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Vocational Training as an Effort to Enhance the Capacity of Persons with Physical Disabilities: A Literature Review

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Abstract
Persons with physical disabilities in Indonesia continue to face significant barriers to education and employment, driven by social stigma, limited accessibility, and a lack of relevant skills. Vocational training has been widely promoted as a strategy to build the capacity of persons with physical disabilities so that they can compete in the labor market or establish independent enterprises. This study employs a literature review method, drawing on articles, books, scientific journals, and official documents obtained mainly through Google Scholar, to synthesize existing findings on the role of vocational training in improving the capacity of persons with physical disabilities. The results show that vocational training programs—covering skills such as batik making, macrame, flower arrangement, knitting, and sewing—enhance participants' motor skills, creativity, and ability to follow work instructions, while also strengthening psychosocial aspects such as self-confidence, social skills, persistence, and self-motivation. The learning-by-doing method was found to be particularly effective, as it allows participants to grasp material gradually according to their individual conditions and abilities. Vocational training was also found to open opportunities for independent entrepreneurship. However, implementation still faces obstacles, including differences in participants' physical conditions, fluctuating concentration and emotional states, limited facilities, and the need for intensive mentoring. This study concludes that vocational training plays an important role in strengthening the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of persons with physical disabilities, and that its effectiveness depends heavily on appropriate teaching methods, supportive facilities, and an inclusive learning environment.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The World Health Organization (WHO), in its International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF), defines disability as an impairment of body function or structure—a significant deviation or loss that affects mobility, strength, or physical coordination. According to data released by Indonesia's Central Statistics Agency (Badan Pusat Statistik/BPS) in December 2024, persons with disabilities in Indonesia number approximately 10.7 million, with physical disabilities—classified according to affected body systems, including musculoskeletal, neurological, and sensory impairments—forming a substantial share of this population. Persons with physical disabilities in Indonesia still face numerous barriers to obtaining equal rights and opportunities in society, particularly in accessing education and employment. Social stigma, which produces labelling, together with limited accessibility and scarce opportunities, makes it difficult for

persons with physical disabilities to participate fully in social life. As a result, persons with physical disabilities have lower chances of securing employment, even though Law No. 13 of 2003 on Manpower, Article 5, guarantees every worker an equal, non-discriminatory opportunity to obtain employment. In addition, Law No. 8 of 2016 on Persons with Disabilities, Article 53(2), requires private companies to employ at least 1% persons with disabilities out of their total workforce. Nevertheless, persons with physical disabilities who are already part of the workforce are not free from discrimination.

Discrimination against persons with physical disabilities in the workplace can take the form of bullying, intimidation, disrespectful jokes and remarks, failure to provide accommodations suited to their condition, differential treatment due to their limitations, sexual harassment, dismissal, and the creation of workplaces with substantial physical barriers to their mobility (Mulyani et al., 2022). Such conditions arise because persons with physical disabilities are often underestimated on account of their physical limitations, which in turn reflects a persistent employment opportunity gap. These conditions indicate that persons with physical disabilities require deliberate efforts to build their capacity, so that they possess the same skills and competencies demanded by the labor market. Discrimination often occurs because they are regarded as a burden to society, presumed incapable of independence, and assumed to struggle in finding work (Purinami et al., 2018). Discrimination against persons with disabilities—particularly physical disabilities—in the workplace is frequently compounded by gaps in competency and skills. Many face difficulties in obtaining the education and training needed to compete, which in turn limits their access to formal employment opportunities (Mawarningsih & Trustisari, 2024).

One approach to strengthening the capacity of persons with physical disabilities is through vocational training. Vocational training itself refers to training that teaches and provides practical skills to participants, enriching their experience—particularly through productive activities aligned with the needs of industry (Gaffar et al., 2023). Vocational training is designed to equip participants with a specific type of skill suited to their talents, interests, and abilities, preparing them for life in society. Pangestuti (2021) further explains that vocational training for persons with physical disabilities is intended to provide work-related knowledge and skills so that they can meet labor market demands. Although disability services often focus on direct interventions such as vocational training and rehabilitation, the success of these services is also shaped by the surrounding social environment. Disability services therefore also need to target the wider community, in order to create an inclusive environment that supports the functioning of persons with disabilities. To support and involve persons with disabilities in community activities, society must develop greater awareness of inclusive social life. With better understanding, communities can work together to remove barriers and build an environment that upholds the rights, diversity, and full inclusion of all individuals, including those with disabilities. Such support can take the form of advocacy, awareness-raising, and public education aimed at reducing the stigma, discrimination, and social barriers experienced by persons with disabilities (Eldiva et al., 2023). Vocational training is not only a means of developing knowledge and skills, but also fosters attitudes such as independence and self-confidence. Through vocational training, persons with disabilities are expected to gain the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required both to enter the workforce and to build independent businesses.

