

**Exploring parental experiences in transition program for job placement of learners  
with intellectual disabilities: A phenomenological study**

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**ABSTRACT**

This phenomenological study in the Philippines explored how five parents supported transition-to-work programs for learners with intellectual disability. Using semi-structured interviews and selected record reviews, and guided by Epstein's model, we analyzed data with reflexive thematic analysis. Parents described structured home routines for ADL and pre-vocational skills, two-way communication with teachers, shared goal-setting, and efforts to build community links for work exposure. Reported gains included better functional communication, confidence, and task independence, alongside limits tied to time, finances, and access to resources. Findings point to strengthening parent orientation, clarifying roles in transition planning, and expanding partnerships with local agencies and employers to increase work immersion and placements.

**Keywords:** Intellectual disabilities (ID), parental involvement, transition program.

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**INTRODUCTION**

Intellectual disability, which affects an estimated one to three percent of the global population, presents persistent challenges in cognitive development and adaptive functioning that significantly limit meaningful participation in society, particularly in the domain of employment (Nidya, 2024; Patel et al., 2020). Characterized scientifically as having a below-average intelligence quotient of less than 70, intellectual disability directly impairs an individual's capacity for learning and behavioral adaptation, restricting their ability to respond to the demands of daily life (Patel et al., 2020). Alulima et al. (2023) emphasize that these limitations require targeted interventions, and Talman et al. (2019) further note that intellectual disability manifests across a spectrum of severity, ranging from mild to profound, each identified through standardized assessments. Because persons with intellectual disabilities are constrained in their participation in crucial aspects of social life, including the workforce, they require specialized support to facilitate an independent life or one requiring only minimal supervision.

In response to these challenges, transition programs have been developed internationally to prepare individuals with intellectual disabilities for greater independence and

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successful integration into adult life. As Sung et al. (2023) and Traina et al. (2020) observe, these programs are critical in facilitating social integration, offering structured interventions that extend beyond academic learning to encompass vocational training, life skills development, internships, and entrepreneurship. Barnard Brak et al. (2022) reinforce the importance of equipping learners with job-specific skills to achieve employment success and lead independent lives following secondary education, while Alshuayl (2023) characterizes the transition to independent living as a critical developmental stage for this population. Approaches to transition programming vary across national contexts. In Ireland, Traina et al. (2022) describe the E-IDEAS program, which breaks down complex employment-preparation tasks into smaller, manageable steps. In the United States, Avellone (2023) notes a strong emphasis on experiential learning through real-world internships. These international models reflect a shared recognition that structured, skills-based transition support is essential for learners with intellectual disabilities, regardless of setting.

In the Philippines, the legal and policy framework for transition programs has evolved considerably. The Magna Carta for Disabled Persons, or Republic Act No. 7227, mandates the development of policies to foster rehabilitation, self-development, and self-reliance among persons with disabilities, including provisions for access to education, vocational training, and employment opportunities. Transition programs were first implemented in the country in 2005 for adult learners with disabilities and were later expanded through the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013. More recently, the Department of Education issued Order No. 041, Series of 2020, outlining the adoption of the K to 12 transition curriculums for learners with disabilities, which comprises seven curriculum packages: the Care Package, the Life Skills Package, the Functional Academics Package, the Pre-Vocational Package, the Enrichment Package, the Career Skills Package, and the Livelihood Package. These packages collectively address self-care, communication, academic preparation, vocational readiness, and entrepreneurship, and are designed to prepare learners with disabilities for five possible life pathways: higher education, entrepreneurship, employment, middle-level skills, and a functional life path for those with severe to profound disabilities. Regardless of entry point or age, learners with disabilities may be accommodated on the basis of diagnostic assessment, whether they come from home with no formal schooling, from a regular classroom, or from a SPED center or class.

Despite this policy advancement, significant structural barriers persist in the Philippine context. A case study by Faragher et al. (2021) on inclusive education across Asian countries identified major challenges in the Philippines, including a lack of specialized teacher training, underreporting of learners with disabilities, and insufficient support within regular classrooms. The reported student-teacher ratio of 50:1 and the 2018 figure of 85,320 school-age children with intellectual and developmental disabilities underscore the inadequacy of material and human resources available for effective curriculum implementation. As UNESCO (2021) cautions, such barriers limit both the accessibility and effectiveness of transition programs, making it difficult for learners with intellectual disabilities to fully participate in or benefit from them. Although some private institutions in the Philippines offer specialized transition support and financial assistance to learners from marginalized families, these opportunities remain out of reach for the majority, further deepening educational inequities for this population.

These systemic resource gaps bring the role of parents into sharp focus. The shortage of specialized teaching resources and adequately trained public educators effectively shifts a significant portion of the support burden onto families, underscoring the critical need for strong parental involvement as a complement to institutional provision. Parental involvement is consistently associated with positive academic and non-academic outcomes (Torreccilla and Hernandez-Castilla, 2020), and a substantial body of research confirms that it significantly improves students' academic performance, even when accounting for variables such as socio-

economic status, ethnicity, and parental education level (Utami, 2022; Tan et al., 2020; Xiuying et al., 2020; Lim, 2020). Yet parental involvement is a multidimensional concept that has been defined in varying ways across the literature. Lawrence and Fakuade (2021) describe it as all forms of support provided to school-age children by parents, guidance teachers, or caregivers to ensure the accomplishment of academic goals. Otto and Karbach (2020) characterize it as a broad umbrella term encompassing many forms of parental activity, while Ribeiro et al. (2021) operationalize it through the amount of time parents dedicate to supporting school activities. Dewangan (2021) extends the concept beyond the school context, defining it as participation in every facet of a child's education and development from birth to adulthood. Sreekanth (2023) offers a more affective framing, describing it as going beyond one's capacity through perseverance and compromise. These varied definitions converge on the notion of active parental engagement in a child's educational journey, encompassing school-based involvement, home-based support, emotional guidance, and participation in decision-making.

