education designed to prepare an individual for employment, an occupation, trade, craft, or an art (Adeela and Lauretta: 2023).

1.9 Chapter Summary

The preceding chapter presented the background to the study, it has highlighted major concepts that guide the study, the statement of the problem, the research objectives and questions, key terminologies and study aims and objectives. The following section presents chapter two, chapter two covers the literature review section of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 introduction

This chapter presents the reviewed literature on the provision of vocational education to persons with disabilities. It also discusses the theoretical framework that guides this study and various other works done by different authors and researchers on the provision of vocational education to persons with disabilities, with particular interest in the contribution vocational education makes towards the improvement of the quality of life among them.

2.2 Empirical Review

2.2.1 The Role of Vocational Education in Employment and Economic Integration of Persons with Disabilities

The International Labour Organization (ILO, 2015) shows the transformative impact of vocational education, particularly in fostering the participation of persons with disabilities in formal and informal employment. By equipping them with relevant skills, vocational education helps bridge the gap between marginalized groups and the labor market. This, in turn, contributes to gross domestic product (GDP) growth, demonstrating the mutual benefits for individuals and national economies alike. In addition, Selingo (2006:21) highlights how vocational education creates pathways for career progression, a significant factor in maintaining long-term employment. This is critical as it not only secures economic stability for individuals with disabilities but also ensures their ongoing contribution to the workforce. Similarly, the Technical and Vocational Training College (TVTC, 2019) in Zambia identifies vocational education as a cornerstone for inclusive economic growth, advocating for its prioritization in national education policies.

Empirical evidence from various countries corroborates the role of vocational education in employment integration. For instance, Pillai's (2016) study in India found that vocational education substantially improved employment outcomes for students with disabilities, while Wei, Zhang, and Salvadar (2020) reported similar results in

China, particularly in informal sector engagement. While these studies highlight the benefits of vocational education, limited research exists on the systemic barriers that hinder access for persons with disabilities. For instance, societal stigma and lack of inclusive infrastructure often impede full participation.

2.2.2 Vocational Education as a Tool for Poverty Alleviation and Independence

Vocational education is a powerful mechanism for poverty alleviation among persons with disabilities, as it equips them with practical skills essential for income generation and self-sufficiency. Tripney et al. (2015) identify persons with disabilities as among the poorest and most disadvantaged globally, often excluded from both formal and informal economic activities.

The Technical and Vocational Training College (TVTC, 2021) notes that vocational education is a vital component of independent living for persons with disabilities, emphasizing that it equips them with survival skills necessary to escape poverty and lead dignified lives. This is particularly important in contexts like Zambia, where a significant proportion of persons with disabilities face systemic barriers to education and employment.

Contemporary research by Steenstra and Lee (2019) demonstrates that vocational training programs significantly reduce poverty among persons with disabilities by improving their capacity to adapt to economic demands and participate actively in community life. These findings are echoed by Murgor et al. (2014), who highlight that vocational education is key to creating sustainable livelihoods for marginalized populations, including those with disabilities.

Furthermore, vocational education promotes entrepreneurial skills that enable persons with disabilities to start small businesses. Mubanga (2019) observes that such entrepreneurial ventures not only generate income but also boost the confidence and self-esteem of persons with disabilities. By engaging in gainful activities, individuals experience improved resilience, social inclusion, and a greater sense of belonging, all of which contribute to their overall well-being. However, the benefits of vocational education are not limited to individuals. From a macroeconomic perspective, increased participation of persons with disabilities in the workforce contributes to national

economic growth. According to ILO (2015), empowering persons with disabilities through vocational education results in their productive engagement in the economy, thus enhancing the gross domestic product (GDP) and reducing poverty rates nationally.

2.2.3 Vocational Education as a Determinant of Social Integration and Reduced Vulnerability

Vocational education is not merely a tool for economic empowerment; it also serves as a critical mechanism for social integration and the reduction of vulnerability among persons with disabilities. By equipping individuals with practical skills and fostering economic independence, vocational education enables persons with disabilities to break the barriers of social exclusion and build meaningful connections within their communities (Al-Yagon and Michal, 2015).

Itaan (2017) asserts that vocational education plays a pivotal role in reducing social exclusion and vulnerability among persons with disabilities. It provides them with opportunities to engage in gainful activities, fostering a sense of belonging and acceptance within society. The ability to contribute economically often shifts societal perceptions, helping to dismantle stigmas and stereotypes associated with disability. This transformation has far-reaching implications, as it enables persons with disabilities to participate fully in social, cultural, and political life. Social integration is further enhanced through the collaborative and interactive nature of vocational training programs. Many vocational institutions promote inclusive environments where persons with and without disabilities learn side by side. Such interactions help to bridge gaps, foster mutual understanding, and promote empathy. Al-Yagon and Michal (2015) emphasize that these shared experiences often result in long-term friendships and professional networks, which are essential for navigating social and economic landscapes.

In addition to fostering inclusion, vocational education reduces vulnerability by addressing the systemic disadvantages faced by persons with disabilities. These individuals are disproportionately affected by poverty, unemployment, and social isolation, often leaving them dependent on caregivers or social welfare systems. Vocational education disrupts this cycle by equipping individuals with the skills needed

for self-reliance. As Mubanga (2019) highlights, the resulting independence not only alleviates financial strain but also enhances the dignity and self-worth of persons with disabilities.

2.2.4 Policy and Institutional Frameworks for Vocational Education

The effectiveness of vocational education as a tool for national development and economic growth hinges significantly on the policy and institutional frameworks supporting it. In Zambia, the establishment of policies and institutions aimed at fostering technical and vocational training demonstrates a commitment to leveraging this sector for socio-economic development. However, the success of these frameworks depends on their alignment with national goals, stakeholder engagement, and responsiveness to labor market dynamic (Schultz & Weber, 2018).

Globally, countries that have excelled in vocational education have relied on robust policy environments and well-coordinated institutional structures. For instance, Germany's dual education system thrives due to clear legislative support, strong partnerships between educational institutions and industries, and adequate funding (Schultz & Weber, 2018). Drawing lessons from such systems can enhance Zambia's vocational education policies.

The Zambian government has implemented several policies aimed at strengthening vocational education, with the Technical Education, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training Authority (TEVETA) serving as the principal coordinating institution. Key frameworks include:

The Technical Education, Vocational, and Entrepreneurship Training (TEVET) Act: This act provides a legal framework for managing vocational training institutions and ensures the standardization of training across the country. It also emphasizes entrepreneurial training, aiming to foster self-reliance among graduates.

The Seventh National Development Plan (7NDP): This development blueprint highlights human capital development as a cornerstone of economic growth. Vocational education is prioritized within the plan, particularly in addressing youth unemployment and skills mismatches in the labor market.

The Education Policy Framework: Zambia's broader education policy incorporates vocational training as a parallel pathway to traditional academic education, with a focus on enhancing access and quality.

TEVETA plays a central role in implementing vocational education policies, overseeing curriculum development, accreditation, and quality assurance. The authority collaborates with industry stakeholders to ensure training programs remain relevant to labor market demands. Additionally, other institutions, such as the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, contribute to policy formulation and funding for vocational training initiatives. Despite these efforts, there are challenges in achieving seamless coordination among these institutions. Research by Mubanga (2019) indicates that overlaps in mandates and limited communication between government bodies often result in inefficiencies, hindering the full realization of vocational education's potential. The following are some of the notable challenges:

Funding Deficits: Vocational education in Zambia suffers from chronic underfunding, limiting the capacity of institutions to modernize training facilities or expand access. The government allocates only a small fraction of the national budget to vocational education, leaving many training centers reliant on donor funding (Ministry of Finance, 2021).

Skill Mismatches: A lack of comprehensive labor market data has led to the development of training programs that do not align with industry needs. This gap reduces the employability of graduates and undermines the effectiveness of vocational training.

*Limited Private Sector Engagemen*t: Although policies encourage public-private partnerships (PPPs), their implementation has been inconsistent. Mubanga (2019) notes that many industries are reluctant to invest in training programs due to unclear incentives and limited awareness of the benefits.

Access Inequality: Vocational training opportunities are unevenly distributed, with rural areas often lacking sufficient facilities. This regional imbalance exacerbates inequality and limits the overall impact of vocational education on national development.

Countries like Singapore provide a blueprint for aligning vocational education with national development goals. Singapore's Skills Future initiative, for example, integrates vocational training into lifelong learning strategies, supported by a robust policy and funding framework (Lee & Ng, 2020). Zambia could adopt similar approaches by embedding vocational education within broader economic planning frameworks and ensuring sustained financial support. Similarly, Germany's success with its dual education system also highlights the importance of strong industry involvement. By adopting a dual-training model, Zambia could enhance the practical relevance of its vocational programs while fostering stronger links between education and employment.

The policy and institutional frameworks governing vocational education in Zambia are critical to its success as a driver of economic growth. While progress has been made, addressing gaps in funding, coordination, and stakeholder engagement is essential to unlocking the full potential of vocational training. By learning from global best practices and prioritizing targeted investments, Zambia can strengthen its vocational education system, aligning it more closely with national development objectives (Mubanga, 2019).

2.2.5 The Role of Industry Collaboration in Vocational Training

Industry collaboration is a cornerstone of effective vocational education, bridging the gap between classroom training and workplace demands. It ensures that vocational programs align with labor market needs, enhancing the employability of graduates and contributing to economic productivity (Kim, 2020). In Zambia, fostering strong partnerships between training institutions and industries is a strategic priority, but its implementation remains uneven.

Globally, successful vocational education systems emphasize robust industry linkages. Countries such as Germany, Switzerland, and Australia have demonstrated that involving industry in curriculum design, internships, and apprenticeships leads to superior employment outcomes and skill development (Schmid & Eberle, 2019). Zambia can benefit significantly by adopting similar collaborative frameworks.

In Zambia, industry collaboration takes several forms. First, TEVETA engages industry stakeholders during the development and review of vocational training curricula. However, the degree of participation varies by sector. Key industries such as mining and agriculture show greater involvement, while emerging sectors like information technology remain underrepresented. Additionally, many vocational institutions incorporate work-integrated learning components, requiring students to complete internships as part of their training (UNESCO, 2021). For example, institutions offering engineering courses often partner with mining companies to provide students with practical experience. Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) have also been introduced to promote industry engagement, but challenges such as limited incentives, weak policy enforcement, and unclear roles for private stakeholders hinder the full potential of these partnerships. Some industries, particularly in the mining and energy sectors, have established their training centers to address skill shortages. While these centers are beneficial, they often operate independently of the national vocational training framework, leading to fragmentation (UNESCO, 2021).

Globally, Germany's dual education system provides a notable example of successful industry collaboration. In this system, companies and vocational schools share responsibility for training, with companies funding a significant portion of the apprenticeship costs (Schultz & Weber, 2018). Applying this model in Zambia could involve introducing co-financing arrangements where industries contribute to training costs, reducing the financial burden on institutions.

2.2.6 Regional Disparities in Access to Vocational Training

In urban areas, vocational training institutions are typically more concentrated, better equipped, and staffed with qualified instructors. Urban centers also benefit from proximity to industries that provide internships, apprenticeships, and post-training employment opportunities. In contrast, rural areas often lack sufficient vocational training facilities or have institutions that are under-resourced. Limited infrastructure, such as poor roads and inadequate electricity, further constrains the effective delivery of training in rural regions (TEVETA, 2023). Additionally, rural trainees frequently face higher transportation costs and logistical challenges, reducing their ability to access these services.

The quality of vocational training also varies significantly between urban and rural settings. Urban institutions are more likely to have up-to-date equipment, well-designed curricula, and diverse course offerings that align with market demands. Rural institutions often operate with outdated tools, limited course options, and fewer qualified instructors, leaving students ill-prepared for competitive labor markets. These discrepancies discourage rural youth from pursuing vocational training or lead to higher dropout rates among those who enroll (World Bank, 2021).

Socio-cultural factors further deepen regional disparities. In rural areas, vocational training is often viewed as a less desirable alternative to traditional farming or other local livelihoods. Families may prioritize immediate labor contributions over long-term educational investments. Gender norms are also more rigid in rural settings, further restricting access for women, as discussed in the previous sub-theme (World Bank, 2021).

2.2.7 Challenges Faced by Persons with Disabilities in Accessing Vocational Education

Access to vocational education and training (VET) for persons with disabilities (PWDs) in Zambia presents a complex array of challenges, including systemic, infrastructural, social, and cultural barriers. While there is a growing recognition of the need to include individuals with disabilities in the country's development agenda, significant hurdles remain in ensuring equitable access to vocational education. These challenges can be categorized into resource constraints, societal stigma, inadequate policy implementation, lack of accessibility, and the limited capacity of educators to address the diverse needs of PWDs (UNICEF, 2020).