A study by Ramadhani and Fawzi (2021) examined the empowerment process of workers with disabilities through vocational training conducted by PT Thisable Enterprise. The study describes how the training begins with an open recruitment stage, followed by administrative selection, and then an interview and assessment stage for candidates who pass the administrative screening, in order to evaluate their condition and abilities. Participants who pass the selection then take part in two training sessions—a soft-skills

session and a hard-skills session—designed to equip them with the technical skills, attitudes, and work behavior required in industry. Ramadhani and Fawzi (2021) also note that the type of training provided is adapted to participants' disability conditions and educational level, in order to create an adaptive and inclusive learning environment. This indicates that the vocational training process encompasses the development of participants' knowledge, skills, and attitudes in preparation for entering the workforce. Prior studies on capacity building for persons with physical disabilities and vocational training have been conducted extensively, including by Hanifah and Sujarwanto (2024), Pangestuti (2021), and Purnomo, Setiadi, Ishartiwi, Wibawa, and Damayanto (2022). These three studies examine how persons with physical disabilities who undergo vocational training show measurable improvements in knowledge, skills, attitudes, and independence compared to their condition beforehand.

Although numerous studies have demonstrated that vocational training is effective in improving the capacity of persons with physical disabilities, most of this research evaluates the programs or implementation practices of specific institutions. Few studies have specifically synthesized empirical findings on the role of vocational training in improving the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of persons with physical disabilities by examining the existing literature as a whole. Therefore, this study aims to compile and synthesize findings from various studies on vocational training as an effort to enhance the capacity of persons with physical disabilities.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed qualitative literature review design to synthesize existing empirical findings on vocational training as a means of enhancing the capacity of persons with physical disabilities. The research process began with formulating the research focus, followed by a systematic search for relevant literature using keywords such as "vocational training," "physical disability," "capacity building," and "disability employment," combined in various combinations. The literature search was conducted primarily through Google Scholar, supplemented by academic journal databases, to identify articles, books, scientific journals, and official documents published within the last ten years that were directly relevant to the topic.

The literature obtained was then screened based on inclusion criteria, namely: (1) publications directly discussing vocational training for persons with physical disabilities, (2) empirical studies or literature reviews published in accredited national or international journals, and (3) sources available in full text. Sources that did not meet these criteria, such as opinion articles without empirical grounding or publications unrelated to physical disability, were excluded from the analysis. The selected literature was then reviewed, categorized based on recurring themes (skills, knowledge, attitudes, and barriers to implementation), and analyzed descriptively to identify patterns and draw conclusions regarding the role of vocational training in improving the capacity of persons with physical disabilities (Snyder, 2019).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the finding obtained from the reviewed literature and discusses the in relation to the problem outlined in the introduction. The discussion is organized into two subsections:

3.1.Research Results

The reviewed literature shows that vocational training programs for person physical disabilities generally cover range of practical skills, including batik making, macrame, flower-bouquet arrangement, knitting, and sewing (Gaffar et al., 2023; Pangestuti, 2021).

These programs are typically structured in stages, beginning with an open recruitment process, followed by administrative selection and an interview or assessment stage to evaluate participants' condition and abilities, before participants proceed to soft-skills and hard-skills training sessions (Ramadhani & Fawzi, 2021). Across the studies reviewed, participation in vocational training is consistently associated with improvements in three main areas. First, in terms of skills, participants show measurable gains in motor ability, creativity, and the capacity to follow work instructions accurately (Gaffar et al., 2023; Purnomo et al., 2022). Second, in terms of knowledge, participants gain a clearer understanding of work procedures and industry-relevant practices, particularly when training is delivered through a learning-by-doing approach (Ramadhani & Fawzi, 2021; Hanifah & Sujarwanto, 2024). Third, in terms of attitudes, training contributes to psychosocial gains, including increased self-confidence, stronger social skills, greater persistence, and higher self-motivation (Pangestuti, 2021)

The literature also indicates a considerable number of participants go on to establish independent businesses after completing vocational training, applying the specific skills they acquired to build their own enterprises (Hanifah & Sujarwanto, 2024; Purnomo et al., 2022). At the same time, several studies report recurring obstacles in the implementation of vocational training, including differences among participants in physical condition, concentration, and emotional stability, as well as limited facilities and the need for intensive mentoring (Mawarningsih & Trustisari, 2024).