The dimensions of parental involvement are similarly diverse. The Family Involvement Questionnaire identifies home-school communication, home-based involvement, and school-based involvement as three core factors (Manz et al., 2004, as cited in Antipkina and Ludlow, 2020). Yulianti et al. (2023) enumerate parenting, communicating, volunteering, and learning at home as distinct forms of engagement, while Oriana and Chidinma (2024) identify emotional support, academic assistance, communication with school, decision-making participation, and financial support as key subcategories. Together, these frameworks suggest that parental involvement functions as a three-way process engaging the student, the parent, and the teacher simultaneously. However, the degree and nature of this involvement are shaped by a range of factors including socio-demographic profile, personal characteristics, cultural beliefs, and social environment, as Georgiou (2023) and Bonilla et al. (2022) discuss.

For parents of children with intellectual disabilities, the challenges of involvement are considerably amplified. Merla and Kumar (2021) note that raising a child with an intellectual disability significantly impacts parents' emotional and psychological well-being, largely due to the permanent and evolving nature of the condition. Caregivers of children with intellectual disabilities report elevated stress levels (Hameed and Kotian, 2022), are twice as likely to experience mental distress (Chaudry et al., 2023; Coulman et al., 2022), and report lower quality of life (Staunton et al., 2020). In the Philippine context, Garcia and Guzman (2020) observe that Filipino parents from low-income families tend to equate involvement with educational and financial support, viewing both as pathways to academic success. Jabar (2020) further notes that even when direct academic engagement is limited, ensuring a child's basic needs may itself constitute a form of indirect parental involvement, though this remains a baseline rather than a robust form of engagement. These realities reflect the tension between parental aspiration and the structural constraints that shape what involvement is actually possible.

Notwithstanding these challenges, the literature consistently affirms the value of parental involvement in transition planning for learners with intellectual disabilities. Culnane et al. (2022) argue that parental involvement in transition planning ensures early and appropriate preparation, consistent skills assessment, and shared care. Codd and Hewitt (2020) emphasize that when parents are engaged in transition education, they help set realistic goals oriented toward eventual workforce integration. Effective transition planning, the literature underscores, should involve substantive discussions between parents and teachers about available options and activities, ensuring that parents are not merely informed but are active participants in their child's educational decision-making. The Philippine policy framework reflects this understanding: DepEd Order No. 44, Series of 2021, commits the Department of

Education to fostering a cooperative and collaborative process among teachers, school leaders, parents, and relevant specialists, directing that parents take part in setting educational goals and participate actively in Individual Transition Plans. State-level initiatives such as Brigada Eskwela and the Parent-Teacher Association system further institutionalize parental participation in Philippine schools, providing formal structures through which parents can engage with educators and advocate for their children's well-being.

When the focus narrows to job placement specifically, parental involvement takes on an even more decisive role. Garrels and Sigstad (2021) observe that there is little to no data on the employment trajectories of intellectually disabled persons following school, as they remain largely excluded from the labor market. Jacob and Pillay (2023) attribute this in part to the conservatism of many countries in offering employment opportunities to persons with intellectual disabilities, who are also less likely to pursue further education and obtain a bachelor's degree. Within the Philippine transition curriculum, three of the seven learning packages specifically target the path toward employment: the Pre-Vocational Package, which builds foundational workplace skills; the Career Package, which supports career exploration and decision-making aligned with learner abilities and interests; and the Livelihood Package, which provides practical training in specific job skills and entrepreneurial opportunities. Parental support is pivotal to the success of these packages. Studies indicate that parents who actively participate in career planning and employment efforts help their children gain confidence and improve job retention rates (Garrels and Sigstad, 2021; Jacob and Pillay, 2023). Direct forms of parental involvement, such as attending job fairs, seeking internship placements, and coordinating with schools and employers, facilitate the transition from school to work. Kovacs et al. (2022) further emphasize that parents play a vital role in cultivating emotional resilience in their children, a quality that proves especially significant in navigating workplace difficulties and the broader adversities of adult life. Dossal et al. (2021) note that independent life skills remain a challenge for both parents and teachers of persons with intellectual disabilities, making employment not only a practical goal but also a vehicle for developing independence and self-determination.

Systemic barriers continue to complicate these efforts. Discriminatory hiring practices (Jacob et al., 2022), external stigma (Merhej, 2020), and stereotypical views toward persons with intellectual disabilities (Tossebro and Olsen, 2020) represent persistent obstacles to labor market inclusion. Carter et al. (2023) argue that addressing these issues requires a multidisciplinary approach involving all relevant stakeholders, particularly those most directly engaged in the care and education of individuals with intellectual disabilities. Schools must serve as active facilitators, helping parents and employers connect, and ensuring that training is aligned with the skills, interests, and available jobs in the labor market.

