



Original Article

Perspectives of Filipino Families for youth with disability on school-to-work preparedness in Metro Manila, Philippines

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Abstract

Background: Youth with disabilities (YWDs) in countries like the Philippines face substantial employment barriers. While school-to-work (STW) transition programs and strong family support are crucial for their success, family involvement in planning is often insufficient. **Objectives:** This study aims to explore the perspectives of families of YWDs on STW transition in the Philippines and the differences in perspectives among families from varying socioeconomic backgrounds. **Methods:** This exploratory-descriptive qualitative study utilized semi-structured interviews with seven primary caregivers of YWDs in Metro Manila, representing diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. Thematic analysis was employed. **Results:** Three key themes emerged. First, families underscored the value of education in shaping STW transition outcomes, emphasizing its role in building literacy and practical life skills and highlighting the need for improved school support and educator training. Second, significant challenges in accessing support and transition services were reported, with financial constraints in obtaining government aid being a major hurdle regardless of socioeconomic status. Finally, caregivers stressed the family's vital role in transitioning YWDs for adulthood and work, particularly in fostering independence, nurturing strengths, and developing relevant skills for future employment. **Conclusion:** This study explored the Filipino families' shared perspectives on STW transition, highlighting the value of education, challenges in accessing support, and the family's role in the transition process. It emphasized the need for accessible and inclusive transition services addressing socioeconomic and cultural factors affecting YWDs and their families. Enhanced stakeholder collaboration is crucial in creating comprehensive and culturally relevant STW services that promote successful workforce integration of YWDs

Key Words: school-to-work transition, supported employment, youth with disabilities, inclusion, vocation

INTRODUCTION

A person with disability (PWD) is anyone who has a physical, mental, or learning impairment limiting daily participation.¹ For a child with disability (CWD), their condition often persists lifelong, necessitating continuous support as they age.² This support becomes crucial as they become youths who eventually need to transition from a student to a worker role.

School-to-work (STW) transition is a complex process for youth with disabilities (YWDs), encompassing significant physiological, social,

and emotional changes.³ It includes developing skills to access, secure, maintain, and successfully participate in productive employment.³ This includes navigating key milestones such as moving to postsecondary education, achieving independent living, pursuing vocational training, securing employment, and establishing social relationships. Research confirms that targeted interventions, including student-focused planning, career education, and vocational

training, can significantly improve post-school outcomes for YWDs.⁴

Despite the potential, PWDs generally experience marginalization in the community.⁵⁻⁶ While employment policies and legislation exist, inclusive employment practices remain challenging.⁷⁻⁸ For example, PPWDs often struggle to secure employment due to negative employer attitudes, concerns about accommodation costs, and a general lack of openness from employers to hire a PWD.⁹⁻¹⁰ Furthermore, the scarcity of available positions, a lack of access to career fairs, strict skill requirements, and the lower educational attainment of YWDs hinder their ability to find employment.¹¹ Even when hired, PWDs frequently receive contractual positions with unfair terms.¹²

Such disparities are magnified in low to middle-income countries. For example, about half of employed PWDs in the Philippines were classified as underemployed. Most were classified as vulnerable workers because they were either self-employed or wage workers without formal contracts,⁵ confirming PWDs' limited access to proper employment. However, those PWDs with better privileges, such as access to transition services, have been shown to achieve better work opportunities.^{8,13} Thus, empowering PWDs through employment requires inclusive job opportunities⁴ and accessible STW transition programs.⁶