1. Resource Constraints and Inadequate Infrastructure

One of the foremost challenges is the lack of adequate resources allocated to cater to the needs of PWDs within the vocational education system. Government funding for vocational institutions remains limited, and many institutions lack the necessary facilities, tools, and specialized equipment to accommodate students with disabilities. For instance, many vocational training centers are not physically accessible to individuals with mobility impairments due to poorly designed buildings and lack of

ramps or elevators. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), around 15% of the global population lives with a disability, yet most educational systems, including those in Zambia, have not prioritized inclusive education infrastructure (WHO, 2011).

In Zambia, vocational schools, especially in rural areas, often lack basic facilities such as braille reading materials, adaptive computers, or hearing aids that would make learning more accessible for individuals with visual or hearing impairments. Without these resources, PWDs face difficulties participating fully in the curriculum, limiting their ability to gain vocational skills that are necessary for employment (WHO, 2011).

2. Societal Stigma and Discrimination

Societal stigma remains one of the most pervasive barriers for PWDs seeking vocational education. Negative perceptions and stereotypes about the capabilities of persons with disabilities often lead to discrimination, both within educational institutions and the wider society. There is a deeply ingrained belief in many communities that PWDs are incapable of learning complex skills or contributing meaningfully to the workforce. This social stigma often results in the exclusion of PWDs from mainstream education, including vocational training programs, and may even affect their confidence and self-worth (Al-Yagon and Michal, 2015).

3. Lack of Trained Personnel

Another critical challenge is the lack of adequately trained educators who are capable of addressing the unique needs of PWDs. Vocational training centers often lack staff with the knowledge and skills necessary to implement inclusive teaching practices. For example, teachers may not be trained in sign language, braille, or other methods that are essential for ensuring that PWDs can participate fully in vocational training. According to research by UNESCO, teachers in many developing countries, including Zambia, receive little to no training in inclusive education (UNESCO, 2017). This lack of specialized training reduces the effectiveness of vocational education programs for PWDs, as instructors may be unaware of how to adapt their teaching methods to accommodate students with disabilities.

4. Economic Barriers and Employment Opportunities

The economic constraints faced by persons with disabilities also hinder their access to vocational education. Many families in Zambia struggle with poverty, and the cost of accessing education, including vocational training, can be prohibitive. PWDs often face additional costs related to specialized transportation, personal care, and medical services, which further exacerbate financial barriers. Without financial support, many persons with disabilities are unable to pursue vocational training, despite their desire and potential to contribute to the workforce (ILO, 2018).

Moreover, even after completing vocational training, PWDs often face significant challenges in finding gainful employment. Discrimination in the labor market, lack of accessible workplaces, and the absence of policies that promote disability-inclusive employment practices mean that even well-trained PWDs may remain unemployed or underemployed. A study by the International Labour Organization (ILO) found that people with disabilities face much higher unemployment rates than the general population, even in countries with robust vocational training systems (ILO, 2018). In Zambia, the formal sector's reluctance to employ PWDs, coupled with few opportunities for inclusive employment, results in high levels of economic dependency and social exclusion for individuals with disabilities.

5. Insufficient Policy Frameworks and Implementation

Although Zambia has made strides in policy development to promote the rights of persons with disabilities, the implementation of these policies remains weak. The Persons with Disabilities Act of 2012, which recognizes the rights of PWDs to access education and vocational training, is an important legal framework. However, the Act has not been fully implemented, and there is a lack of political will and resources to ensure that PWDs can access vocational education on an equal footing with others. The Zambian government has also been slow to implement measures that would make vocational institutions more accessible to PWDs, such as providing financial assistance, creating accessible transportation options, and increasing the number of specialized vocational training programs (Government of Zambia, 2012).

In addition to weak enforcement of policies, there is insufficient data on the number of PWDs who are actually accessing vocational education, which makes it difficult to measure progress or identify gaps. The lack of a systematic approach to monitoring

and evaluation of inclusive education policies further limits the effectiveness of governmental efforts in this area (Government of Zambia, 2012).

6. Cultural and Traditional Barriers

In Zambia, as in many other African countries, cultural and traditional beliefs about disability play a significant role in shaping attitudes toward persons with disabilities. Disability is often viewed through a lens of superstition, with some communities perceiving it as a curse or punishment. These deeply rooted beliefs influence how PWDs are treated within their families and communities, and contribute to the exclusion of PWDs from education and vocational training programs. These cultural attitudes need to be addressed through awareness campaigns and education that challenge misconceptions about disability and promote a more inclusive mindset (UNESCO, 2017).

Internationally, countries such as Brazil, South Africa, and India have implemented policies and practices that have improved access to vocational training for persons with disabilities. In Brazil, the government has partnered with NGOs to develop vocational training programs that are specifically designed for individuals with physical and sensory disabilities. Similarly, South Africa has introduced a national vocational education and training policy that mandates the inclusion of PWDs in training programs, with provisions for specialized resources and accommodations (UNICEF, 2020).

2.2 Theoretical Framework

2.2.1 The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach

According to Chambers and Conway (1992:9), "a livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets, and activities required for a means of living." The Sustainable Livelihoods approach emerged in the 1980s with the aim of eliminating poverty in poorer countries (Chambers, 1983); this challenged the dominant economic growth-led development paradigm. The approach recognizes poor people’s resources, capabilities, and agency and draws on the concepts of the capability approach, equity, and environmental sustainability (Krantz, 2021). SLA explores different forms of capital (human, physical,

social, financial, and natural) and how they interact to improve the quality of life for individuals. This provides a holistic perspective leading to greater self-reliance, economic independence, and social inclusion.

Application on the theory

Financial capital is considered to be the key component of the SLA, measured in terms of income, resources, and access to financial services (Krantz, 2021). In the context of vocational education at the National Vocational Rehabilitation Centre (NVRC)**.** The study investigate how vocational education affects the financial independence of persons with disabilities by examining whether graduates are able to secure employment, start their own businesses or generate income through other means. The ability to attain financial independence post-training is the central outcome of vocational education contributing to enhanced livelihoods (Moser, 1998, p.3).

Establishing relationships, connections and network can influence economic and social opportunities (Putnam, 2000, p.19). In the context the NVRC, the institution fosters relationships through peer-to-peer interaction among students extending to and instructors. Vocational education may also provide opportunities for persons with disabilities to build relationships with others with similar interests. This support can also enhance confidence, provide mentorship, and open doors to job opportunities or social inclusion (Coleman, 1988, p.112).

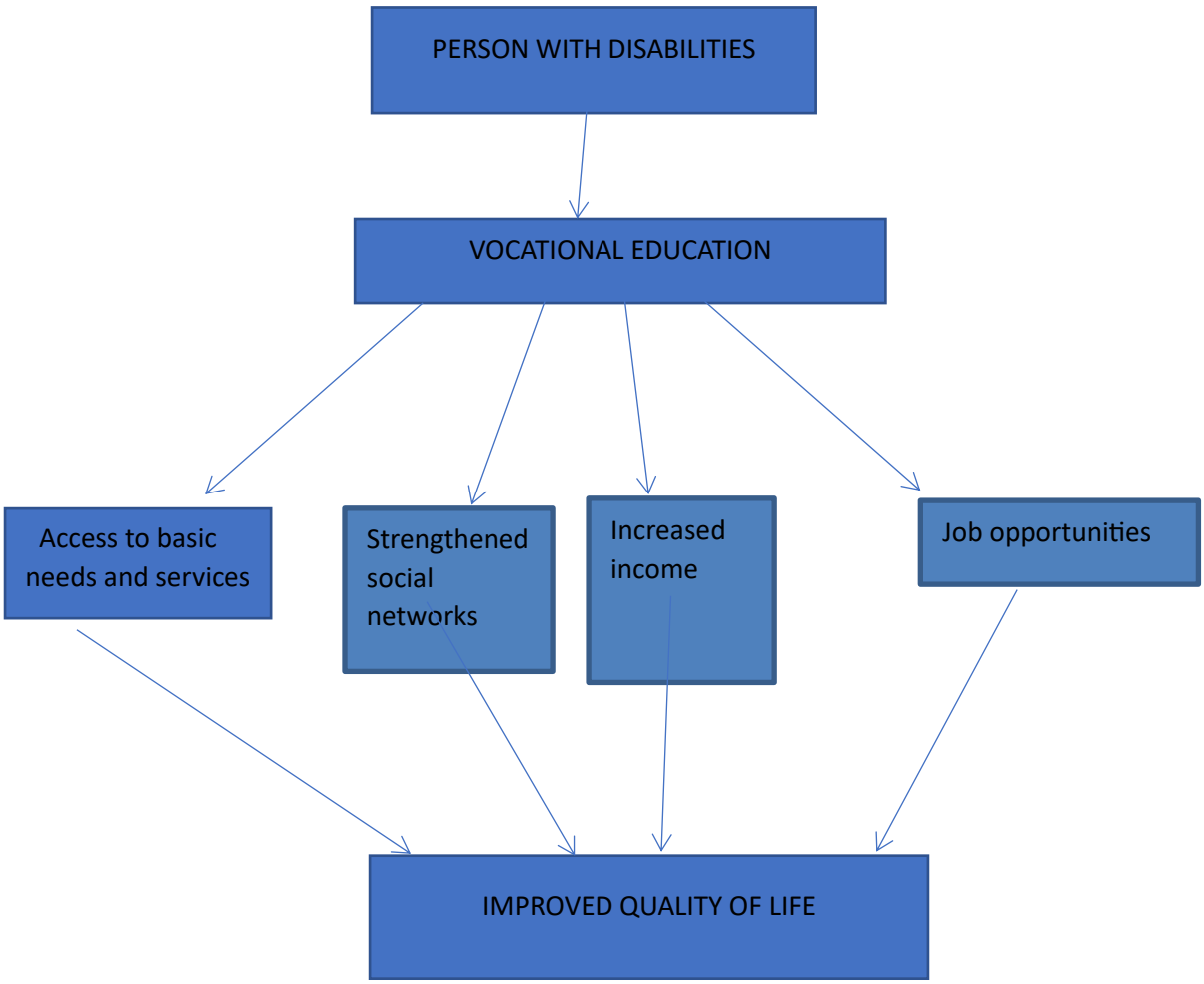
SLA regards vocational education as human capital with primary focus on livelihood improvement of PWDs Chambers (1983). The training received at NVRC can provide individuals with skills and knowledge required to engage in various works and empowering individuals with practical skills and knowledge that prepares PWDs with gainful employment or self-employment (Lawal and Abdulrahaman, 2013). By providing the opportunities to acquire relevant skills PWDs may become self-reliant, participants in the economy Krantz (2021).

Physical capital encompasses infrastructure such as schools and healthcare facilities crucial for meeting basic needs. Access to these infrastructures allows PWDs obtain essential services such as healthcare, education, clean water which are fundamental for well-being (Chambers & Conway, 1992, p.5). Additionally, physical infrastructure

is vital for accessing social services. For instance, accessible roads and local clinics enable people reach healthcare centers, attend school ensuring benefit from essential social services (Moser, 1998, p.15).

The SLA emphasizes how vocational education can mitigate the vulnerabilities faced by persons with disabilities, such as limited access to resources or social exclusion, by increasing self-reliance, reducing dependency, and fostering self-esteem (Moser, 1998, p.4). Focusing on both individual and structural factors, SLA highlights the interconnects of economic, social, and psychological dimensions of livelihoods, ensuring that vocational education programs address not just the skills gap but also the holistic needs of persons with disabilities (Narayan et al., 2000, p.77).

2.3 Conceptual Framework



2.3.1 Operationalizing the Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework under discussion focuses on the interaction between persons with disabilities (PWDs) and vocational education, framed within the context of the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA). The framework proposes that vocational education for PWDs can lead to improved quality of life, with specific indicators such as strengthened social networks, increased income, access to basic needs and services, and job opportunities. This operationalization broke down these concepts into measurable variables and indicators, offering a clear path for empirical testing and analysis (Chambers and Conway, p. 992).

1. Persons with Disabilities (PWDs)

Definition: This group refers to individuals who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments that, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others (Disability Act of 2012 No 6, p.1).

Operationalization:

- Demographic Variables: Age, gender, type of disability (physical, visual, auditory, intellectual), educational background.
- Indicators:

    I. Type of disability (e.g., mobility impairments, visual impairments, hearing impairments).
    II. Level of disability (mild, moderate, severe).
    III. Access to disability-specific support and services (e.g., rehabilitation, mobility aids, assistive technology).

2. Vocational Education

Definition: Vocational education refers to educational programs designed to provide individuals with specific trade skills or knowledge that prepare them for employment in various industries or sectors. This includes training in technical, business, health, and

social services sectors, as well as soft skills such as communication and problem-solving Joseph (2020, p.2)

Operationalization:

- Educational Variables: Access to vocational training programs, availability of disability-inclusive education policies, participation in vocational courses.
- Indicators:

    I. Number of vocational training institutions offering accessible programs for PWDs.
    II. Availability of inclusive teaching materials (e.g., braille, sign language interpreters, adaptive technology).
    III. Completion rates for PWDs in vocational programs.
    IV. Employment rates post-graduation from vocational training programs.