To analyze parental involvement in this layered context, this study applies the Epstein Model of Parental Involvement, which identifies six dimensions of engagement: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community. This framework provides a structured lens through which to examine how parents support their children's transition from school to employment by engaging in activities such as career exploration, advocating for workplace accommodations, and fostering relevant skill development at home. The model is particularly apt for the transition program context, where successful employment outcomes typically require coordinated effort among families, educators, and employers. Recent empirical work reinforces the relevance of this framework: Cosso et al. (2022) and Xu et al. (2024) link active parental engagement to better skill retention, higher self-esteem, and increased job readiness among learners with disabilities. Garrels and Sigstad (2021) find that participation in career planning sessions and Individual Transition Plans significantly enhances employment prospects, and Jacob and Pillay (2023) highlight the pivotal role of parent-educator communication in aligning school-based training with real-

world job requirements. The Epstein Model's emphasis on community collaboration is equally relevant in addressing the socio-economic and cultural barriers that constrain parental involvement, including financial limitations and disability-related stigma (Bonilla et al., 2022; Tan et al., 2020), pointing toward the need for policy interventions such as financial assistance, parent training programs, and workplace awareness initiatives.

The conceptual framework of this study positions the interplay among family resources, school capacity, and community support as the foundational conditions that shape collaborative processes. These conditions, in turn, determine the quality of communication, shared decision-making, and the lived experiences of parents, including whether their needs are met, how much burden they carry, and how empowered they feel. The outcomes for learners, including their readiness, confidence, participation, and pathways to job placement, are understood as emerging from these relational dynamics. Crucially, outcomes are not treated as endpoints but as feedback that loops back into practice: weak results signal the need to address relational or contextual conditions, while strong results affirm effective approaches. This experience-first orientation departs from a strict input-process-output model, privileging instead the meanings and perceptions that parents construct through their engagement with transition programs.

While the literature on parental involvement in education is extensive, research that focuses specifically on parents' roles in job placement for individuals with intellectual disabilities within the Philippine context remains limited. This gap is particularly notable given the documented challenges of resource scarcity, systemic barriers to employment, and the centrality of parental support in transition outcomes. This phenomenological study, grounded in Epstein's model and the conceptual framework outlined above, seeks to address this gap by exploring the lived experiences of parents whose children are enrolled in the transition program at Paaralang Pag-ibig at Pag-asa, the only complete SPED school in the Division of San Pablo City, Laguna. By centering parental voices within this specific institutional context and examining how involvement shapes employment readiness and community participation for learners with intellectual disabilities, the study aims to produce qualitative insights that can inform more responsive, collaborative, and effective transition practices in the Philippine educational landscape, consistent with the mandate of the Philippine Inclusive Education Act of 2022 or Republic Act No. 11650.

### Statement of the problem

This study aims to answer the following question: What are the lived experiences of parents in transition programs focused on job placement for their children with intellectual disabilities?

This study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. How did parents manifest the identified types of parental involvement (Epstein's model) in transition programs for learners with intellectual disabilities, particularly toward job placement?
2. How do parents describe their involvement in these programs, specifically regarding communication, decision-making, and collaboration?
3. What key themes emerge from the testimonies/narratives of parents participating in such transition programs?
4. Based on these experiences and themes, what outputs can be proposed to improve transition programs and parental involvement?

### METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a qualitative phenomenological research design to explore the lived experiences of parents whose children with intellectual disabilities have undergone transition programs for job placement. Phenomenology was chosen as the guiding framework because it allows for an in-depth understanding of the subjective experiences and perceptions of parents regarding intellectual disability at Paaralang Pag-ibig at Pag-asa, a public school in the Philippines.

The target population for this study was drawn from Paaralang Pag-ibig at Pag-asa, a public-school Special Education Center in San Pablo, Laguna, Philippines. The target sample size consisted of five parents whose children are current students and have intellectual disability. Purposive sampling was selected as the appropriate technique for this study, as it is suitable for qualitative research in that it allows the researcher to select participants who possess specific knowledge, experience, or involvement in the research topic. This method ensures that the sample yields relevant and meaningful insights. The purposive sampling technique was specifically chosen because the goal of the study is not to generalize findings to a larger population, but rather to gain in-depth insights from individuals who have direct knowledge and experience of parental involvement in transition programs. To be included in the study, participants were required to be a parent or primary caregiver of a learner enrolled in the transition program during the period of the study, able to participate in a 45-to-60-minute audio-recorded interview, and in possession of informed consent and, where applicable, permission to review relevant learner progress records.

Reflecting on the lived experiences of parents in the transition program, several themes emerged that illustrated both the possibilities and the enduring challenges of preparing learners with intellectual disabilities for job placement. The heart of effective transition support was shaped not only by policies but, more importantly, by the day-to-day practices and perspectives of families and teachers who worked directly with the learners. Across cases, parental involvement manifested most clearly in the steady rehearsal of daily-living and pre-vocational routines at home, the maintenance of timely two-way communication, and the shared setting of attainable goals.

One of the most consequential themes centered on home-school alignment. Families did more than encourage participation; they translated classroom routines into short, repeatable tasks at home and monitored progress with teachers. When planning was shared, learners received consistent cues in both settings, and small gains in independence accumulated. This pattern supported the view that involvement mattered most when it connected directly to what learners needed to do at work or during community participation, rather than remaining a symbolic form of support.

At the same time, implementation was often constrained by practical barriers. Parents reported limits on time and finances, uneven access to services or transportation, and occasional gaps in information flow. Some families navigated tensions between promoting autonomy, such as through travel training or work-like tasks, and ensuring safety, which required careful scaffolding and gradual fading of prompts. These constraints did not negate progress; rather, they highlighted the conditions under which progress was most likely, namely clear roles, simple tools, and predictable follow-through.

Taken together, the themes suggested that transition efforts advanced when schools and families shared concise plans, used straightforward communication protocols, and focused on a few priority routines that could be practiced daily. Partnerships with community agencies and employers created realistic opportunities to apply these routines beyond school. In this sense, modest, repeatable actions produced meaningful movement toward job readiness, while ongoing collaboration remained essential to sustain gains and address the barriers families encountered.