Adequate preparation, training, and adequate social and environmental support facilitate successful YWD transition into the workforce.¹³⁻
¹⁴ The YWD's family plays a critical role in the STW transition process by offering financial, emotional, and social support. Families manage career opportunities for the YWD, collaborate with service systems, assist with job searches, and foster an independent living environment.¹⁴ Evidence shows that higher parental expectations correlate to greater independence of YWD in adulthood. Additionally, empowered parents of YWDs with high expectations for their children are more likely to participate in STW transition services.¹⁵⁻¹⁶ Early engagement means better preparation in transition planning,

equipping YWDs with necessary work placement skills.¹³⁻¹⁴

However, the STW transition can become stressful, especially for families with limited resources. Accessing the necessary services on time is crucial, as it reassures families of the available support system for the YWD. Caregivers also worry about planning for their child's future independence and ensuring the continuity of support after they are gone. Siblings may feel burdened by the unequal distribution of resources and the expected responsibility to assist with the transition process of the sibling with a disability. Ultimately, the family's resources and available options can significantly impact the YWD's overall STW transition.¹⁷

Theoretical Framework. This study is guided by Family Systems Theory, which highlights the interconnectedness among family members and how family dynamics shape individual growth.¹⁸⁻
¹⁹ This framework is crucial for understanding caregivers' roles and expectations in planning a youth's transition into adult roles and employment.

For families raising YWDs, the Family Systems Theory analyzes how parents and children interact to shape individual behaviors and contribute to family life. It examines how families process challenges and implement strategies tailored to their needs.²⁰ This systemic analysis, which views the family as a whole rather than just the sum of its individual parts, implies that a change in any one family member will inevitably trigger changes in others. As shown in Figure 1, the family systems framework encompasses four core components: characteristics, interactions, functions, and life cycle.^{18,21}

Family characteristics act as the initial input, including traits of the whole family (size, culture, socioeconomic status) and individual members (disability, health, coping styles). These traits and unique challenges fundamentally shape family engagement. Family interactions are the dynamic processes within the family and its subsystems, influenced by cohesion and adaptability and shaped by characteristics to produce functions. Family functions are the

output of these interactions, fulfilling essential roles like providing affection, promoting self-esteem, managing finances, and facilitating daily care, socialization, recreation, and education. These functions are directly influenced by the family's unique characteristics and interaction patterns. The family life cycle introduces change, including developmental stages and non-developmental events like illness or the birth of child with special needs, continually altering family interactions. These life cycle events continually alter family interactions.¹⁸⁻²¹

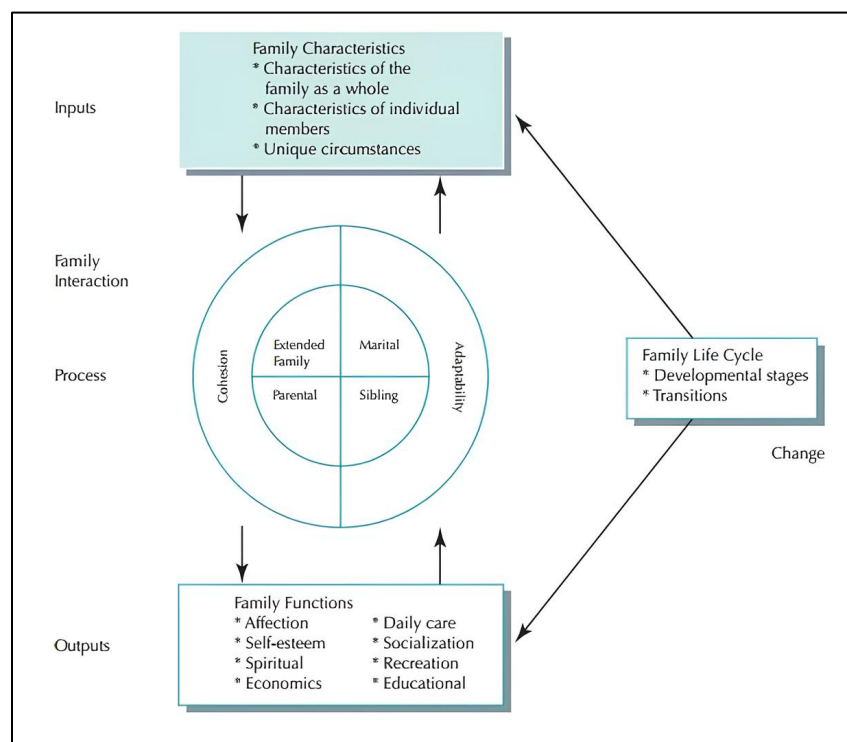
Applying this approach, families raising YWDs were analyzed as a system to understand how their complex interactions and behaviors influence their daily lives and the adjustments they make to function effectively.¹⁹ The presence of a child with special needs naturally prompts family adjustments to perceived challenges, reflecting the members' attitudes, beliefs, and coping strategies.