3. Strengthened Social Networks

Definition: Social networks refer to the relationships and support systems individuals build within their communities, including family, peers, educational institutions, and professional networks (Kollmair, Gamper & Juli 2002, p.6)

Operationalization:

- Social Capital Variables: Access to social support and participation in social or community groups.
- Indicators:

    I. Frequency of social interactions with peers and family members.
    II. Participation in community events or professional networks related to vocational education.
    III. Perception of social inclusion and belonging within educational or employment settings.
    IV. Engagement with advocacy or disability support groups.

4. Increased Income

Definition: Increased income refers to the enhancement of financial resources due to acquiring vocational skills, leading to better job opportunities, higher wages, or increased entrepreneurial activity (DFID 1995, p.15).

Operationalization:

- Financial Capital Variables: Employment status, income levels, job security.
- Indicators:

    I. Changes in monthly or annual income before and after completing vocational education.
    II. Number of PWDs employed in formal or informal sectors.
    III. Rate of entrepreneurial activities (e.g., self-employment, freelancing).
    IV. Employment benefits (e.g., health insurance, pension) associated with income.

5. Access to Basic Needs and Services

Definition: This refers to the ability of PWDs to access essential services and resources that sustain their well-being, such as healthcare, housing, food security, and transportation (Krantz 2021, p.16).

Operationalization:

- Basic Needs Variables: Access to health services, social welfare programs, transportation, and housing.
- Indicators:

    I. Availability of accessible healthcare services for PWDs (e.g., availability of sign language interpreters, disability-friendly clinics).
    II. Access to public transportation (e.g., availability of accessible buses, taxis).
    III. Ability to meet basic living needs, including adequate housing and food security.
    IV. Participation in social welfare or disability assistance programs.

6. Job Opportunities

Definition: Job opportunities refer to the availability of paid employment, apprenticeships, or internships that are accessible and inclusive of individuals with disabilities (Lawal and Abdulrahaman 2013, p.87).

Operationalization:

- Employment Variables: Access to employment, career development, and job placement services.
- Indicators:

    I. Number of job opportunities available to PWDs in the vocational fields of study.
    II. Types of jobs obtained post-graduation (e.g., full-time, part-time, self-employment).
    III. Support systems in place for job placement and career guidance.
    IV. Rate of job retention and career advancement among PWDs.

7. Improved Quality of Life

Definition: Improved quality of life refers to the overall well-being of individuals with disabilities, particularly in terms of their personal satisfaction, social inclusion, economic independence, and ability to participate fully in society (Lawal and(Juozas, 2014, p.321).

Operationalization:

- Human and Social Capital Variables: Quality of life as a composite indicator of economic, social, and psychological well-being.
- Indicators:

    I. Improved psychological well-being (e.g., self-esteem, confidence).
    II. Level of satisfaction with current employment or vocational training.
    III. Social inclusion and participation in community activities.

IV. Perceived quality of life (e.g., through surveys, interviews assessing life satisfaction, and well-being).
V. Health outcomes (e.g., reduced physical and mental health barriers to participation).

2.3.2 Synthesis and Relationships within the Framework

- Vocational Education enhances the human capital of PWDs, leading to strengthened social networks, increased income, better job opportunities, and greater access to services. These factors combine to improve the quality of life for individuals with disabilities.
- Social networks created through vocational education can provide emotional, social, and economic support, fostering a sense of community and increasing overall life satisfaction.
- Increased income and access to basic needs and services are crucial components of economic independence for PWDs, helping to break the cycle of poverty and marginalization that often accompanies disability.
- Job opportunities and economic empowerment lead to improved quality of life, as they facilitate independence, reduce dependency on family or government support, and provide a sense of purpose and contribution to society.

2.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the literature review that supported the findings that emanated from this study. It presented the theoretical and empirical review of literature, after which the conceptual framework was also presented respectively. The following chapter presents the methodology that was used in the study.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology that shall be used in this study. The research used the qualitative study with the purpose of gaining a deep understanding of vocational education and how its impact on the quality of life for persons with disabilities National vocational rehabilitation Centre in Ndola district on the Copperbelt province of Zambia. This chapter covered the following: research approach, research design, study population, sample size, sampling techniques, data collection, data analysis, and ethical considerations.

3.1 Research Approach

The research used a qualitative approach to research implementation. The approach selected was due to its capacity to provide qualitative data, which provided rich data for the realization of the study objectives (Creswell, 2014). The approach allowed for exploration of the personal experience and narrative of individuals, giving deeper and richer insight into how vocational training has influenced their lives. The flexibility of the approach can delve into complex aspects, gathering data on how participants feel, their beliefs, and how they interact with the broader community, and allow contextual exploration of vocational education programs.**3.1 Research Design**

A research design is a framework for the collection and analysis of data Bryman (2008). For this particular research a descriptive research design was chosen. The descriptive design was found to be ideal for this particular study as it you captured a holistic view of the phenomenon by documenting detailed and factual information about the topic under investigation. White (2005) explains that a descriptive design is the type of inquiry in which the researcher carries out research about people's experiences in natural settings. This design helped to study the effect of vocational education on that livelihood improvement for persons with disabilities in Ndola District of Western Province in Zambia.

3.2 Study Population

Ndola District is found on the Copperbelt Province of Zambia and it comprises more than seven Vocational skills training Centres with only one National rehabilitation centre providing inclusive vocational education in the district. The participants of the study were drawn from the surrounding communities within the district. The respondents included vocational education graduates who are basically persons living with disabilities, School administrators, representatives from various existing organizations that spearhead matters around issues to do with people living with disabilities and officers from the Zambia Agency for Persons with Disabilities under the Ministry of community development and social services. The sample population targeted 40 participants all together both males and females.

3.4 Sampling Technique

This study used the convenient and purposive sampling technique. The convenience window was based on the availability of participants to provide the required data in order to realize the objective of the study. The purposive selection was based on the direct involvement and interest in the key institutions.

3.5 Sample size

The sample for this study consisted a total of 40 participants. The selection was made to ensure that the participants can effectively address the specific research questions, with careful consideration of gender balance throughout the research. The breakdown of participants was as follows:

- 4 administrators from the National Rehabilitation Centre
- 2 representatives from the Zambia Agency for Persons with Disabilities
- 4 representatives from organizations for persons with disabilities
- 30 vocational education graduates living with disabilities, consisting of 15 females and 15 males

3.5.1 Selection of respondents and sample size

No	Type of participants	Male	Female	Sample
1	Zambia Agency for Persons with Disabilities- Provincial coordinator and the Assistant	1	1	2
2	Training College for persons with disabilities - The principal - The Registrar - The Placement Officer - HOD Agriculture - HOD Production - HOD Business Studies - HOD Home Economics	2	2	4
3	Persons with Disabilities (Graduates)	15	15	30
4	Chairpersons of OPDs - Zambia National Association for the Blind & Partially Sighted Women (1) - Zambia National Association for Persons with physical Disabilities (1) - Bwafwano Food Processing Ndola (1) - Bwananyina Association of Persons with physical Disabilities (1)	2	2	4

3.6 Data Collection

The research was iterative and inductive due to the evolving understanding of livelihood and the dedication to a grounded theory methodology. Participants included thirty (30) individuals with disabilities trained in vocational education, four (4) National Vocational Rehabilitation Centre administrators who facilitate the program, two (2) representatives from the Zambia agency for Persons with disabilities as a national agency that supports and coordinates the enrolment of persons with disabilities and

four (4) representatives from Organizations for persons with disabilities that are community based representing persons with disabilities.

To gather representative data, the sample was drawn from program coordinators at the rehabilitation centre, representatives from various organizations representing people living with disabilities, other key informants from the Zambian agency of people living disabilities and the persons with disabilities (graduates) who have been trained in vocational education for at least 4 years and would have since graduated from the learning institution at the time of the study. This was in order to be attentive to the impact of vocational education on livelihood. Some of the variables included: Age, gender, type of disability (physical, visual, auditory, intellectual), educational background, access to vocational training programs, availability of disability-inclusive education policies, participation in vocational courses, access to social support and participation in social or community groups, employment status, income levels, job security, access to health services, social welfare programs, transportation, and housing among others.

3.7 Data Collection Tools

3.7.1 Primary Data

3.7.1.1 Semi-Structured Questionnaire

A semi-structured interview guide was used in order to gain insight into the living conditions for persons with disabilities. The interview inquired into the vocational education with respect to livelihood of persons with disabilities. Each interview lasted between 15 and 20 minutes. Henriquez et al. (2009), semi-structured questionnaires are ideal in quantative research because they capture both qualitative and quantitative data simultaneously (Dencombe, 2010). This kind of questionnaire encompasses both closed and open-ended questions. The closed ended questions capture quantitative data to preconceived questions and responses that asses or seek to measure various quantitative variables within the study population. Conversely, the open-ended questions leave room for the study participants to provide detailed responses to the questions in the data collection too (Kotari, 2012).

3.7.1.2 Semi-Structured interview Guide

While giving enough room to the participants to express their in-depth responses and perspectives to the questioned asked. The Semi-structured interview guide provides a well-structured flow of questioned thus giving a clear guide in the sequence and information being gathered in an interview. The semi-structured interview guide is ideal for collecting in-depth qualitative data from study participants. Because that questions are usually open-ended, the data may not be easily quantified and will allow the researcher to ask follow-up questions (probing) so as to get detailed information. This will assist in gathering enough information with relative ease. Therefore, this was used to capture in-depth expert information from the key informants in the study such as program coordinators, administrators and key representatives from organizations of people living with disabilities (Kotari, 2012; Creswell, 2014).

3.7.2 Secondary Data

3.7.2.1 Document Review

The researcher gathered information related to the research topic as secondary data through the literature review process from books, magazines, newspapers, journal articles, conference notes, government documents, published research and reports by other scholars.

3.8 Data Analysis

Since the data that was collected from the study was both qualitative and quantitative in its nature, the data analysis process took both qualitative and quantitative data analysis techniques.

3.8.1 Qualitative data analysis

Since the data collected from the study was qualitative in its nature, the data analysis process took qualitative data analysis techniques. Precisely, the content and thematic analysis analysis technique was employed. The researcher identified and familiarizeed herself with the data collected via the semi-structured questionnaire and semi-structured interview guide. The initial process involved organization of the full

transcripts from the audio files, code them as per participant serial number, compare and review the responses in each transcript against the recorded audio files for each interview, Clean and correct any errors through triangulation, identify and code recurring themes from the transcripts, record the frequency of the themes, and finally draw inferences. This was done using a qualitative data analysis software called N'vivo.

3.9 Ethical Consideration

The researcher sought formal permission from the learning institution before collecting data with the administrative key informants. Similarly, representative organizations for people living with disabilities were formally consulted for permission to conduct data collection on their members before data collection process. Furthermore, the researcher maintained and acknowledged the responsibility to the academic research community by adhering to appropriate ethical conduct throughout the entire process of the study.

Additionally, the researcher also ensured that participants were not harmed in anyway and ensured that confidentiality of participants was upheld during the entire process of the study. Finally, participant anonymity was maintained and participants were assured that the data to be collected from the study was purely to be used for academic purposes only.

3.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the methodology that was used in the study. Various aspects that relate to the practicality and adherence to scientific protocol of conducting research were highlighted in this chapter such as; the selection of the research design, and the methodological approach that were observed among others. The following chapter will present the data analysis and presentation of the study findings.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the data analysis and presentation of the study findings from the data that was collected from the study respondents. The chapter presents the; demographic characteristics of the study respondents, after which it also presents the findings of the study in order of the study questions. The findings are presented using both qualitative and quantitative techniques. Specifically, the quantitative techniques (descriptive statistics; frequency distributions, measures of dispersion; mean, mode, median and standard deviation, and inferential statistics; chi-square tests to test the significance of the relationship in selected variables) were used to present the quantitative data. Further, thematic analysis was used to analyse and present the emerging themes in the qualitative data.

This study was guided by the following questions:

5. What kind of skills and knowledge do the people living with disabilities acquire from enrolling into vocational education in Ndola District, Copperbelt Province, Zambia?
6. To what extent does vocational education contribute to establishing or strengthening social networks among persons with disabilities?
7. Does vocational education contribute to improving the chances of employment among persons living with disabilities in Ndola District, Copperbelt Province, Zambia?
8. Does vocational education improve the accessibility to basic needs and social services of people living with disabilities in Ndola District, Copperbelt Province, Zambia?

4.1 Quantitative Analysis

The quantitative findings present the related numerical analysis that was conducted on selected quantitative variables.

4.1.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The demographic characteristics of the respondents are summarized in the table below, highlighting key variables such as age, gender, type and level of disability, educational background, and employment status before and after vocational education.