The research instruments for this study included semi-structured interviews and learners' progress reports. The semi-structured interviews were conducted to elicit parents' insights into their experiences and perceptions of parental involvement in the transition process for students with intellectual disabilities. These interviews allowed for flexibility in exploring participants' views on how parental engagement influences job placement outcomes. In addition, learners' progress reports were analyzed to provide objective data on students' vocational and academic development, with a focus on their readiness for employment. The combination of these two instruments offered a comprehensive understanding of the impact of parental involvement on job placement outcomes in transition programs.

The data-gathering procedure for this study involved a step-by-step process to ensure the comprehensive collection of qualitative data from both interviews and learners' progress reports. The researcher first obtained necessary permissions from the school administration to access the learners' progress reports and to conduct interviews with parents. Once consent was secured, participants were invited to take part in semi-structured interviews, which were conducted either in person or virtually based on participant availability and preferences. Each interview lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes and was audio-recorded with participant consent to ensure accurate transcription. The interviews were scheduled at a convenient time for participants, and follow-up interviews were conducted where necessary for clarification. Alongside the interviews, the researcher gathered the learners' progress reports from the school to analyze the academic and vocational development of students with intellectual disabilities, with a focus on aspects related to job placement readiness. The researcher carefully reviewed the reports, paying particular attention to sections on parental involvement, vocational skills, and progress in the transition program. All data were securely stored to ensure confidentiality, and the analysis integrated insights from both the interviews and the progress reports to draw meaningful conclusions about the role of parental involvement in job placement outcomes.

Interview transcripts and corroborating records, where applicable, were analyzed using Reflexive Thematic Analysis following Braun and Clarke's six phases: familiarization with the data; systematic, line-by-line coding; construction of candidate themes from code clusters; review of themes against coded extracts and the full dataset; definition and naming of themes; and reporting with representative verbatim extracts and analytic commentary. Coding progressed from codes to formulated meanings to code clusters to themes, and was explicitly aligned to the Statements of the Problem to maintain analytic focus and avoid thematic sprawl.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the findings derived from qualitative interviews conducted with five parents or guardians of learners with intellectual disabilities enrolled in the transition program at Paaralang Pag-ibig at Pag-asa, the only complete Special Education center in the Division of San Pablo City, Laguna. The study employed a phenomenological research design, purposively selecting five participants whose children were actively participating in the school's transition program aimed at job placement. Data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews, and analysis followed the six-step thematic analysis framework of Braun and Clarke (2006), guided deductively by Epstein's Six Types of Parental Involvement Model and inductively open to emergent patterns from participant narratives. The discussion presented in this chapter is grounded entirely in the data gathered from these five participants and is interpreted in direct relation to the four research objectives of the study: to determine how parents manifest Epstein's six types of parental involvement in transition programs, to describe their involvement with respect to communication, decision-making, and collaboration, to

identify key themes emerging from their narratives, and to propose outputs that can improve transition programs and parental involvement. All interpretations and contextualizations are drawn exclusively from the data and from relevant scholarly literature, with no new data introduced at any point in the discussion.

#### Socio-demographic profile of the parent and guardian participants

The five participants comprised three mothers designated as P1, P3, and P5, one father designated as P4, and one older sister serving as legal guardian designated as P2. The learners they support are adolescents and young adults ranging in age from 17 to 23 years, with a mean age of approximately 20 years. Families reported between three and six years of participation in the transition program, averaging slightly over four years, spanning both elementary and secondary phases of the program, with one learner having completed Level 3 in 2020. Four of the five caregivers are engaged in paid work, with two employed in formal positions, one operating a store, and one working as a teacher, while one participant is a full-time homemaker. This distribution of caregiver roles, occupational demands, and multi-year program exposure provides essential context for understanding how each family communicates with the school, reinforces skills at home, participates in decision-making, volunteers, and collaborates with the broader community in support of their children's eventual job placement.

These socio-demographic characteristics are theoretically significant. Hornby and Lafaele (2011) explain that socio-economic conditions, cultural beliefs, and family roles shape both the opportunities and barriers to parental involvement. In the Philippine setting, Garcia and Guzman (2020) found that lower income levels and larger household sizes often limit the time and resources parents can dedicate to educational support, while Mahlo (2021) emphasizes that inclusive education strategies must be grounded in the everyday realities of families to be effective. Codd and Hewitt (2020) further suggest that parents' capacity to reinforce vocational and life skills at home is shaped by their employment demands and access to relevant training. Culnane et al. (2022) add that parents are more likely to sustain engagement when schools maintain open communication and respect each family's unique circumstances. These insights contextualize the varied yet consistent forms of involvement described by the participants and underscore the need to understand their backgrounds as a foundation for interpreting their lived experiences.

#### Manifestations of Epstein's six types of parental involvement toward job placement

The study reveals that all five parents and guardians manifest each of Epstein's six types of parental involvement within the context of a transition program for learners with intellectual disabilities. These manifestations reflect proactive and multidimensional engagement in both home-based learning and school-based collaboration, each contributing substantively to their children's readiness for eventual job placement. The following discussion presents each type as it emerged from participant narratives, grounded in theoretical support and relevant literature.