3.2.Discussion

These findings confirm that vocational training functions as a concrete strategy to close the competency and skills gap identified in the introduction as one of the main drivers of employment discrimination against persons with physical disabilities (Mawarningsih & Trustisari, 2024). By equipping participants with practical skills that are directly relevant to industry needs, vocational training addresses the structural barrier highlighted by Purinami et al. (2018), namely the assumption that persons with disabilities are incapable of independence or of competing in the labor market. The measurable gains in creativity, motor skills, and instruction-following ability reported across studies suggest that, when given appropriate training, persons with physical disabilities are able to meet the same performance standards expected of the general workforce directly countering the stigma and labelling described earlier in this study.

The psychosocial outcomes of vocational training, particularly gains in self-confidence and social skills, are equally significant. Since the introduction identified stigma and low self-worth as key contributors to the marginalization of persons with physical disabilities, the fact that training programs simultaneously build technical competence and personal confidence suggests that vocational training addresses both the practical and social dimensions of the employment gap. This aligns with the argument of Eldiva et al. (2023) that improving the position of persons with disabilities in society requires not only individual-level interventions but also broader efforts to build public awareness and reduce stigma, vocational training appears to contribute to the individual side of this equation by strengthening participants' sense of capability and self-worth.

The prominence of the learning-by-doing method across the reviewed studies also has important implications. Because physical disabilities vary widely in type and severity, a single standardized training approach is unlikely to be effective for all participants. The adaptive, hands-on nature of learning-by-doing in which training is adjusted to each participant's condition and pace (Ramadhani & Fawzi, 2021) offers a practical model for reconciling the diversity of physical disability conditions with the need for effective, inclusive skills training. This is particularly relevant given that Law No. 8 of 2016 obliges

private companies to employ persons with disabilities, yet compliance with this obligation depends heavily on whether prospective employees possess adequate, job-ready skills well-designed vocational training thus plays a mediating role in enabling this legal provision to be realized in practice.

Furthermore, the finding that vocational training frequently leads participants toward independent entrepreneurship suggests that its benefits extend beyond formal employment. For persons with physical disabilities who continue to face structural barriers within conventional workplaces including inaccessible facilities and discriminatory treatment, as outlined in the introduction self-employment offers an alternative pathway to economic participation that does not depend on employer willingness to accommodate disability. In this sense, vocational training contributes not only to individual capacity building but also to a broader shift toward the economic empowerment and self-reliance of persons with physical disabilities.

At the same time, the barriers identified in the literature variation in participants' physical and emotional conditions, limited facilities, and the need for intensive mentoring indicate that vocational training cannot be treated as a one-size-fits-all solution. The effectiveness of training programs depends on the availability of adequate facilities, appropriately trained instructors, and sufficiently flexible program design. This underscores the importance of the inclusive and adaptive environment discussed earlier: without adequate institutional and social support, even well-designed training programs may fail to achieve their intended outcomes. Taken together, these findings suggest that maximizing the impact of vocational training on the capacity of persons with physical disabilities requires a combination of well-adapted pedagogical methods, sufficient facilities, and a supportive social environment that continues to challenge stigma and structural discrimination.

4. CONCLUSION

This study set out to compile and synthesize findings from the literature on vocational training as an efforts to enhance the capacity of persons with physical disabilities. The review confirms that vocational training serves this purpose across three interconnected dimensions: it builds practical, industry-relevant skills; it strengthens work-related knowledge through adaptive, individualized instruction, and it fosters attitudes of independence, self-confidence, and self-motivation. Beyond preparing participants for formal employment, vocational training also opens a viable pathway to independent entrepreneurship, offering an avenue for economic participation that does not depend on employer accommodation.

However, the extent to which these benefits are realized is not automatic, is conditioned by the availability of adaptive teaching methods such as learning-by-doing, adequate facilities, intensive mentoring, and an inclusive environment responsive to the diversity of physical disability conditions. Taken together, these findings indicate that vocational training is an effective and multidimensional strategy for closing the competency gap and reducing the structural and social barriers that persons with physical disabilities continue to face in the Indonesian labor market, provided it is implemented within a sufficiently supportive institutional and social environment.

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