Table 4.1 Summary of demographic characteristics of respondents

Demographic Variable	N (Valid)	Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Deviation	Major Categories (%)
Age	30	28.3 (years)	0	28, 34	0	Age 28, 34 (13.3%)
Gender	30	1.5333	2.0000	2.00 (Female)	.50742	Female (53.3%)
Type of Disability	30	2.0333	2.0000	3.00 (Hearing Impairment)	.85029	Hearing (36.7%)
Level of Disability	30	2.3667	2.0000	2.00 (Moderate)	.61495	Moderate (50.0%)
Educational Background	30	2.2333	2.0000	2.00 (Secondary)	.67891	Secondary (50.0%)
Employment Status Before Vocational Education	30	1.8000	2.0000	2.00 (Unemployed)	.40684	Unemployed (80.0%)
Current Employment Status	30	1.5000	1.5000	1.00 (Equal Employed/Self-employed)	.50855	Equal Employment Split (50.0%)

Age

The ages of the respondents varied from 21 to 40 years, with an average age of 28.3 years (SD = 5.07). The most common ages among respondents were 28 and 34 years, each representing 13.3% of the sample. In contrast, the least frequently reported ages, each at 3.3%, included 21, 23, 24, 25, 26, 32, 38, and 40 years. Overall, individuals aged 21 to 29 made up 50% of the sample, while those aged 32 and older accounted for the other 50%. This suggests that the sample population is relatively young.

Gender

In terms of gender, the sample included 30 respondents, with 53.3% being female (n = 16) and 46.7% male (n = 14). The slight majority of females indicates a fairly balanced gender distribution in the study, though there were more female participants.

Type of Disability

Regarding the type of disability, the most frequently reported was hearing impairment, which represented 36.7% (n = 11) of respondents. This was followed by mobility impairment at 33.3% (n = 10) and visual impairment at 30.0% (n = 9). This highlights a diverse range of disability types among the respondents.

Level of disability

The majority of respondents indicated they had moderate disabilities (50.0%, n = 15), followed by those with severe disabilities (43.3%, n = 13), and a smaller group with mild disabilities (6.7%, n = 2). This shows that most participants are dealing with moderate to significant levels of disability.

Educational Background

Regarding educational qualifications, 50.0% (n = 15) of the respondents completed secondary education, while 36.7% (n = 11) achieved tertiary-level education. The remaining 13.3% (n = 4) reported that primary education was their highest level of attainment. This indicates that a considerable number of respondents have at least completed secondary education, with many advancing to tertiary education.

Employment status before vocational education

Prior to their vocational education, a significant 80.0% (n = 24) of respondents were unemployed, while only 20.0% (n = 6) reported being employed. This underscores a notable lack of employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities before they received vocational training. This highlights the significance of vocational education in improving the outcomes of the employability status of PWDs.

4.1.2 Skills and knowledge acquired by PWDs from vocational education.

This particular objective sought to analyze the skills and knowledge acquired through vocational education. The data on this is presented in table 4.2 below:

Table 4.2: Skills Acquired

Skills	**Count/Frequency**
Sewing, fabric cutting, and designing patterns.	5
Welding, cutting, and assembling metal.	4
Mastery in bead crafting, weaving, and marketing products through social media platforms.	4
Garment cutting, stitching, pattern-making, and client communication skills.	4
Coding in Python, database management, and website development.	3
I learned how to create furniture, operate woodworking machinery, and finish products for commercial use.	3
I learned to use assistive technology for typing and converting text into Braille format.	3
I learned candle-making techniques, soap formulation, packaging, and marketing strategies.	2
I learned how to do automotive mechanics	2

Table 4.2 shows that in regards to skills acquired, the most common skills learned include sewing, welding, and various crafts, indicating a diverse range of vocational training.

4.1.3 Vocational Education Contribution in Establishing or Strengthening Social Networks among PWDs.

The study also intended to assess whether acquiring vocational education improved the development of social networks among the PWDs. The results on this objective are presented in table 4. 3 below:

Table 4.3: Vocation education and social networks establishment

Question	Statistic	Value
What areas of your life have improved the most?	**Frequency (N=30)**	Financial: 11 (36.7%), Social: 15 (50.0%), Psychological: 4 (13.3%)
	Mean	1.77
	Median	2.00
	Mode	2.00
	Std. Deviation	0.68
	Cumulative Percent	Financial: 36.7%, Social: 86.7%, Psychological: 100.0%
	Sum	53
Since completing vocational training, have you made new social or professional connections?	**Frequency (N=30)**	Yes: 30 (100.0%)
	Mean	1.00
	Median	1.00
	Mode	1.00
	Std. Deviation	0.00
	Cumulative Percent	100.0%
	Sum	30

How often do you interact with others from the vocational program?	**Frequency (N=26)**	Frequently: 15 (57.7%), Occasionally: 11 (42.3%)
	Mean	1.42
	Median	1.00
	Mode	1.00
	Std. Deviation	0.50
	Cumulative Percent	Frequently: 57.7%, Occasionally: 100.0%
	Missing Data	4 responses (13.3%)
	Sum	30

The results presented in table 4.3 demonstrate that vocational training has had a notable impact on various aspects of the participants' lives. Out of the 30 respondents, half (50.0%) identified social improvements as the most significant benefit, while 36.7% pointed to financial improvements, and 13.3% mentioned psychological benefits. The mean response was 1.77, which is closely aligned with both the median (2.00) and mode (2.00), indicating that social improvements were the most commonly reported outcome. Cumulatively, social and financial benefits together represented 86.7% of all responses, underscoring their importance in the participants' experiences. All 30 respondents (100.0%) confirmed that they had established new social or professional connections since completing their vocational training. This unanimous agreement is reflected in the statistical data, where the mean, median, and mode were all 1.00, with a standard deviation of 0.00. These findings highlight the effectiveness of vocational training in building social and professional networks for individuals with disabilities. Among the 26 respondents who answered this question, 57.7% reported having frequent interactions with others from their vocational program, while 42.3% noted occasional interactions. The mean response was 1.42, and the mode was 1.00, suggesting that frequent interaction was somewhat more prevalent. It is worth mentioning that four responses (13.3%) were missing, which may reflect variability in the participants' availability or willingness to engage. These findings highlight the role of vocational training in maintaining ongoing social connections among graduates.

4.1.4 Vocational Education and Employability of PWDs.

This particular objective intended to assess whether vocational education influenced the employability of the PWDs after graduation from vocational education school. The data on this is presented below:

Table 4.4: Vocational Education and Employability

Questions	N (Valid)	N (Missing)	Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Deviation	Sum	Frequency - Yes (%)
Do you feel the training provided skills relevant to employment or livelihood?	30	0	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.0	30.0	100.0
Are you currently employed?	30	0	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.0	30.0	100.0

In table 4.4, the results indicate that all 30 respondents (100.0%) agreed that the vocational training equipped them with skills relevant to employment or livelihood. This consensus is evident in the statistical analysis, where the mean, median, and mode were all 1.00, and the standard deviation was 0.00, showing no variability in responses. The cumulative percentage of 100.0% reinforces the widespread belief that vocational training is directly relevant to their career goals and livelihood needs.

Likewise, all 30 respondents (100.0%) reported being currently employed, highlighting the effectiveness of the vocational training programs in improving employability for individuals with disabilities. The statistical analysis backs this up, with a mean, median, and mode of 1.00 and a standard deviation of 0.00, indicating no variation in

responses. This consistent result suggests that vocational education has played a crucial role in helping participants secure job opportunities.

Table 4.5 Vocational Education and Employment

How Vocational Training Helped Secure Employment	Frequency	Percent
I was introduced to tools and techniques that are in demand for producing accessible materials for visually impaired individuals	1	3.3%
It equipped me with skills that matched the requirements of tailoring shops in my area.	4	13.3%
It gave me the practical skills needed to start my business.	4	13.3%
It provided me with the technical skills, and a small start-up kit to launch my business.	2	6.7%
The practical training and certification made me a desirable candidate for the workshop.	3	10.0%
The program helped me build a strong foundation and confidence to believe in my capabilities which also necessitated the development of my small tailoring business	1	3.3%
The program helped me build a strong portfolio and gave me the confidence to apply for tailoring jobs.	4	13.3%
The program not only equipped me with technical skills but also helped me understand how to run a small business, including bookkeeping and customer engagement.	4	13.3%
The training gave me the technical expertise required for IT roles, and the program's certification added credibility to my job applications.	3	10.0%
The training introduced me to tools and techniques that are in demand for producing accessible materials for visually impaired individuals	2	6.7%
The training provided the technical skills and a small start-up kit to launch my business.	2	6.7%
Total	**30**	**100.0%**

In the same context, table 4.5 illustrates the feedback from participants regarding how vocational training aided them in securing employment, showcasing the various ways these programs enhanced their employability. The most commonly cited benefits

include equipping participants with practical skills, supplying start-up kits, and building the confidence and foundational knowledge essential for both entrepreneurship and employment.

Around 13.3% of participants indicated that the training provided them with skills that aligned with the needs of tailoring shops in their locality, while another 13.3% mentioned that it equipped them with the practical skills necessary to launch their own businesses. Likewise, 13.3% highlighted that the program helped them create a strong portfolio and instilled the confidence to pursue tailoring job opportunities.

Additionally, another 13.3% pointed out that the program not only imparted technical skills but also educated them on managing a small business, covering aspects like bookkeeping and customer interaction. Participants who gained from the training program's certification and the technical know-how required for IT positions made up 10.0%, while another 10.0% noted that the hands-on training and certification rendered them attractive candidates for workshops.

Responses also highlight specific impacts, such as providing tools and techniques for creating accessible materials for individuals with visual impairments (6.7%) and offering technical skills along with start-up kits for businesses (6.7%).

4.1.4.1 Rating Impact of Learned Skills and Created Social Networks on Livelihoods

This particular analysis assesses how the identified skills have impacted the livelihoods and quality of life of individuals with disabilities. The summary indicates how different skills correlate with the perceived quality of life after vocational education.

Table 4.6: Quality of Life Ratings and Skills Learned

Quality of Life Rating	**Skills Learned**	**Frequency**
Good	Garment cutting, stitching, pattern-making, and client communication skills.	4
Very Good	Mastery in bead crafting, weaving, and marketing products through social media platforms.	4
Very Good	Sewing, fabric cutting, and designing patterns.	4

Very Good	Welding, cutting, and assembling metal.	4
Good	Coding in Python, database management, and website development.	3
Good	I learned how to create furniture, operate woodworking machinery, and finish products for commercial use.	3
Good	I learned to use assistive technology for typing and converting text into Braille format.	3
Good	I learned candle-making techniques, soap formulation, packaging, and marketing strategies.	2
Good	I learned how to do automotive mechanics	2

The summary of the findings in table 4.6 above illustrates how quality of life ratings are distributed based on different skills acquired through vocational education. The data indicates that specific skills, like garment cutting and bead crafting, are associated with higher quality of life ratings.

4.1.4.2 Specific Areas of Life that have improved due to Vocational Education

This section presents the specific areas of life that have improved due to vocational education among the vocational education graduates.

Table 4.7: Areas of Life Improved

Areas of Life Improved	**Skills Improved Livelihood**	**Frequency**	**%**
Social	Yes	15	50
Financial	Yes	11	36.6
Psychological	Yes	4	13.3

According to the summary in table 4.7, the most frequently reported benefits are social and financial improvements, while psychological improvements are mentioned less often. This summary emphasizes the considerable influence of vocational education on the social and financial dimensions of life for individuals with disabilities.

4.1.5 Vocational Education and Accessibility of PWDs to Basic Needs and Social Services.

This objective sought to assess whether vocational education improves accessibility to basic needs and social services. This was done by examining the areas of life that have improved, particularly focusing on basic needs and social services.

Table 4.8: Vocational Education and Accessibility to Basic Needs and Services

Question	Yes (Frequency, %)	No (Frequency, %)	Mean	Median	Mode	Standard Deviation
Has vocational education improved your ability to access healthcare services?	22 (73.3%)	8 (26.7%)	1.27	1.00	1.00	0.45
Have you experienced improvements in housing, transportation, or food security?	26 (86.7%)	4 (13.3%)	1.13	1.00	1.00	0.35
Are public facilities such as healthcare, transportation, or social services accessible to you?	15 (50.0%)	15 (50.0%)	1.50	1.50	1.00	0.51

A large majority of respondents (73.3%) reported that vocational education had enhanced their ability to access healthcare services. These individuals noted that the financial independence gained from vocational training allowed them to afford healthcare services more easily. However, 26.7% of respondents mentioned that they had not seen such improvements, indicating that other systemic factors might affect healthcare accessibility for this group.

A significant number of respondents (86.7%) recognized improvements in key areas of their lives, such as housing, transportation, or food security, after completing their

vocational education. These enhancements were often linked to the financial stability and skills acquired through vocational training. Nevertheless, 13.3% of participants reported no improvements in these areas, pointing to possible disparities in outcomes based on personal situations or external influences.

Opinions on the accessibility of public facilities, including healthcare, transportation, and social services, were split. Half of the respondents (50%) felt that these facilities were accessible to them, while the other half reported difficulties in accessing them. For those who had access, it was noted that this positively impacted their personal and professional lives, while those without access continued to encounter challenges despite the advantages of vocational training.