With respect to Type 1, or Parenting, all participants described the deliberate establishment of structured home routines that reinforce life and vocational skills acquired in school. P1 stated that the things her daughter learned in school, such as cooking, are applied at home. P2 affirmed that whatever her ward learns in school is practiced at home, noting that the learner now independently prepares simple food. P3 described teaching her child to prepare his own breakfast and organize his own belongings to foster independence. P4 reported encouraging household chore participation to develop habituation, while P5 expressed general supportiveness oriented toward the learner's eventual success. These accounts collectively reflect Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory, wherein mastery experiences cultivated through

repeated practice build confidence and self-management. Cosso et al. (2022) similarly found that parents of learners with intellectual disabilities who intentionally build daily routines reinforce both life and vocational skills, aligning directly with these findings. The creation of a structured and purposive home environment thus serves as the foundational layer of parental involvement, anchoring school-based instruction in the routines of daily domestic life and providing learners with consistent opportunities to develop the reliability and self-management that prospective employers require.

Regarding Type 2, or communicating, participants consistently described active use of digital platforms, particularly class group chats through applications such as Viber and Messenger, as the primary medium for school-to-home and home-to-school communication. P1 noted that the group chat allows for quick exchanges whenever questions arise. P2 reported using the group chat to ask questions directly. P3 described communication occurring through both text messages and a shared group chat, characterizing the arrangement as well-functioning. P4 noted that the Viber group with the teacher enables fast responses to queries, while P5 emphasized that the group chat keeps the family consistently updated. Jacob and Pillay (2023) highlighted the role of technology-mediated communication in enhancing parent-teacher collaboration, and this study's findings corroborate that perspective within the Philippine SPED context. The speed and accessibility of these digital channels effectively bridge the physical distance between home and school, enabling parents to convert school instructions into the specific steps practiced at home and to flag emerging concerns before they develop into barriers to the learner's progress.

With respect to Type 3, or Volunteering, participants described involvement in school events and performances, functioning as an audience whose presence provides emotional validation for learners. P1 expressed excitement at watching her daughter perform publicly in school-taught activities such as dancing. P3 reported attending both events and meetings consistently. P5 articulated a desire to contribute actively rather than permit her child to bear volunteer duties alone. P2 candidly acknowledged difficulty in dedicating time due to employment obligations, which reflects the tension between caregiving aspirations and occupational demands noted by Bonilla et al. (2022). P4's response, while initially addressing communication, underscored the value of staying informed through parent group channels about event and project requirements. Tan et al. (2020) described this form of engagement as an audience effect, wherein visible parental presence during public performances enhances learner confidence and motivation, outcomes that are especially relevant in Special Education settings where social exposure serves as preparation for performance-like workplace interactions such as interviews and customer-facing roles.

Regarding Type 4, or Learning at Home, participants described deliberate and consistent reinforcement of school-taught functional and vocational tasks in the home environment. P1 reported that her daughter learned to clean and do laundry and described her as genuinely neat. P2 noted a particularly striking example, recounting that her ward began self-administering injections independently at around eleven years of age, having been fully dependent on caregiver assistance previously. P3 described a learner who progressed from being unable to do laundry to independently performing the task, as well as acquiring slicing and peeling skills. P4 described teaching basic life skills including bed-making, doing laundry, and dishwashing in order to foster independence. P5 noted that her daughter learned to tidy and launder, and does so with such thoroughness that she will re-clean spaces that are already clean. Otto and Karbach (2020) identified guided home practice of vocational tasks as central to skill retention, and Garrels and Sigstad (2021) emphasized that consistent daily practice at home strengthens vocational readiness. The narratives in this study align with both positions,

demonstrating that home effectively functions as an extension of the classroom, where parents serve as facilitators who not only reinforce school-based learning but also encourage autonomy, responsibility, and confidence. These attributes constitute foundational prerequisites for sustained employment and independent living.

With respect to Type 5, or Decision-Making, participants described meaningful inclusion in goal-setting and transition planning processes. P1 praised the quality of teacher decision-making and recounted a significant milestone in which her daughter expressed the desire to commute home independently rather than be escorted by her father. The family responded by teaching the learner which transport to board, where to disembark, and how to show the driver the destination address stored on her mobile phone. This account reflects Georgiou's (2023) shared pathway planning model, in which family input shapes practical, learner-centered transition goals. P2 reported being invited to a meeting in which the teacher asked what the family wanted the learner to achieve. P3 and P5 both described inclusion in career path decision-making and future planning, while P4 noted that the teacher specifically asked the family where they envisioned the learner working. Collectively, these narratives confirm that transition planning in this setting is characterized by genuine collaborative engagement rather than unilateral professional determination, aligning with the mandate of DepEd Order No. 44, Series of 2021, which requires parents to participate actively in setting educational goals and in Individual Transition Plans.

Regarding Type 6, or Collaborating with the Community, participants articulated advocacy for broader community acceptance and expanded livelihood and employment opportunities. P1 expressed the hope that employers would accept persons with disabilities. P2 expressed the desire for a dedicated livelihood center for persons with disabilities. P3 described directly engaging local government officials, including mayors, in advocacy for their children. P4 called on the government to provide sports facilities and TESDA training opportunities. P5 described reaching out to business owners in order to identify employment prospects for their children. Carter et al. (2023) argue that effective inclusion of individuals with intellectual disabilities in the labor force requires a multidisciplinary approach involving educators, parents, employers, and policymakers, and the advocacy behaviors described by these participants reflect precisely that orientation. The efforts of these families to engage beyond the school boundary extend the transition program's reach into the community, expanding the pool of available internship placements and employment opportunities and demonstrating the organic emergence of a community collaboration ethic consistent with Epstein's sixth type.