Research Gap. Despite the importance of the family's role in the STW transition of a YWD, research indicates that family involvement in transition planning and implementation remains

inadequate.²² Parents of YWDs reported a lack of understanding because of untimely information and the use of jargon by professionals working with the YWD. They also expressed feelings of being unsupported throughout the transition process.¹⁴ Therefore, examining the family's perspectives on the STW transition process is important, as these can influence how they prepare their child for employment.²³

Research Objectives. While there is available evidence examining the experiences of YWDs' families during the transition process, most of the studies were conducted in the Western context, mainly in high-income countries.²⁴⁻²⁶ Furthermore, there is limited evidence discussing the socioeconomic, societal, and cultural factors affecting the STW transition of a YWD. Therefore, the primary purpose of this study is to (1) explore the perspectives of families of youths with disabilities on the STW transition in the Philippines and (2) explore the differences in perspectives of low, middle, and high-income class families regarding STW transition programs.

Figure 1. Family Systems Framework: Emphasis on Family Characteristics



METHODS

Ethical Consideration. The study was approved by the University of Santo Tomas-College of Rehabilitation Sciences Ethics Review Committee with Protocol Number SI-2023-009 last February 29, 2024.

Research Design. An exploratory-descriptive, qualitative study design was used to understand the perspectives of families regarding the STW transition for YWDs. This approach was suitable for capturing participants' complex and multifaceted experiences,²⁷ allowing them to share insights in a field with limited existing literature.²⁸ It provided a holistic view of their experiences and the socioeconomic factors influencing the transition process.²⁹

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria. Participants were selected using purposive sampling,³⁰ focusing on "primary caregivers" responsible for YWDs' well-being, including extended family, legal guardians, and employed caregivers. To explore income-based differences, participants represented low, middle, and upper-income levels, based on the Philippine Statistics Authority's³¹ Family Income Expenditure Survey. Caregivers with experience in transition services were excluded to ensure unbiased insights into

initial expectations and concerns. Table 1 lists the inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Data Collection Tools. A questionnaire adapted from the Transition Quality Indicator Survey (TQIS)³² was distributed to assess the eligibility, as permitted by the original author. The TQIS includes nine quality indicators and associated sub-indicators designed to understand the experiences of YWDs, their family members, caregivers, and transition stakeholders.³³ The researchers specifically adapted the family survey component of the TQIS, with a Tagalog version available for non-English proficient caregivers.

The interview questions were developed and validated. The questions were adapted from a study on parental expectations of developmentally delayed children³⁴ and validated through a Google Form pilot test with a parent of a YWD. Based on the feedback from pilot testing, probing questions were added.

Eligible participants were approached face-to-face to explain the study and to obtain informed consent. They were contacted via mobile, landline, or email for the one-on-one interview. Seven participants met the inclusion criteria. No participant has refused or dropped from the study.

Table 1. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion	Exclusion
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be a primary caregiver of a YWD for at least 5 years • Be able to show proof of documentation for socioeconomic status such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With an ITR, Income Certificate, or Payslip • If not available, at least a Certificate of Indigency or a letter from the local municipality/barangay declaring socioeconomic status • YWDs must be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15 - 29 years old • With valid PWD ID or Medical Certificate • Attends private or public school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be a primary caregiver of a YWD who has undergone any type of STW Transition Services

One-on-one interviews (30-60 minutes) were conducted onsite (at participants' homes or rehabilitation clinics) or via Zoom, based on

preference. YWDs were sometimes present during onsite interviews. Participants were encouraged to use headphones and

microphones, with attention to lighting and cameras for identity verification and security. Confidentiality was maintained by anonymizing participants (e.g., "Participant 1"). All interviews were recorded.