Table 4.9: Influence of Vocational Education on your personal or professional life

If yes, how has this influenced your personal or professional life?		**Frequency**	**Percent (%)**
Valid		14	46.7
	I can now afford better healthcare due to increased income from my business.	3	10.0
	I joined a group that campaigns for inclusive education resources in public schools.	3	10.0
	I joined a local association of women artisans, which has boosted my confidence and broadened my market reach.	3	10.0
	I joined a local tailoring group that helps promote inclusion and offers opportunities to work on large orders collaboratively.	4	13.3
	I joined a youth empowerment group that regularly organizes exhibitions to showcase work done by persons with disabilities.	3	10.0
	Total	**30**	**100.0**

The data in table 4.9 above sheds light on how access to public facilities and vocational education affects the personal and professional lives of respondents. The findings show a range of impacts, especially in enhancing healthcare affordability, encouraging group involvement, and supporting empowerment initiatives.

General Influence: A total of 14 respondents (46.7%) shared general feedback, indicating that access to facilities and vocational education has had a positive effect on their personal or professional lives, though they did not detail the specific nature of this impact.

Healthcare Affordability: Three respondents (10.0%) mentioned that the increased income from their businesses, likely made possible by vocational education, has allowed them to afford better healthcare services.

Advocacy for Inclusive Education: Another 10.0% of respondents (3 individuals) became involved in groups advocating for inclusive education resources in public schools. This involvement reflects their efforts to use their experiences to push for societal improvements.

Women's Artisan Groups: Three respondents (10.0%) reported joining local associations of women artisans. These groups not only enhanced their confidence but also expanded their market reach, illustrating how vocational education can promote both self-esteem and economic opportunities.

Collaborative Tailoring Groups: Four individuals (13.3%) became part of local tailoring groups that focus on inclusion and provide collaborative opportunities for larger orders. This highlights a collective effort to improve professional prospects and cultivate a sense of community.

Youth Empowerment Groups: Three respondents (10.0%) participated in youth empowerment groups. These groups host exhibitions that display the work of individuals with disabilities, demonstrating both the promotion of inclusivity and the creation of pathways for professional recognition.

4.2 Thematic Analysis

The qualitative findings are presented in thematically. The thematic analysis section presents the findings from the in-depth interviews that were conducted with the Key-informants.

4.2.1 Responses from the Key Informants

4.2.1.1 Barriers to Accessing Vocational Education

A common concern expressed by informants was the various obstacles that individuals with disabilities encounter when trying to access vocational education. These challenges go beyond just physical facilities and include societal attitudes and systemic issues. One informant pointed out:

> *"Some vocational schools have classrooms on the upper floors without elevators, making it impossible for people with mobility impairments to access them" (interviewee 1, personal communication, 2024).*

The quote highlights the physical barriers, like classrooms on upper floors without elevators, that limit access to vocational education for individuals with disabilities. It also points to broader systemic issues, including societal attitudes and a lack of awareness in designing inclusive educational environments. The problem is not just physical infrastructure but also a lack of consideration for accessibility in policies and attitudes towards individuals with disabilities. Another informant highlighted the lack of awareness among families:

> *"Many families of people with disabilities don't even know these programs exist. There's a need for widespread sensitization" (interviewee 7, personal communication, 2024).*

The quote highlights the lack of awareness among families of persons with disabilities about vocational education programs, which hinders access to opportunities that could improve skills and employability. The informant advocated for "widespread sensitization," suggesting efforts like outreach campaigns and community engagement to raise awareness. Lack of awareness was as a result of limited access to information, societal stigma, inadequate communication from institutions, economic

and social barriers, and insufficient policies or advocacy. Addressing this issue required improved information access, challenging misconceptions, and strengthening communication and advocacy efforts to help families access these valuable resources.

Financial limitations also surfaced as a significant barrier, as noted by another participant:

> *"The tuition fees are simply unaffordable for most families, especially in rural areas where incomes are already very low" (interviewee 3, personal communication, 2024).*

The quote highlighted how high tuition fees are a significant barrier to vocational education for persons with disabilities considering the high cost of living, particularly coming from low-income families already face financial challenges. The cost makes it difficult for these families to afford training that could improve skills and employment prospects influencing disparities between communities. As a result, financial limitations prevent access to educational opportunities, further hindering social inclusion and quality of life for individuals with disabilities.

4.2.1.2 Role of Vocational Training in Economic Empowerment

Vocational education was widely acknowledged by the informants as an essential means of achieving economic empowerment. They explained how it provides individuals with valuable skills that allow them to make financial contributions to their families.

> *"One of our trainees started a welding business after finishing the program. Now, he's employing two other people with disabilities. That's what empowerment looks like" (interviewee 8, personal communication, 2024).*

The quote highlights how vocational education empowers individuals with disabilities by providing them with valuable skills that enable financial independence. The example of a trainee who started a welding business and employed others with disabilities demonstrates how vocational training can lead to both personal success and community impact. It shows that empowerment involves not only acquiring skills

but also using them to create economic opportunities for others, fostering independence and social responsibility.

The ability of vocational training to close the employment gap was also emphasized:

> *"Many disabled individuals become self-employed after they complete their training. They're no longer relying on handouts but are standing on their own two feet, at least figuratively" (interviewee 5, personal communication, 2024).*

The quote emphasizes how vocational training enables persons with disabilities to become self-employed, reducing their reliance on financial support. The phrase "standing on their own two feet" highlights the independence and self-sufficiency gained through vocational skills, even though challenges may still exist. Ultimately, vocational education empowers individuals to manage their livelihoods, fostering autonomy, financial independence, and dignity.

4.2.1.3 Challenges in Implementation of Vocational Programs

The implementation of vocational programs for individuals with disabilities faces numerous challenges, including limited resources and poorly designed programs.

One major concern is the absence of customized curricula. An interviewee shared their disappointment regarding this issue:

> *"Vocational programs often take a one-size-fits-all approach, overlooking the specific needs of learners with disabilities. This is a disservice to them" (interviewee 2, personal communication, 2024).*

The lack of customized curricula for learners with disabilities in vocational education caused by the adoption of a single approach, overlooks their unique needs and abilities. Without individualized support, these programs fail to fully equip learners for success, limiting their employment opportunities and growth. The issue highlights the need for tailored educational approaches to ensure inclusivity and effectiveness for all learners, especially those with disabilities.

Another critical issue raised was the presence of underqualified instructors:

> *"Trainers often struggle to communicate effectively with learners who have hearing impairments or cognitive challenges. This creates an uncomfortable learning environment for everyone" (interviewee 4, personal communication, 2024).*

The presence of underqualified instructors in vocational education programs leads to ineffective communication with learners who have hearing impairments or cognitive challenges, creating an uncomfortable learning environment. This highlights the need for specialized training for instructors to ensure a supportive and inclusive educational experience

Additionally, a significant gap was noted in the area of post-training support, especially concerning job placement services:

> *"Without proper connections to employers or start-up funding for businesses, the training fails to lead to real employment opportunities" (interviewee 6, personal communication, 2024).*

The quote highlights a key issue in vocational education: the lack of post-training support, particularly in terms of job placement services and resources for starting businesses. The informant points out that, while training programs may equip individuals with valuable skills, without proper connections to employers or financial support to start their own businesses, these individuals may struggle to find real employment opportunities. The absence of this crucial support means that the training may not translate into tangible economic empowerment.

4.2.1.4 Impact on Social Inclusion and Confidence Building

The transformative power of vocational education extends beyond economic benefits to fostering social inclusion and enhancing self-esteem. Informants observed how training programs provided participants with a sense of purpose and belonging.

> *"Before joining the program, many of them felt isolated. But learning a skill and interacting with others in a similar situation boosts their confidence immensely" (interviewee 7, personal communication, 2024).*

The quote emphasizes how vocational education not only provides economic benefits but also plays a crucial role in promoting social inclusion and boosting self-esteem for individuals, especially those who may feel isolated. Before joining these training programs, many participants experienced feelings of isolation, likely due to a lack of opportunities or social interaction. However, the process of learning a new skill, combined with the chance to interact with others in similar situations, helps participants feel more connected and supported. Acquiring new skills, individuals gain a sense of purpose, which positively impacts their confidence and self-worth. The interaction with peers in the same training environment fosters a sense of belonging, which further contributes to their emotional and social well-being. Essentially, vocational education transforms lives not only by enhancing job prospects but also by creating a sense of community and belonging, which is vital for individuals' overall personal development.

One informant shared a specific success story:

> *"We had a student who was initially very withdrawn because of the stigma she faced in her community. After completing her training, she started making handicrafts and now participates in local fairs with great pride" (interviewee 8, personal communication, 2024).*

The quote highlights how vocational education can empower individuals, particularly those facing social stigma. A student, initially withdrawn due to community stigma, gained confidence and independence after completing vocational training in handicrafts. This allowed her to express herself creatively and participate in local fairs, overcoming social barriers and rebuilding her self-esteem. The story demonstrates how vocational education can foster personal and social growth, helping individuals gain pride in their work and become more engaged in their communities

Vocational training also challenges societal stereotypes:

> *"When people see a disabled person running a successful business or excelling in a skill, it changes their perception. It proves that disability isn't inability" (interviewee 5, personal communication, 2024).*

The quote highlights how vocational training can challenge and change societal stereotypes about people with disabilities. The informant points out that when PWDs succeed in running businesses or excelling in specific skills, it challenges common misconceptions. This visible success helps to shift public perception, demonstrating that disability does not equate to inability. Trainings also provides individuals with skills and opportunities to showcase their potential, ultimately contributing to a broader cultural shift towards inclusion and respect.

4.2.1.5 Recommendations for Improvement

The interviews yielded numerous recommendations focused on improving the accessibility and effectiveness of vocational education for individuals with disabilities. Enhanced infrastructure and specialized tools were commonly highlighted:

> *"We need more inclusive facilities ramps, elevators, Braille resources, and other adaptive tools to ensure everyone can participate fully" (interviewee 1, personal communication, 2024).*

The quote emphasizes the importance of improving the physical infrastructure and accessibility of vocational education facilities for PWDs. The informant stresses the need for modification and adaptation to provide inclusive training to ensure that people with disabilities can fully participate in vocational programs. These recommendations highlight that accessibility is not just about offering educational content but also about creating an environment where everyone, regardless of their physical or sensory limitations can engage in the learning process of programs to ensure equal opportunities for all learners to fully benefit from the training and succeed in different fields.

Several participants emphasized the necessity of targeted funding and government support:

> *"A dedicated budget for vocational education programs designed for people with disabilities would make a significant impact. This includes subsidizing fees and providing grants for start-up businesses" (interviewee 3, personal communication, 2024).*

The quote highlights the need for targeted financial support and government involvement in vocational education for individuals with disabilities. A dedicated budget could subsidize tuition fees and provide grants for starting businesses, reducing economic barriers and promoting self-sufficiency. This financial support would enhance access to education, leading to greater empowerment and sustainability for individuals with disabilities

The need for training programs for instructors was also identified as a vital area for enhancement:

> *"Instructors must be equipped with the knowledge and tools to effectively support diverse learners. Regular workshops and certifications should be mandatory" (interviewee 4, personal communication, 2024).*

The quote highlights the crucial need for training instructors to support diverse learners, particularly those with disabilities. The informant suggests that instructors must have the right knowledge and tools to address the unique needs of these students. Regular workshops and certifications would ensure instructors stay informed about best practices, fostering a more inclusive and effective learning environment.

Additionally, building partnerships with employers to facilitate job placements was suggested:

> *"We should collaborate with industries that are open to hiring people with disabilities. Apprenticeships and internships can help bridge the gap between training and employment" (interviewee 8, personal communication, 2024).*

The quote emphasizes the importance of forming partnerships with employers to enhance job placement opportunities for individuals with disabilities. The informant suggests that collaborating with industries willing to hire people with disabilities can provide valuable pathways to employment. By offering apprenticeships and internships, individuals with disabilities can help gain hands-on experience and bridge the gap between the skills learned during training and actual employment.

4.3 Chapter Summary

The preceding chapter presented the findings of the study, both quantitative and qualitative findings of the study were presented. As above presented, the study has highlighted quite a number of findings relevant to the discourse including the type of acquired skills and knowledge, the impact of vocational education in the lives of PWDs, the precise areas of life that have improved in the PWDs, the challenges experienced in the administration of vocational education, and the observed educational needs and gaps in vocational education administration. The following chapter presents the discussion of the study findings with support from existing literature.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF THE STUDY FINDINGS

5.0 Introduction

The present chapter deals with the discussion concerning the findings of the research as presented in Chapter Four. The discussion is organized in accordance with the specific objectives guiding the study. It also uses pertinent and available literature from Chapter Two as evidence to support the emerging findings.

5.1 Demographic Finding

AGE

The demographic profile of the respondents was essentially youthful, age of the respondents supports the argument that vocational education plays a key role in early skill development, which is especially critical for individuals with disabilities. This is consistent with literature on vocational education largely highlighting the great value of early intervention for equipping a person with the necessary abilities to enter and prosper in a labor market (Weigel, Mulder, & Collins, 2007). Early access to vocational education can equip individuals with the skills they need to enter the workforce and succeed in competitive job markets.