Taken together, the manifestations documented across all six types form a coherent and mutually reinforcing pathway to employment. Home routines cultivate the reliability and self-management that workplaces demand. Fast, technology-mediated communication creates a feedback loop that identifies and corrects small issues before they become entrenched barriers. Parental presence at school events builds confidence and social tolerance for performance-like situations. Guided practice at home converts isolated classroom lessons into stable, transferable performance. Shared decision-making increases the alignment between the learner's interests and available employment contexts. Community advocacy opens concrete opportunities that would otherwise remain inaccessible. The cumulative result is a tighter continuum from learning a task in class, to practicing it independently at home, to performing it reliably in real occupational settings.

Parental descriptions of involvement in communication, decision-making, and collaboration

Participants described their involvement as simultaneously intentional, responsive, and outward-looking. With respect to communication, all five participants relied on digital group chats as the primary channel for receiving teacher updates and relaying questions or concerns. The speed and accessibility of these platforms were consistently cited as factors that enabled families to make timely adjustments to home routines, materials, and transport arrangements in response to school needs. Participants expressed a desire for formalized communication protocols, including consistent posting schedules, defined response windows, plain-language messaging, and archived key updates that could inform revisions to Individual Education Programs and Individual Transition Plans. These preferences reflect the findings of Nidya (2024), who emphasized parental involvement as a key factor in bridging school-based instruction and workforce preparation, and of Codd and Hewitt (2020), who identified sustained parental communication as a driver of self-efficacy and motivation in learners with intellectual disabilities.

With respect to decision-making, participants described collaborative, increasingly student-led processes in which family input was solicited and respected by teachers. Goal-setting involved negotiation among teachers, parents, and learners, with particular attention to the emerging autonomy of the learner, as illustrated by travel training and graded independence plans described across multiple accounts. P1's account of coaching her daughter to commute independently using a phone-stored address exemplifies the practical operationalization of shared decision-making in service of transition goals. Participants expressed support for student-led Individual Education Program and transition meetings, risk-assessed autonomy milestones, and alignment of goals with local labor market realities, consistent with the mandate of Republic Act No. 11650 and the collaborative ethos described by Codd and Hewitt (2020).

With respect to collaboration, participants described reaching beyond the school to engage relatives, barangay officials, local government units, the Public Employment Service Office, the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority, nongovernment organizations, and small and medium enterprises in support of their children's daily independence and employment preparation. Proposed practical structures emerging from these accounts include partner directories, memoranda of understanding for on-the-job training placements, parent ambassador programs to link new families to community opportunities, job-shadow days, and community commute dry-runs. These community-oriented behaviors are consistent with DepEd Order No. 44, Series of 2021, and with Carter et al. (2023), who argue that successful transition outcomes depend on the activation of multi-sector networks that connect school-based learning to actual labor market contexts.

#### Key themes emerging from parental narratives

Five recurring and interconnected themes emerged from the testimonies of participants, each reflecting a distinct dimension of parental engagement and its implications for transition outcomes.

The first theme is the use of home as a training ground for independence. Across all accounts, parents described the deliberate teaching and rehearsal of daily living and vocational tasks in the domestic environment, ensuring that skills acquired through school instruction and canteen duties were embedded in functional home routines. This theme affirms the transition program's objectives and is supported by Piskorz-Ryn (2024) on holistic readiness programs and Jiang et al. (2023) on integrated academic-vocational curricula. Practical implications include sending home task analyses and weekly checklists, aligning canteen and shop duties

with domestic routines, scaffolding generalization through timed chores and safety checks, and using activities of daily living growth to inform job-matching decisions.

The second theme is consistency through practical communication strategies. Participants described strong alignment between school instruction and home practice, facilitated by communication strategies that extended to innovative adaptations such as typed phone notes displaying destination addresses for use with transport drivers. P3 noted that although her child learned to speak and make herself heard, she relies on parental mediation when verbal expression is insufficient, illustrating the complementary relationship between developing communicative competence and ongoing family support. Jiang et al. (2023) identified this type of school-to-work integration as central to effective transition, and the practical communication aids described by participants suggest actionable directions including take-home cue cards, picture-based schedules, and generalization monitoring rubrics linked to Individual Transition Plans.

The third theme is emotional validation through participation. Parents described the PPP environment as transformative relative to prior educational placements, with P1 recounting that upon transferring to the school, her daughter quickly learned mathematics, began forming words, and acquired sign language, none of which had been possible in the regular classroom. Parents described experiencing pride and joy at witnessing their children perform in school events, and this visible parental presence was understood by families as a source of confidence and self-esteem for the learners. Traina et al. (2020) identified parental validation as a mechanism that enhances learner engagement, and this theme points toward the value of institutionalizing student showcases, parent-participation days, and strengths-based progress documentation that correlates confidence gains with placement readiness indicators.

The fourth theme is shared goal-setting and growing respect for learner autonomy. Participants described a progressive shift in which learners themselves began initiating independence, most notably through the desire to commute unaccompanied. Goal-setting emerged as a genuinely collaborative process involving teachers, parents, and learners, with families taking care to honor their children's expressed preferences. Jacob and Pillay (2023) found that skill confidence and network advocacy are direct antecedents of placement success, and this theme supports the implementation of student-led Individual Education Program meetings, travel training with systematically faded prompts, and the inclusion of autonomy milestones in community-based instruction planning.

The fifth theme is advocacy for community inclusion and government-supported employment. All participants articulated hopes and active efforts directed at expanding the employment landscape for persons with disabilities, including calls for TESDA training, access to sports and livelihood facilities, and the engagement of employers, barangay officials, and local government units. Garrels and Sigstad (2021) demonstrated that parental advocacy directly supports employment outcomes, and Jacob and Pillay (2023) reinforced that community networks activated by families contribute meaningfully to placement success. This theme affirms the necessity of formalizing linkages between schools and community stakeholders through mechanisms such as memoranda of understanding, parent ambassador programs, and scheduled job-shadow and community immersion activities.