Interviews were conducted by either one male and one female student researcher or two female student researchers, with no other individuals present. To ensure methodological rigor, the student researchers, trained in clinical interviewing, were aware of their interest in the topic and took steps to remain neutral. Open-ended questions were used to elicit authentic responses, and were responsible for recording the interviews. Researchers also engaged in observations and member checking. Data saturation was reached after seven interviews, confirmed by comparing responses to objectives. Thus, only one round of interviews was conducted.

Data Analysis. Thematic analysis was used to identify recurring patterns and themes in the participants' responses.³⁵ An inductive approach following Braun and Clarke's six-step framework³⁶ was applied. Two student researchers independently coded the transcripts and then collaborated with the two faculty authors to compare and reconcile codes. Discrepancies were resolved through consensus discussions to ensure consistency and rigor. NVivo software was used to organize and track the codes.

All interviews were transcribed, translated, and coded. To explore how socioeconomic factors influenced perspectives on STW transitions, researchers repeatedly reviewed the data to identify emerging patterns. Instead of a formal coding tree, themes and subthemes were developed iteratively, based directly on participant narratives. Transcripts were returned to participants for accuracy checking, and summarized findings were later shared with participants for feedback to validate whether the identified themes aligned with their experiences.

The two faculty authors, experienced in using NVivo and qualitative research, supervised and trained the student researchers throughout the data analysis process. Identified themes were reviewed and verified by the entire research

team to ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings. These methodological considerations ensured that the perspectives gathered represented diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, providing a foundation for thematic analysis.

RESULTS Seven participants took part in the study. All were mothers aged between 41 and 56 years. Their YWD children were mostly 16-20 years old, diagnosed with developmental disabilities or cerebral palsy. Families resided in various Metro Manila cities: four from low-income households (Tondo, Manila), two from middle-income (Sampaloc, Manila, Quezon City), and one from high-income (Quezon City). This socioeconomic diversity provided broad insights into STW transition experiences. Table 2 contains the demographic characteristics of the participants.

Through thematic analysis, three overarching themes emerged, reflecting Filipino families' perspectives on STW transition for YWDs: *(1) the value of education in shaping STW transition outcomes, (2) the challenges families face in accessing support and transition services, and (3) the critical role families play in preparing their YWDs for adulthood and work.* These themes highlight the interrelationship between cultural values, socioeconomic conditions, and systemic support structures. All participant quotations to illustrate the findings were translated from Tagalog to English.

Value of Education in Shaping School-to-Work Transition Outcomes. The first theme described how the caregivers emphasized their child's education as contributing to YWD's ability to work in the future. The following three subthemes include *(1) the inherent value of formal education as the foundation for future work, (2) the role of schools in the transition process, and (3) the need for structured STW transition programs in schools.* The first subtheme focused on the caregivers' views on the inherent value of education for YWDs, particularly for securing essential literacy skills and long-term opportunities, including entrepreneurship. Despite reluctance or perceived limitations, caregivers believed formal

education was vital for future employment. Participant 5 stressed the importance of foundational skills: *"Even if he does not like it, we force him to go to school. So as he ages, he won't have difficulty reading and writing; those are important"*. While some caregivers acknowledged the value of life experience, Participant 5 still emphasized the need for formal education for business aspirations: *"Others may sometimes discourage going to college, saying that experience will teach you. But it's still important to go to college, especially if you want to have a business"*. This reflects caregivers'

Table 2. Participant Characteristics

Participant	Age	Gender	Years of being a caregiver to YWD	Child's Medical Diagnosis	Child's Age/Sex	Awareness of SWT	Location	SES
1	51	F	16	Dyslexia	16/M	Not aware	Tondo	Low
2	42	F	18	Intellectual Disability	18/M	Aware	Quezon City	High
3	38	F	18	Intellectual Disability	18/M	Aware	Tondo	Low
4	48	F	16	Intellectual Disability	16/M	Aware	Sampaloc Manila	Lower Middle
5	41	F	17	ADHD	17M	Aware	Quezon City	Lower Middle
6	56	F	20	Cerebral Palsy Diplegia	20	Aware	Quezon City	Low
7	52	F	20	Cerebral Palsy Quadriplegia	20	Aware	Quezon City	Low

classmates are doing should also be given to him so he can experience it, too."