Studies show that vocational education is not only essential for gaining initial employment but also for maintaining long-term employment and fostering social inclusion. According to Nuri (2012), vocational education for individuals with disabilities is crucial for both securing employment and ensuring job stability. The International Labour Organization (ILO, 2015) also highlights how vocational training aids individuals in maintaining jobs, thus promoting social inclusion and rehabilitation.

The relatively young age of the respondents in the study reinforces the idea that vocational education is essential in helping individuals with disabilities secure employment early in their adult lives. This early employment intervention is crucial in closing the employment gaps faced by PWDs. The ability to gain skills early on can help to integrate into the workforce contributing to their economic independence and social inclusion. The data aligns with the literature that stresses vocational education's

role in increasing economic opportunities and reducing barriers to employment for individuals with disabilities (ILO, 2015).

Overall, the youthful demographic of your respondents underlines the significance of vocational education as a tool for early intervention to enhance their employability and contribute to their long-term career development and economic integration.

Gender

The gender distribution in the sample indicates 53.3% females and 46.7% males, representation of both genders with a slight majority of female participants. This gender balance in vocational education is significant, particularly in countries like Zambia, where gender norms and societal expectations often influence educational and employment opportunities. The fact that vocational training programs are becoming more inclusive for both males and females reflects an important shift in the education sector, especially in technical fields that have historically been male-dominated.

Historically in Zambia, vocational training fields like welding, construction, and coding, has been male-dominated. The gender gap in vocational education and training (VET) has been attributed to cultural norms and biases that associate technical and trade skills with men (TVTC, 2021). However, recent trends show a positive shift toward greater gender inclusivity in these programs, recognizing the importance of providing equal opportunities for skill acquisition and employment for both men and women.

The Technical and Vocational Training College (TVTC) in Zambia has highlighted the importance of inclusive training programs that cater to individuals with disabilities, irrespective of gender. These programs aim to ensure that both men and women, regardless of their disability status, can access education, enhance their skills, and integrate into the workforce (TVTC, 2021). The Zambian government's efforts to improve access to vocational education for women and marginalized groups, including those with disabilities, align with global trends toward gender inclusivity in education and the workforce (UNESCO, 2020).

Though, women with disabilities have often faced additional challenges when accessing vocational education due to both gender and disability-related barriers. Societal expectations about gender roles often prevent women from technical fields, while disabilities can add to challenges related to mobility, access to infrastructure, and necessary accommodations. However recent initiatives such as the Zambia National Disability Policy (2019) focus on reducing these barriers and ensuring that women with disabilities have equal opportunities for skill development and employment.

Zambia has partnered with international organizations to enhance gender inclusivity in vocational training, focusing on increasing women's participation in fields like construction, engineering, and technology, which are vital for economic development (UN Women, 2021). The Zambia National Vocational and Technical Education Policy emphasizes the need for accessible education for all genders, including individuals with disabilities, ensuring they acquire skills to succeed in the workforce (TVTC, 2021)

Type of disability

Hearing impairment is one of the most common disabilities worldwide. The World Health Organization (WHO) reports that over 5% of the world's population about 430 million people, suffer from hearing loss that is significant enough to interfere with communication (WHO, 2021). This is consistent with the prevalence rate you reported in your sample. Hearing impairments can range from mild to profound and may impact an individual's ability to communicate, work, and interact socially. The programs offered are designed to address the needs of individuals with different disabilities, making sure that the training is both accessible and effective. This approach is consistent with the findings of the ILO (2015) and Selingo (2006), who stress the importance of accessible vocational education that accommodates diverse abilities and promotes equal participation in the labor market.

Mobility impairments indicating 13.7% of reported having mobility difficulty, including difficulty walking or climbing stairs are another common type of disability, often resulting from conditions such as arthritis, cerebral palsy, or spinal cord injuries. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2021). And visual Impairment (30.0%) are also widely prevalent, with the WHO estimating that 2.2 billion people

globally, Visual impairments can range from partial vision loss to complete blindness and can significantly impact daily life WHO (2019).

The relatively distribution of different disability types (hearing, physical and visual impairments) in the sample suggests that the group is diverse in terms of challenges. This diversity is consistent with an inclusive approach to disability research, where no single impairment is dominant in the population. And incorporating assistive technologies and personalized support is essential for enhancing their learning experiences and improving their job prospects.

Educational Background

The 50% secondary education is a milestone for individuals as it opens up opportunities for further educational and vocational development. Studies have shown that completing secondary education is associated with higher employment rates, improved life outcomes, and greater social inclusion (UNESCO, 2017). The fact that half of your respondents completed secondary education suggests a solid foundation for skills development that could contribute to both personal and professional growth.

The attainment of 36.7 % in tertiary education, which includes universities, colleges, or vocational institutions, is particularly significant as it offers specialized knowledge and skills that can lead to better employment prospects. Globally, individuals with disabilities have faced challenges in accessing tertiary education due to physical, financial, and societal barriers (United Nations, 2019). The fact that 36.7% of respondents in the sample have achieved tertiary education is an encouraging indicator of progress in enhancing access to higher education for persons with disabilities.

The lower percentage of 13.0% respondents with only primary education highlights the challenges that individuals with disabilities might face in accessing and completing formal education, particularly at the primary level, due to barriers such as inadequate infrastructure, lack of support systems, or social stigma in line with the World Bank, 2020). Primary education remains a foundational level of education, and ensuring access to it for all individuals is essential in breaking the cycle of poverty and exclusion.

The distribution of educational qualifications in the sample points to a growing trend of accessibility in educational systems, particularly at the secondary and tertiary levels. However, challenges remain, especially in terms of access to primary education and vocational training programs for persons with disabilities. The findings can help inform the design of policies and educational programs that promote inclusive education and vocational training (ILO, 2018).

Employment after vocational training

The change in employment status before and after vocational education is a significant finding. Before undergoing vocational training, 80% of respondents were unemployed, clearly illustrating the difficulties that individuals with disabilities encounter in entering the job market. However, following the completion of the vocational education program, 50% of the respondents found employment, while the other 50% became self-employed. This notable improvement in employment outcomes underscores the transformative power of vocational education in boosting employability and entrepreneurial skills.

Similar results have been reported in the literature, with studies like those by Pillai (2016) and Wei, Zhang, and Salvadar (2020) demonstrating the positive effects of vocational education on employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities across various global settings. These results also resonate with the research of Tripney et al. (2015), who emphasize that vocational education serves as a vital tool for poverty reduction, especially for marginalized groups such as individuals with disabilities. This transition from unemployment to self-employment and employment after training illustrates the dual advantages of vocational education programs: they not only facilitate access to formal jobs but also nurture entrepreneurial skills, allowing individuals with disabilities to develop their own income-generating ventures.

This supports the findings of Murgor et al. (2014) and Mubanga (2019), who highlight that vocational education can empower individuals with disabilities to launch their own businesses, thereby enhancing their economic independence and decreasing their dependence on social welfare programs.

5.2 Skills and Knowledge Acquired by PWDs

The skills and knowledge gained through vocational education are diverse, showing that the programs provide a wide range of practical training options tailored to various interests and market needs. Commonly learned skills include sewing, welding, and different types of crafting, all of which are practical and potentially profitable. These skills not only enable PWDs to earn an income but also promote independence by allowing them to create products for sale or personal use. The variety in skill acquisition also demonstrates the flexibility of vocational programs, which offer training across numerous fields, from technical skills like coding and woodworking to creative sectors such as bead crafting and garment making. This broad spectrum of skills empowers participants to select a path that best fits their interests, abilities, and local market demands.

The addition of assistive technology training for people with visual impairments, like learning Braille or using typing aids, highlights vocational programs' dedication to offering inclusive and accessible education.

This perspective aligns with Weigel, Mulder, and Collins (2007), who view vocational education as a pathway to employment and economic independence, especially for marginalized groups. The practical and market-focused nature of these skills ensures that participants are not only prepared to meet local market needs but also empowered to earn an income and achieve financial independence. This is supported by findings from Pillai (2016) and Wei, Zhang, and Salvadar (2020), which showed notable improvements in employment outcomes for people with disabilities involved in vocational training programs in India and China, respectively. The flexibility of vocational education programs, as seen in the integration of assistive technologies like Braille and typing aids for individuals with visual impairments, emphasizes their potential for inclusivity and customized support.

The role of vocational education in alleviating poverty and promoting independent living, as highlighted by Tripney et al. (2015), supports the conclusions of this study. Skills such as sewing and crafting empower persons with disabilities (PWDs) to engage in entrepreneurial activities, which lessens their reliance on social welfare and encourages self-sufficiency. The Technical and Vocational Training College (TVTC,

2021) supports this view, emphasizing vocational education as a crucial element in poverty reduction strategies for PWDs in Zambia. By helping PWDs break free from systemic poverty and live with dignity, vocational education plays a vital role in achieving broader societal goals of inclusion and empowerment. These insights also underline the transformative impact of vocational education on social integration for PWDs. By gaining practical skills, participants can make meaningful contributions to their communities, fostering a sense of belonging and acceptance. This perspective aligns with Al-Yagon and Michal (2015), who point out the social integration advantages of vocational education, which help reduce vulnerability and encourage active involvement in social and cultural activities. Collaborative learning environments within vocational programs can help dismantle societal stigmas and promote mutual understanding between PWDs and their non-disabled peers, as noted by Itaan (2017). Such inclusive strategies not only boost individual confidence but also challenge stereotypes, fostering societal acceptance and minimizing social exclusion.

From an economic standpoint, the skills gained through vocational education allow persons with disabilities (PWDs) to engage in both formal and informal economies, thereby contributing to GDP growth, as highlighted by the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2015). For example, sectors like welding and garment making are in high demand and present significant income-generating opportunities, especially within Zambia's informal economy. This aligns with the views of Murgor et al. (2014), who advocate for vocational training programs to be tailored to high-demand market sectors to enhance economic benefits for participants.

5.3 Vocational Education in Establishing or Strengthening Social Networks

Vocational education programs have proven to be vital in building social networks among PWDs, which is a crucial element of life after education. The data indicates that all respondents formed new social or professional connections following their vocational training. This suggests that vocational education not only imparts technical skills but also fosters personal development and community involvement. The influence on social networks was particularly noticeable in the respondents' accounts of enhancements in the social dimensions of their lives.

While 50% of respondents identified social improvements as the most significant benefit, 36.7% pointed to financial gains. These results highlight the multifaceted nature of vocational education, which meets both the immediate need for economic support and the long-term advantages of social integration and assistance. The interaction frequency among graduates, with 57.7% engaging frequently and 42.3% occasionally, suggests that vocational education programs foster lasting communities of practice that continue to benefit participants after they complete their training. The data findings indicate that vocational education significantly contributes to personal development and community involvement for persons with disabilities (PWDs). Notably, the unanimous response from all participants (100%) confirming that they established new social or professional connections after training aligns with existing research that underscores vocational education as a crucial tool for social integration. As noted by Itaan (2017) and Al-Yagon and Michal (2015), vocational education goes beyond teaching technical skills; it opens doors for social inclusion by allowing individuals with disabilities to participate in activities that promote social ties. These connections can be essential for accessing support, securing employment, and fostering a sense of belonging within the larger community.

For individuals with disabilities, social networks play a crucial role in combating the social isolation that often arises from societal stigmas and physical barriers to participation (Al-Yagon & Michal, 2015). The fact that 50% of respondents identified social improvements as the most significant benefit of their vocational education underscores the transformative potential of these programs. This aligns with Mubanga's (2019) view that vocational education can dismantle the barriers of social exclusion by fostering economic independence and self-reliance. By empowering individuals to contribute economically, vocational education can help change societal perceptions, creating a more inclusive environment. Moreover, vocational training programs often encourage collaboration between individuals with and without disabilities, facilitating interactions that promote mutual understanding, empathy, and lasting professional relationships. As Itaan (2017) highlights, these opportunities for social exchanges frequently lead to enduring friendships and professional connections, which can be vital for navigating both social and economic landscapes. The data also reveals that 57.7% of respondents maintain frequent interactions with their peers after graduation, while 42.3% engage occasionally.

This highlights the creation of ongoing communities of practice that extend beyond the formal education period. These communities provide ongoing support, facilitate knowledge sharing, and encourage collaboration, all of which improve participants' integration into the workforce and their communities. The social networks established through vocational education programs thus lay the groundwork for lifelong learning, social cohesion, and mutual support, which are crucial for the sustained success and empowerment of people with disabilities (PWDs) (Al-Yagon & Michal, 2015). This is in line with the ILO's (2015) assertion that social inclusion achieved through vocational education can create a ripple effect, benefiting not only individuals but also their families and communities.