Proposed output: Bridge to Work program

Drawing directly from the five themes and the broader findings of this study, a proposed output titled Bridge to Work: Home, School, and Community Program was developed as a concrete and contextually responsive mechanism for enhancing transition programs and strengthening parental involvement. The program is organized around seven areas of concern,

each with defined objectives, strategies, responsible persons, time frames, and success indicators.

The first area addresses orientation and role clarification, with the objective of ensuring that families understand the program's goals and their specific roles within it. Strategies include a ninety-minute orientation session, distribution of a one-page contact card, and confirmation of each family's preferred communication channel. Responsible persons include parents, immediate family members, and SPED teachers, with implementation targeted for the first week of the program. The success indicator is full orientation attendance and a contact card on file for each participant.

The second area addresses home-to-school alignment of activities of daily living and vocational routines, with the objective of ensuring that home practice matches school instruction. Strategies include selection of two target routines per learner, provision of one-page task analyses, and daily fifteen-to-twenty-minute home practice documented through a Home-Goal Card. SPED teachers, parents, and learners are all responsible, with daily implementation across the first four weeks. The success indicator is a completed and submitted weekly Home-Goal Card.

The third area addresses family communication and co-planning, with the objective of ensuring timely communication and collaboratively set goals. Strategies include establishment of a moderated class group chat in the first week, distribution of a monthly program digest, and a thirty-minute Individual Transition Plan mini-meeting in the second week at which two shared goals are agreed upon. The success indicator is verified reachability within the group chat and a signed Individual Transition Plan on file.

The fourth area addresses structured autonomy practice in travel and work-like tasks, with the objective of supporting the learner in practicing independence with systematically faded prompts. Strategies include selection of one route or task per learner, creation of a step-by-step safety checklist, and three to four practice sessions per week with weekly prompt fading. Implementation spans weeks two through six, with the success indicator being safe and independent completion of the designated task or route.

The fifth area addresses functional communication aids for real-world tasks, with the objective of equipping each learner with a practical aid to support task completion. Strategies include creation of one individualized aid, such as a phone note, checklist, or picture cue, rehearsal in a real errand or classroom task, and sharing of a photo of the aid in the class group chat. The aid is to be built in week three and used from weeks three through six, with independent use of the aid serving as the success indicator.

The sixth area addresses community linkages and on-the-job training exposure, with the objective of securing additional job-shadow and on-the-job training placements. Strategies include identification of three target community partners including TESDA offices, local government units, and small and medium enterprises, two outreach contacts or emails to those partners, and scheduling of two job-shadow days. Responsible parties include the transition coordinator, school head, local government and Public Employment Service Office representatives, TESDA, small and medium enterprises, nongovernment organizations, and a designated parent ambassador. Implementation spans weeks four through eight, with the success indicators being confirmed partner commitment and scheduled job-shadow slots.

The seventh area addresses parent support and progress monitoring, with the objective of ensuring that families can resolve emerging barriers and track learner progress. Strategies include a monthly sixty-minute problem-solving huddle, a weekly Home-to-School Tracker with tick-box format, and a reflection form administered at the end of week eight. Parents and

SPED teachers share responsibility, with monthly huddles and weekly tracker submission serving as the success indicators.

These proposed outputs are grounded in the recommendations of Carter et al. (2023) and Barnard Brak et al. (2022), who emphasize cross-sector coordination as essential for effective workforce integration of persons with intellectual disabilities. By anchoring the Bridge to Work program in the parental narratives collected in this study, the proposals are ensured to be contextually responsive, family-centered, and practically implementable within the resource realities of public SPED programs in the Philippines. The program also aligns with the mandates of DepEd Order No. 44, Series of 2021, Republic Act No. 11650, and the provisions of the Magna Carta for Disabled Persons, situating it firmly within existing policy frameworks.

This chapter has demonstrated, through analysis of five parental narratives, that parents of learners with intellectual disabilities in a Philippine transition program manifest all six of Epstein's types of parental involvement in concrete, employment-oriented ways. Their engagement spans the creation of structured domestic learning environments, technology-mediated communication with teachers, emotional and logistical participation in school events, guided home reinforcement of vocational skills, collaborative and increasingly student-led goal-setting, and community advocacy directed at expanding employment opportunities. Five key themes emerged from the data: the use of home as a vocational training ground, consistency through practical communication strategies, emotional validation through participatory presence, shared and autonomy-respecting goal-setting, and community-level advocacy for inclusion. These themes converge on a central finding that sustained, multidimensional parental involvement constitutes a critical mechanism bridging classroom learning and actual employment, a conclusion supported by the literature of Garrels and Sigstad (2021), Jacob and Pillay (2023), Codd and Hewitt (2020), and Cosso et al. (2022), among others. The proposed Bridge to Work program operationalizes these findings into seven structured areas of intervention applicable across similar transition program contexts. These results contribute to the growing body of literature on parental involvement in special education and transition services, particularly within underrepresented Philippine settings, and lay the empirical and practical groundwork for the conclusions, recommendations, and implications presented in the subsequent chapter of this manuscript.

## CONCLUSION

This study examined the lived experiences of parents and guardians of learners with intellectual disabilities who are enrolled in transition programs focused on job placement, drawing on Epstein's Six Types of Parental Involvement as an analytical framework. The thematic analysis revealed that parental involvement in this context is comprehensive, multidimensional, and deeply intentional, extending well beyond conventional forms of school participation. The findings demonstrate that parents function as active collaborative partners across the home, school, and community environments, each of which plays a distinct and complementary role in preparing learners for vocational life.