Caregivers also emphasized the collaboration between the educators and members of the interdisciplinary team. They noted a disconnect between the YWD's program and what was needed at home. Participant 2 mentioned, *"The school should also be aware of what is happening at home, not just giving random assignments. We cannot do follow-ups at home. The key to success relies at home"*. Participant 4 stated, *"They always advise me to apply the things done in therapy...which I comply with....so that he will learn more"*.

belief that formal education is essential for YWDs' future independence and work.

The second subtheme highlighted the caregivers' call for increased educator training and inclusive practices in schools to prepare YWDs for adulthood and work. They emphasized ongoing awareness and support, advocating for schools to assist YWDs throughout their educational journey. They also stressed that YWDs should experience diverse activities, even if different from peers, to prepare for life after school. Participant 7 noted, *"The things his*

Furthermore, caregivers called for comprehensive training for all school staff. Participant 5 stated, *"Not just one, but everyone in school, even the janitors, should be given seminars."* Participant 6 added, *"They should have more seminars. So parents of CWDs will become more aware that this is not just until high school"*. This underlined caregivers' desire for schools to be well-equipped to provide inclusive and informed support for YWDs, addressing their unique needs, especially as they transition from school to work.

The last subtheme highlighted caregivers' strong desire for their children to secure employment after education, emphasizing the critical role of

STW transition programs. Caregivers expressed the importance of transitioning from education to employment, with hopes for office or government positions. Participant 5 noted, *"He is aware that after he finishes schooling, he needs to go to work,"* which reflects a recognition of the need for post-education employment. Participant 7 expressed their hope for their child to be accepted and offered opportunities in the workforce, stating, *"I hope that he will get accepted after he finishes Grade 12. I hope he gets employed by the government"*. This highlights the need for schools to have structured STW transition programs to facilitate such transitions and improve the chances for long-term employment.

Challenges in Accessing Support and Transition Services. This theme focused on external factors hindering caregivers and their YWDs from accessing needed support and services for STW transition. Participants described major challenges, including (1) *financial limitations due to low household income*, (2) *limited accessibility and benefits of government programs for YWDs*, and (3) *the need to seek alternative sources of support*. These subthemes, centered on financial strain and inadequate government assistance, highlight how external barriers impede YWDs' transition to adulthood and employment.

Despite the differences in socioeconomic status, all families faced financial challenges in accessing support and services. Participant 2, who belonged to the high-income SES, shared, *"It's difficult. We also have another child to take care of; then, we need to bring him to therapy; although it's just once a week, it still has a huge impact. And he still has other needs - he has maintenance (medications)"*. This reflects the financial impact of a child with special needs on other family members, with fund reallocation covering therapies and specialized educational programs, reducing resources for other family members.

Many caregivers discussed challenges in meeting basic living needs, with incomes insufficient to cover essential expenses. Participant 5 in the lower middle-income SES remarked on the inadequacies of Philippine wages, saying, *"The*

government says that the salary of a minimum wage worker is enough for them to be fed in a day. That is not true for us; that is not enough". This illustrates the gap between minimum wage and living costs, making it hard for families to cover basic needs plus disability-related expenses.

Participant 3 in the low-income SES shared, *"Our finances...it's really difficult because my husband is not earning a minimum wage; his salary is not even within the minimum. He receives Php 500 in a day. We have to budget that amount for our household needs. You will pay for the water, electricity, all of that"*. This highlights low-income families' financial strain, as they must carefully allocate limited budgets across essential needs. Competing priorities often make educational expenses difficult to sustain, leading to compromises that impact learning opportunities and academic success.