5.4 Vocational Education and Employability of PWDs

Vocational education has significantly influenced the employability of persons with disabilities (PWDs). The data indicates that all respondents believed the skills they gained were applicable to their jobs or livelihoods, with 100% reporting employment after graduation. These results highlight the success of vocational training in equipping PWDs for the job market. The uniformity in responses where means, medians, and modes all stood at 1.00 and standard deviations were 0.00 points to a strong agreement among participants about the relevance and usefulness of the training they received. Moreover, the various ways vocational education assisted participants in finding jobs are reflected in their feedback. A notable 13.3% of respondents mentioned that the program provided them with practical skills that matched local job market demands, such as tailoring and business management. Others noted the boost in confidence they gained from the program, which motivated them to seek employment or launch their own businesses. This illustrates that vocational training not only imparts technical skills but also enhances the self-esteem and entrepreneurial drive of PWDs, enabling them to engage more actively in the economy.

The findings of this study highlight the significant influence of vocational education on the employability of persons with disabilities (PWDs). A key takeaway is the impressive 100% employment rate after graduation, along with a unanimous agreement among respondents that the skills they gained were directly applicable to their jobs and daily lives. This uniformity in responses, with means, medians, and modes all at 1.00 and standard deviations of 0.00, underscores the success of vocational training in

providing PWDs with valuable skills. The implications are extensive, indicating that vocational training serves not only as a viable route to employment for PWDs but also as an essential means of promoting economic participation and social inclusion. As noted by Al-Yagon and Michal (2015), vocational education equips PWDs with the necessary tools to confront societal stigmas and engage more confidently in the workforce. The study clearly shows that vocational education programs are enhancing not only the technical skills of PWDs but also empowering them to take part in the economy as entrepreneurs or employees.

Nonetheless, the importance of industry collaboration in vocational education is crucial and cannot be overlooked. According to Kim (2020), effective vocational training systems are marked by strong connections between training institutions and industry sectors. Collaboration with industry ensures that training programs meet the actual needs of the labor market, which in turn boosts the employability of graduates. This is especially important for people with disabilities (PWDs), as it guarantees that the skills they gain through vocational programs are sought after in the local economy.

5.5 Impact of Learned Skills and Created Social Networks on Livelihoods

When it comes to the effects of acquired skills and established social networks on the livelihoods of individuals with disabilities, respondents noted significant improvements in their quality of life, with social enhancements being the most commonly mentioned advantage of vocational education. The range of skills learned spanning; garment making, bead crafting, welding, and IT has a direct impact on participants' livelihoods by improving their employability and enabling them to start their own businesses. The variety of responses regarding quality of life after vocational training further underscores the extensive impact vocational education can have. For example, those who acquired skills in business management and client communication rated their quality of life as "very good," as these skills played a crucial role in their ability to successfully operate their own businesses.

In contrast, individuals who acquired technical skills in tailoring or bead crafting reported "good" quality of life ratings, reflecting the economic and social benefits they gained from their training.

These findings are consistent with existing literature on vocational education and its effects on marginalized groups, including persons with disabilities (PWDs). Vocational

training is recognized worldwide as a means to enhance the livelihoods of individuals with disabilities by improving their employability and encouraging entrepreneurial activities (Kim, 2020). Additionally, the formation of social networks through vocational education has been identified as a crucial factor in improving livelihoods. Research indicates that these social networks offer individuals access to important resources such as job opportunities, market insights, and emotional support, all of which contribute to better economic outcomes (Schmid & Eberle, 2019).

For example, Kim (2020) points out that collaboration with industry in vocational education programs often results in stronger social networks, which subsequently increase the chances of employment after graduation. This is especially significant for PWDs, who may encounter extra challenges in securing job opportunities due to societal stigma or physical obstacles. Building social connections during vocational training, whether through mentors, peers, or employers, helps to mitigate these barriers.

Research in countries with robust vocational training systems, like Germany and Switzerland, indicates that incorporating social network development into vocational education enhances job placement rates and increases job satisfaction (Schultz & Weber, 2018). These results imply that vocational training, when paired with organized opportunities to cultivate social capital, plays a significant role in both economic and social empowerment, especially for marginalized groups such as persons with disabilities (PWDs).

5.6 Accessibility to Basic Needs and Social Services

The data presented in Table 4.8 offers a mixed perspective on how vocational education influences access to basic needs and services. A notable portion of respondents (73.3%) reported that vocational education positively impacted their ability to obtain healthcare, while some (26.7%) pointed out that systemic barriers might still hinder complete access. The enhancement in healthcare access was primarily linked to the financial independence gained through vocational skills, allowing individuals to afford services that were once beyond their reach. This aligns with the financial capital aspect of the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach, which emphasizes the importance of financial resources in achieving sustainable livelihoods (UNDP, 2015).

A significant majority (86.7%) reported that vocational education had improved their housing, transportation, and food security, indicating that the practical skills gained from vocational training played a role in achieving financial stability. However, the remaining 13.3% did not see any improvements, suggesting that personal circumstances or systemic barriers may have limited the benefits for some individuals. This finding highlights the importance of targeted interventions to ensure that vocational education is accessible to all PWDs in an equitable manner.

The issue of accessibility to public facilities presented a more mixed picture. Half of the respondents (50%) believed that services such as healthcare, transportation, and social services were accessible, while the other half indicated a lack of accessibility. This reveals a significant gap in public service provision for PWDs, despite the progress made through vocational education. Those who reported having access to public facilities mentioned positive personal and professional outcomes, including enhanced social integration and improved job opportunities.

In addition to the overall benefits, specific personal and professional changes were also noted. Table 4.9 illustrates that 46.7% of respondents experienced general improvements in their lives as a result of vocational training, although they did not specify the exact changes.

Other respondents provided specific examples of how vocational education positively influenced their lives, such as making healthcare more affordable due to increased earnings from self-employment (10.0%) and participating in advocacy and empowerment groups (30.0%). These insights indicate that vocational education significantly impacts people with disabilities (PWDs), promoting not just economic empowerment but also social engagement and inclusion. Therefore, these findings highlight the necessity for a comprehensive approach where vocational training is supported by investments in infrastructure and social services to foster a genuinely inclusive environment.

The results reveal that 73.3% of respondents experienced positive outcomes from vocational education regarding their access to healthcare, with financial independence playing a crucial role. This is consistent with the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach, which underscores the importance of financial capital in accessing essential services, including healthcare (UNDP, 2015). Respondents who acquired skills in areas like

garment making, welding, and IT reported being better equipped to manage medical expenses that had previously been unaffordable.

Despite improvements, 26.7% of respondents reported ongoing barriers, indicating that systemic issues persist. This underscores the continuous challenge of accessing healthcare, which relies not just on financial resources but also on factors like infrastructure and healthcare policy. Regional disparities (TEVETA, 2023) worsen this problem, as rural persons with disabilities may struggle to reach healthcare facilities that can adequately address their needs. Therefore, while vocational training enhances the chances of individuals obtaining healthcare services, it is crucial to tackle infrastructure gaps and systemic challenges to guarantee equitable access for everyone.

A notable 86.7% of respondents reported enhancements in housing, transportation, and food security as a result of vocational education. These improvements were associated with the economic advantages gained from the skills learned, leading to increased financial independence. These results reflect wider global patterns, where vocational education has been proven to boost individuals' economic status, thus improving access to housing and transportation (World Bank, 2021). However, 13.3% of respondents noted no such improvements, suggesting that factors beyond vocational training, such as personal situations and regional disparities, may impede these benefits. This highlights the necessity for targeted interventions to ensure that the advantages of vocational education are accessible to all persons with disabilities (PWDs), particularly those in underprivileged areas (Zambian Ministry of Education, 2022).

The feedback regarding access to public facilities like healthcare, transportation, and social services was mixed, with half of the respondents indicating improved access, while the other half faced obstacles. This inconsistency illustrates the shortcomings in public service delivery for PWDs, which is a significant concern in Zambia. Although vocational education provides individuals with the skills and financial means to enhance their situations, the insufficient infrastructure and services available in both urban and rural settings, especially for PWDs, restricts the overall effectiveness of these benefits (TEVETA, 2023). This observation underscores the importance of

comprehensive policies that link vocational training with enhancements in public facilities and services for PWDs.

Additionally, the personal stories shared by respondents, such as increased participation in advocacy groups (30%) and improved healthcare access due to higher earnings from self-employment (10%), highlight the social integration benefits of vocational training. Beyond the economic advantages, vocational education promotes greater social engagement, emphasizing its role in building inclusive communities.

Regional disparities pose a significant obstacle to equal access to vocational training and social services for persons with disabilities (PWDs), especially in rural areas. While urban regions enjoy better infrastructure, resources, and industry access, rural areas often struggle with inadequate training facilities and limited healthcare and transportation options (TEVETA, 2023). PWDs in these rural settings face additional challenges due to socio-cultural factors, such as gender norms and a preference for traditional livelihoods. Although decentralization efforts (Zambian Ministry of Education, 2022) and initiatives like mobile training units have been implemented to address these issues, the scale of these programs is still not enough to satisfy the increasing demand for vocational training and support services in underserved regions.

5.8 Thematic Findings

5.8.1 Barriers to Accessing Vocational Education

The barriers identified, such as inaccessible infrastructure and a lack of awareness, are consistent with earlier studies highlighting the systemic exclusion of people with disabilities (PWDs) from education and employment opportunities (UNDP, 2022). In particular, the absence of inclusive infrastructure in rural areas greatly hinders PWDs' access to vocational training. The scarcity of resources in these regions further exacerbates this issue, leaving PWDs at a disadvantage due to logistical and financial challenges. Moreover, the socio-cultural barriers noted, where vocational education is often regarded as a lesser option in rural communities, reflect broader societal attitudes that tend to stigmatize PWDs as less capable. This underscores the necessity for strong community outreach initiatives aimed at shifting perceptions of disability and vocational education, alongside enhancements in infrastructure to guarantee equal access (Zambian Ministry of Education, 2022).

5.8.2 Role of Vocational Training in Economic Empowerment

The success stories shared by informants illustrate how vocational training can significantly enhance economic independence and empowerment for people with disabilities (PWDs). This theme highlights the crucial role of vocational education in breaking the cycle of poverty and dependence. However, as the literature points out, the full economic benefits of vocational training can only be achieved when it is paired with sufficient post-training support, such as business mentorship, startup funding, and robust employer networks (ILO, 2023). For example, one trainee who launched a welding business and hired other PWDs showcases the far-reaching impact vocational education can have, resulting in both personal empowerment and a wider social effect. These success stories underline the necessity for more customized support systems that can help bridge the gap between education and sustainable livelihoods (World Bank, 2021).

5.8.3 Challenges in Implementation of Vocational Programs

The challenges in implementing vocational programs for persons with disabilities (PWDs) highlight a larger issue of underfunded and poorly equipped vocational training institutions, especially in rural areas. The lack of specialized curricula tailored for PWDs and the presence of underqualified instructors align with regional studies that emphasize the necessity for improved teacher training and curriculum development in vocational education (TEVETA, 2023).

Furthermore, the absence of post-training support, including job placement services and access to start-up capital, emphasizes the need for a more holistic approach to vocational training. This approach should foster strong collaborations among government agencies, training institutions, and the private sector (ILO, 2022). The observation that skills acquired in vocational training programs often do not lead to sustainable employment underscores the urgent need for practical solutions that effectively connect education with job opportunities.

5.8.4 Impact on Social Inclusion and Confidence Building

The impact of vocational training on social inclusion and building confidence is one of the most significant outcomes highlighted by informants. For people with disabilities (PWDs), gaining a sense of purpose, dignity, and belonging challenges societal stereotypes and helps break down the stigma associated with disability. These insights

are consistent with existing literature on social inclusion, which views vocational education not just as a way to enhance economic prospects but also as a means to empower individuals socially and psychologically (UNDP, 2022). The aspect of confidence-building in vocational training, where participants move from feelings of isolation to gaining recognition and engaging in community events, suggests that the societal benefits of such training go beyond mere economic empowerment. This underscores the need to incorporate both personal and social development objectives into vocational education programs for PWDs.

5.8.5 Recommendations for Improvement

The recommendations from informants emphasize several important areas for enhancing vocational education for persons with disabilities (PWDs):

1. Improved Infrastructure: It is essential to make vocational training centers accessible to all PWDs. This involves constructing ramps, providing Braille resources, and offering adaptive tools. Prioritizing physical accessibility in both new and existing facilities is crucial.
2. Targeted Funding and Government Intervention: Allocating specific funds for vocational programs designed for PWDs would enhance access and affordability. Government support could include tuition subsidies and grants for PWDs starting their own businesses, ensuring they are not only trained but also empowered to join the workforce or become entrepreneurs.
3. Training for Instructors: Instructors need to be better prepared to meet the diverse needs of PWDs. Regular workshops focused on disability-sensitive teaching methods should be conducted to guarantee that all learners receive the necessary support to thrive.
4. Partnerships with Employers: Establishing partnerships with employers is vital to ensure that vocational training translates into actual job opportunities. Apprenticeships and internships can act as a bridge between training and employment, offering PWDs valuable real-world experience and networking chances.

These recommendations are in line with effective global models of inclusive vocational training programs, like the Skill India Mission and Brazil's Pronatec program, which

focus on collaboration with industries, support from the government, and the establishment of sustainable training infrastructures (World Bank, 2021).