With respect to parenting practices that support learning, the study confirmed that parents deliberately create home environments designed to reinforce the life and vocational skills introduced in school. Participants described integrating practical tasks such as cleaning, laundry, cooking, and household organization into their children's daily routines, reflecting an understanding that learning must extend beyond the classroom to achieve meaningful skill generalization. This proactive approach aligns with the principles of self-efficacy theory and is consistent with research affirming the positive relationship between supportive home environments and skill development in learners with intellectual disabilities. The regularity and

intentionality of these home-based practices were identified as critical factors contributing to the learners' growing autonomy and employment readiness.

Communication between home and school emerged as another foundational dimension of parental involvement. Parents reported a heavy reliance on digital platforms, particularly group messaging applications, to maintain consistent and timely contact with teachers. This mode of communication was described as accessible, responsive, and trust-building, enabling parents to remain informed about assignments, school activities, and their children's developmental progress. The alignment between home support and school goals that results from such communication creates a coherent and reinforcing learning environment for learners, a finding consistent with research validating technology-mediated parent-teacher partnerships in special education contexts.

Although formal volunteering opportunities were not uniformly described, parents consistently expressed the significance of their physical presence at school events such as performances and programs. Their attendance as an audience provided learners with meaningful emotional validation, boosting confidence, motivation, and a sense of belonging. This informal but powerful dimension of involvement supports earlier findings on the psychological benefits of parental presence in special education settings, affirming that even non-instructional forms of participation carry considerable developmental value.

The parents' role in reinforcing vocational tasks at home constitutes a deliberate and structured form of home-based learning support. Skills introduced at school, including culinary preparation, cleaning routines, and organizational tasks, were consistently practiced within domestic settings, reinforcing retention and enabling the transfer of competencies to real-world contexts. This pattern of guided practice outside the school environment is vital for ensuring that acquired skills become robust and applicable to future employment, consistent with research on home-based reinforcement and skill retention in individuals with intellectual disabilities.

Parental involvement in decision-making processes regarding their children's transition pathways was also a prominent finding. Parents described navigating the complex tension between fostering independence and ensuring their children's safety, a process that required ongoing negotiation and collaboration with educational staff. One particularly illustrative example involved a learner's desire to commute independently, which her parents supported by implementing structured safeguards such as typed notes for public transport drivers. This form of collaborative pathway planning reflects an informed and graduated approach to autonomy development, consistent with models that emphasize joint planning in supporting individuals with intellectual disabilities through the transition to adulthood.

At the community level, parents demonstrated active engagement in efforts to broaden their children's social inclusion and access to community-based opportunities. Accounts of supervised outings to public spaces reflected deliberate strategies to develop social competence and comfort in community settings. Beyond individual efforts, some parents articulated strong advocacy positions in favor of government-supported livelihood programs, inclusive hiring practices, and systemic policy reform. This broader advocacy orientation reflects an understanding that the effectiveness of transition programming is ultimately contingent upon the availability of genuine employment opportunities in the wider community, a perspective reinforced by research on community-based instruction and cross-sector collaboration in special education.

The learning progress documented among students enrolled in the transition program, particularly at Paaralang Pag-ibig at Pag-asa, further affirms the value of specialized programming supported by strong parental involvement. Parents reported observable

improvements across multiple domains, including foundational academic skills such as mathematics, communication abilities encompassing verbal expression, sign language, and the use of written notes, and practical daily living competencies. Most significantly, students demonstrated increased levels of independence, including aspirations and developing capacities for unsupervised mobility and social engagement. These gains reflect the transformative potential of holistic, vocationally oriented transition programs when implemented in close partnership with families.

The evidence gathered in this study leads to the conclusion that intensive and sustained parental involvement in transition programming is directly associated with positive outcomes for learners with intellectual disabilities. Parents who actively reinforce skills at home, maintain open communication with educators, participate in school events, engage in decision-making, and advocate for community resources collectively create integrated support networks that extend the impact of formal programming and facilitate genuine pathways to independence and employment.

Based on these conclusions, several recommendations are offered. For parents and guardians, it is recommended that home reinforcement of vocational and daily living skills be maintained consistently, that open and proactive communication with teachers through digital platforms be sustained, and that independence be fostered incrementally with appropriate safeguards and affirmation. Parents are further encouraged to continue advocating for community-based livelihood programs and inclusive employment policies at both local and national levels, ideally in collaboration with other families and advocacy organizations. For schools and educators, it is recommended that structured parent training programs be developed to guide families in effectively reinforcing curriculum-aligned skills at home, that digital communication systems be further optimized to ensure reliable and accessible information flow, and that parents be formally and consistently included in all transition planning processes. Schools are also encouraged to actively cultivate partnerships with local businesses, community organizations, and government agencies to expand post-graduation employment and livelihood opportunities for program graduates. For policymakers and community organizations, the study recommends the enactment and enforcement of inclusive employment policies that incentivize the hiring of individuals with intellectual disabilities, the establishment of community-based livelihood and supported employment centers, the launch of public awareness initiatives to reduce stigma and promote employer engagement, and the sustained allocation of funding for specialized transition programs that address the academic, vocational, social, and independent living needs of learners comprehensively. Together, these recommendations reflect the collective responsibility of families, educational institutions, and broader society in ensuring that learners with intellectual disabilities are afforded meaningful opportunities to achieve vocational success and dignified participation in adult life.

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