Despite these financial challenges, caregivers remained committed to providing a comprehensive learning experience for their YWDs, even when hindered by financial limitations. Caregivers sought financial assistance through various means, such as applying for a PWD ID or an indigency certificate. When unsuccessful, they found alternative ways to meet their children's educational needs. Participant 5 also shared that due to financial constraints, they told their children, *"Go to a public school first because this is only what we can afford. Once you finish Senior High School, let your sister study next; we cannot afford to have you all go to school at the same time"*.

The results also highlighted how government programs' inaccessibility and limited benefits significantly affected caregivers' ability to manage situations and support education. Caregivers stressed the need for more accessible, inclusive educational and STW services but often faced lengthy, complicated processes. Participant 2, who belonged to the high-income SES, expressed frustration with the system, saying, *"I was once able to receive assistance from DSWD, but I did not want to do it again for the second time. There was a long queue! I just got lucky the first time"*. This highlights the challenges caregivers face with lengthy application

processes, which can discourage future attempts to seek aid.

Additionally, caregivers noted bureaucratic obstacles such as documentation requirements, limited slots, and fixed criteria that restricted access to essential programs. Participant 5, belonging to the lower middle income SES, shared the limitations imposed by government aid programs for children with disabilities, saying, *"He received SSDD in high school. He does not have it anymore now, since it was just up to Grade 10."* This limitation, among others, influenced caregivers' decisions about their children's educational paths. For instance, Participant 5 decided against enrolling their child in a private senior high school due to concerns over losing government assistance, saying, *"If he goes to a private senior high school, we might be given decreased or no assistance at all."* In contrast, Participant 5 appreciated how private institutions can provide opportunities when government programs fall short, sharing, *"Maya Foundation has helped us get a scholarship and be able to study in St. John's."*

Caregivers shared similar sentiments regarding STW transitioning regardless of socioeconomic status. However, low-income families faced greater financial strain, limiting access to specialized support. Conversely, while high-income families possessed greater resource availability, they still encountered challenges related to inclusive education. Middle-income families balanced financial constraints with comprehensive support desires, often relying on government aid and community resources. These findings highlight the need for socioeconomically inclusive support systems for equitable access to essential services for all YWDs.

Family's Role in Transitioning YWDs for Adulthood and Work. The third theme encompassed the caregivers' perspectives and their role in STW transition programs, which should be focused on building and utilizing the skills of YWDs to facilitate their successful transition to work. Three subthemes fell under this theme: (1) *fostering independence at home*, (2) *positive family expectations and resilience*, and (3) *honing the YWD's interests and strengths*.

The first subtheme explored the caregivers' desire for their YWDs to develop independence in performing daily tasks and navigating the world safely. Because such skills are not readily targeted in schools, caregivers take on the role of teaching their children how to do these activities and practice them during real-life situations. For example, caregivers valued their YWDs' ability to return home independently if left in an unfamiliar place, reflecting their YWD's self-awareness and autonomy. Participant 6 noted, *"If I leave him in one place, and he knows how to go back home, he will. That's what I want him to learn"*.

Participant 6 also shared that their YWD had become self-sufficient in areas like feeding and bathing, saying, *"He can eat and dress all by himself when at home. I trained him to do things independently, but of course, not everything is perfect yet"*. They emphasized safety measures they take to balance providing the YWD the experience of being independent and able to do such activities safely: *"He can do it! Because at home, I train him...I leave him alone at home...I send messages, I call him"*. These examples reflect a broader trend among caregivers seeking to foster independence for the YWDs, highlighting their caregiver's role in this process.

Caregivers also stressed the significance of their own resilience and belief in their YWD's strengths. Caregivers narrated how they should focus on their child's abilities and talents rather than worrying about limitations. Participant 5 encouraged, *"Lessen the worry then find what your child can do, know what things he is good at,"* supported by Participant 6's statement, *"If the parents have a good perspective...then his child can succeed"*. The caregivers strongly believed that a positive outlook and confidence in a child's potential were key to their development and success in adult life.