5.9 Chapter Summary

The previous chapter discussed the findings outlined in chapter four, while the next chapter (chapter six) will provide the conclusions and recommendations for the study.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.0 Introduction

This chapter outlines the main conclusions and recommendations drawn from the study on how vocational education affects the livelihoods of individuals with disabilities (PWDs). It highlights the advantages of vocational training in boosting employability, achieving financial independence, and promoting social inclusion for PWDs, while also recognizing the obstacles they encounter. In light of the findings, this chapter offers practical recommendations to enhance vocational education programs and improve accessibility, as well as identifies potential areas for future research.

6.1 Conclusions

The findings of this study highlight the significant impact that vocational education has on the lives of individuals with disabilities (PWDs). It shows that vocational education not only helps individuals gain essential skills but also plays a crucial role in enhancing their overall well-being. The variety of skills learned by participants in vocational programs, ranging from practical skills like sewing to digital skills such as IT, illustrates the adaptability and inclusiveness of vocational training. This broad spectrum of skills demonstrates how vocational education can meet the diverse needs of individuals with disabilities, equipping them with the necessary tools to succeed in today's job market.

Moreover, the study has identified a clear link between vocational training and various improvements in quality of life. These enhancements are evident in multiple areas, including social inclusion, financial independence, and access to healthcare. Participants reported notable progress in their ability to engage with their communities and achieve financial self-sufficiency, underscoring the significant role of vocational education in improving the livelihoods of PWDs. It is especially important to note that participants emphasized the direct connection between vocational training and their job opportunities, with many finding stable employment or launching their own businesses after completing their training. This highlights the vital role vocational education plays in linking skill development to economic empowerment.

Additionally, the study revealed that the benefits of vocational education went beyond just securing jobs. It also led to stronger social connections, better access to healthcare, and increased confidence and self-esteem among participants. These

results emphasize the wider societal advantages of vocational education, as it not only promotes economic inclusion but also nurtures a greater sense of belonging and personal empowerment for people with disabilities (PWDs).

Nevertheless, challenges persist. Access to public services and facilities, including healthcare and transportation, remains a significant hurdle for many PWDs. Although vocational education programs have improved financial stability, much work is still needed to ensure that PWDs can fully engage in society. The findings highlight the ongoing need for advocacy and policy changes to tackle these systemic obstacles and guarantee equal opportunities for PWDs in every aspect of life.

6.2 Recommendations

- **Expansion of Vocational Education Programs**

A key recommendation from this study is to broaden vocational education programs. To improve the employability and independence of persons with disabilities (PWDs), these programs should encompass a wider range of skills, including both technical and soft skills. Technical skills like tailoring, carpentry, and IT should be paired with training in soft skills such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving. This comprehensive approach would not only enhance job prospects but also empower PWDs to pursue entrepreneurial ventures, enabling them to create jobs and contribute to the economy.

- **Strengthening Support Networks**

Vocational education should go beyond just teaching technical skills; it should also focus on building strong support networks for PWDs. Training programs ought to include opportunities for networking, peer mentoring, and alumni involvement. Creating platforms for social and professional connections would help PWDs maintain support after their training, fostering a sense of community and promoting ongoing personal and professional growth. This could be facilitated through mentorship initiatives, professional networking events, and user-friendly online platforms.

- **Improving Accessibility to Public Services**

While vocational training greatly enhances financial stability, there is still an urgent need to make public services and infrastructure more accessible for people with disabilities (PWDs). Important areas that need focus include healthcare facilities,

public transportation, and educational institutions. To ensure that PWDs can fully take advantage of vocational education, they must have barrier-free access to these vital services. Policymakers should make accessibility a priority in their reforms, ensuring that public services are inclusive and cater to the diverse needs of individuals with disabilities.

- **Encouraging Entrepreneurship**

The study revealed that a significant number of participants who completed vocational training went on to establish their own businesses. Therefore, it is advisable for vocational programs to integrate strong entrepreneurship education into their curricula. This should encompass training in business management, marketing, financial literacy, and other critical components necessary for running a successful business. By nurturing an entrepreneurial mindset, vocational education programs can empower PWDs to become self-employed and attain long-term financial independence, while also contributing to Zambia's economy.

6.3 Limitations

While the study offers important insights, it is essential to recognize several limitations. The sample size was relatively small, which may not adequately reflect the varied experiences of people with disabilities (PWDs) from different regions or backgrounds. Consequently, the findings might not fully represent the larger population of PWDs in the country. Furthermore, the study primarily involved participants from a single educational institution, which could introduce bias, as those from one institution might exaggerate the advantages of vocational training or downplay the challenges encountered during the process. Future research with larger, more diverse samples and more objective success measures could yield a more thorough understanding of how vocational education affects PWDs.

6.4 Areas for Future Research

Future research should concentrate on the long-term effects of vocational education on the careers of people with disabilities (PWDs). In particular, studies could look into how vocational training impacts career advancement, job stability, and long-term employment success. Another important area to explore would be how vocational education contributes to social inclusion beyond just employment, especially in enhancing community involvement, civic engagement, and social unity. Additionally,

examining the barriers that PWDs encounter when trying to access vocational education would yield valuable insights for enhancing program design and implementation. These barriers may include challenges related to physical access, financial limitations, lack of awareness, or inadequate support from educational institutions. Addressing these issues will guide policy and program development, helping to eliminate obstacles and ensure that vocational education is available to all individuals with disabilities.

6.5 Chapter Summary

The chapter concludes that vocational education plays a crucial role in improving the lives of people with disabilities (PWDs) by providing them with essential skills, boosting their job prospects, and promoting social inclusion. However, challenges still exist in terms of accessing public services and facilities. To address these issues, recommendations include expanding vocational training programs, enhancing support networks, improving accessibility, and fostering entrepreneurship.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Questionnaire

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

UNIVERSITY OF LUSAKA

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

Dear respondent

My name is Talent Matukuta I am a student at the University of Lusaka (UNILUS) undertaking a Master's Degree in Development Studies (MDS) in fulfillment of my master's degree, I am undertaking a research on the evaluation of vocational education to improving livelihood and so I am requesting your participation in this research.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to gain insights on vocational education of how it contributes to livelihood for persons with disabilities

Procedures: If you choose to participate, you will be asked to respond to a questionnaire consisting of questions related to the livelihood of persons with disabilities, the impact of vocational education on the quality of life and the strategies to improve vocational skills development. Your responses will be anonymized, and no personally identifiable information will be disclosed.

Risks and Benefits: There are minimal risks associated with participating in this study. However, you may benefit from the opportunity to reflect on your vocational education and contribute valuable information that may inform future policies and support the role of vocational education plays in the lives of Persons with disability.

Confidentiality: Your participation in this study is confidential. Your responses will be aggregated and reported in a way that ensures the anonymity of individual participants. No personal information that could identify you or your business will be disclosed. Your email address will be collected only for the purposes of sharing the results from the findings and full report for those who will be interested.

Voluntary Participation: Participation in this study is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at any time without consequence. Your decision to participate or not will not affect your current or future relationship with the researcher or any affiliated institutions.

Contact Information: If you have any questions or concerns about the study, you may contact the researcher at 0972 368289 or matukutatalent41@gmail.com

Please answer the following questions by ticking (√) the relevant block or writing down your answer in the space provided.

Demographic Information

1. Age: _____
2. Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female ☐ Other
3. Type of Disability:
    - ☐ Mobility ☐ Visual ☐ Hearing ☐ Intellectual ☐ Other (Specify: _____)
4. Level of Disability:
    - ☐ Mild ☐ Moderate ☐ Severe
5. Educational Background:
    - ☐ Primary ☐ Secondary ☐ Tertiary ☐ None
6. Employment Status Before Vocational Training:
    - ☐ Employed ☐ Unemployed
7. Current Employment Status:
    - ☐ Employed ☐ Self-Employed ☐ Unemployed

Impact of Vocational Education on the Quality of Life of PWDs

1. What vocational course(s) did you enroll in?
2. What specific skills did you learn during the vocational training?

3. Do you feel the training provided skills relevant to employment or livelihood?
    - ☐ Yes ☐ No
    - If **No**, why?
4. Has your income level changed since completing vocational education?
    - ☐ Increased ☐ Stayed the Same ☐ Decreased
5. Are you currently employed?
    - ☐ Yes (Specify job type: _____
    - ☐ No
6. If employed, how did vocational training help you secure your job?

    _____
7. Overall, how would you rate your quality of life since completing vocational education?
    - ☐ Very Good ☐ Good ☐ Neutral ☐ Poor ☐ Very Poor
8. What areas of your life have improved the most?
    - ☐ Financial ☐ Social ☐ Psychological ☐ Access to Services

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Role of Social Networks in Improving the Livelihoods of PWDs

1. Since completing vocational training, have you made new social or professional connections?
    - ☐ Yes ☐ No
2. How often do you interact with others from the vocational program?
    - ☐ Frequently ☐ Occasionally ☐ Rarely ☐ Never
3. Has vocational training helped you feel more included in your community?
    - ☐ Yes ☐ No
    - If **No**, why?
4. Have you participated in any advocacy or disability support groups?
    - ☐ Yes ☐ No
    - If **yes**, how has this influenced your personal or professional life?

      _____

_____

_____

Access to Basic Needs and Services Post-Vocational Education

1. Has vocational education improved your ability to access healthcare services?
    - ☐ Yes ☐ No
2. Have you experienced improvements in housing, transportation, or food security?
    - ☐ Yes ☐ No
    - If **No**, what are the main challenges?
3. Are public facilities such as healthcare, transportation, or social services accessible to you?
    - ☐ Yes ☐ No
4. Have you received support from any social welfare programs since completing vocational education?
    - ☐ Yes ☐ No
    - If **Yes**, please specify:

      _____

Thank you for your time and participation!

Appendix 2: Semi-Structured Interview Guide

VOCATIONAL EDUCATORS, POLICYMAKERS, DISABILITY ADVOCACY GROUPS

UNIVERSITY OF LUSAKA

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

Dear respondent

My name is Talent Matukuta I am a student at the University of Lusaka (UNILUS) undertaking a Master's Degree in Development Studies (MDS) in fulfillment of my master's degree, I am undertaking a research on the evaluation of vocational education to improving livelihood and so I am requesting your participation in this research.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to gain insights on vocational education of how it contributes to livelihood for persons with disabilities

Procedures: If you choose to participate, you will be asked sme questions related to the livelihood of persons with disabilities, the impact of vocational education on the quality of life and the strategies to improve vocational skills development. Your responses will be anonymized, and no personally identifiable information will be disclosed.

Risks and Benefits: There are minimal risks associated with participating in this study. However, you may benefit from the opportunity to reflect on your vocational education

and contribute valuable information that may inform future policies and support the role of vocational education plays in the lives of Persons living with disability.

Confidentiality: Your participation in this study is confidential. Your responses will be aggregated and reported in a way that ensures the anonymity of individual participants. No personal information that could identify you or your business will be disclosed. Your email address will be collected only for the purposes of sharing the results from the findings and full report for those who will be interested.

Voluntary Participation: Participation in this study is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at any time without consequence. Your decision to participate or not will not affect your current or future relationship with the researcher or any affiliated institutions.

Contact Information: If you have any questions or concerns about the study, you may contact the researcher at 0972 368289 or matukutatalent41@gmail.com

Demographic Information

1. Age: _____
2. Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female ☐ Other
3. Disabled: ☐ Yes ☐ No
4. If yes, type of disability: ☐ Mobility ☐ Visual ☐ Hearing ☐ Intellectual ☐ Other (Specify: _____)
5. Level of Disability: ☐ Mild ☐ Moderate ☐ Severe
6. Educational Background: ☐ Primary ☐ Secondary ☐ Tertiary ☐ None
7. Position/Designation: _____

Impact of Vocational Education on the Quality of Life of PWDs

1. Can you describe the types of vocational education programs offered to persons with disabilities?
2. What measures are in place to ensure that training is inclusive and accessible?
3. How relevant are the skills taught to current job market needs?
4. How has vocational education impacted the overall quality of life for persons with disabilities?
5. Can you share examples of individuals who have successfully transitioned to employment after training?
6. What are the main barriers preventing persons with disabilities from securing jobs post-training?

Role of Social Networks in Improving the Livelihoods of PWDs

1. How does vocational training contribute to building social or professional networks for participants?
2. Does vocational education help reduce social isolation among persons with disabilities?
3. How do strengthened social networks support emotional, social, or economic well-being?
4. What role do advocacy or disability support groups play in creating these networks?
5. Can you provide examples of how social networks have positively influenced the livelihoods of PWDs?

Access to Basic Needs and Services Post-Vocational Education

1. In what ways does vocational education improve access to essential services for persons with disabilities?
2. How does improved access to healthcare, housing, or transportation enhance the quality of life for persons with disabilities?

3. What additional support systems are needed to ensure sustainable livelihoods for PWDs?
4. What challenges still exist in ensuring equitable access to basic needs and services for PWDs?

Thank you for your time and participation!