Additionally, caregivers narrated aspirations for their children's future careers, matching potential with skills, strengths, and interests. This was evident in their strength-based approach to employment preparation. Participant 5 highlighted their child's practical skills, such as home management, cooking, and childcare, stating: *"He is good at cooking, he is*

good at taking care of children - he is fond of children. He is good at taking care of our house." By recognizing these strengths, caregivers aimed to guide their children toward employment opportunities that align with these capabilities, such as caregiving or domestic work.

Participant 6 focused on their child's interest in technology, noting, *"He knows how to do editing. That's what I will ask him to get by Grade 11 and 12, ICT."* This comment underscores the caregiver's intention to equip their child with the necessary skills for future careers. This approach recognizes the child's strengths and aims to match these skills with appropriate transition paths to enhance employability in the market.

Discussion

The study revealed shared perspectives of Filipino caregivers, highlighting the role of the family and the need for their active involvement in the STW transition of YWDs. Findings align with existing literature emphasizing inadequate caregiver involvement and a mismatch between school targets and family/YWD interests. To facilitate successful transition planning, caregivers should engage early, prepare for the transition adequately, and participate actively throughout the process.¹³⁻¹⁴

Socioeconomic and Systemic Barriers. This study also demonstrated how families experience different barriers to accessing opportunities based on socioeconomic status. Aligning with the 'family characteristics' concept under the Family Systems Framework, this finding emphasizes socioeconomic status as an input contributing to family interactions and functions. Financial constraints pose significant obstacles for many low-income Filipino families of YWDs, corroborating previous findings within the Philippines³⁷ and other Southeast Asian nations like Malaysia and Indonesia.³⁸ These low-income families often report difficulties accessing specialized educational services and vocational training due to the unaffordable costs. Conversely, higher-income families, despite greater access to resources, still encounter challenges related to social discrimination and exclusion.³⁹ The limited availability of support

services and work opportunities adds stress and burden for caregivers.¹⁴ Thus, a family's financial capability can facilitate or hinder successful transition planning; parents consider both program quality and affordability.

Moreover, the structural and systemic challenges identified reflect broader inadequacies in policies and service coordination of STW programs.³⁸ Southeast Asian regional frameworks like the ASEAN Work Plan on Youth (2021–2025)⁴⁰ emphasize the need for stronger school-community linkages and coordinated transition services to improve employability outcomes for youth, including those with disabilities.³⁸ In the Philippine context, greater policy enforcement, inter-agency coordination, and active advocacy by professional organizations are needed to ensure that the rights and needs of YWDs are met effectively.

The Influence of Cultural Values. Beyond economic factors, the study also revealed how deeply rooted cultural values influence Filipino caregivers' beliefs and actions regarding transition planning.⁴¹ One significant cultural element is *"kapwa,"* or shared identity, reinforcing the view that the individual is inseparable from the community or family unit. This concept of interconnectedness drives caregivers' strong involvement in decision-making and their desire for YWDs to contribute to the family and society eventually. The transition to employment is not only a personal milestone for YWDs but also a family accomplishment, reinforcing the collective orientation of Filipino households.

Other relevant cultural dimensions are the concept of *"hiya"* (modesty and concern for how one is perceived by others) and *"pakikisama"* (maintaining harmonious relationships). Such cultural practices may affect how families interact with schools and professionals, leading to reluctance to express dissatisfaction or request accommodations out of fear of being seen as demanding. These values are reflective characteristics of the family as a whole, which act as an input to the family system. This input shapes how family members engage and influence 'family interaction.' This cultural tendency can inadvertently hinder caregiver

advocacy and open dialogue, even when services fall short of expectations. This highlights the need for educators and professionals to adopt culturally responsive teaching approaches that respect Filipino social norms while encouraging self-regulated learning⁴² for the YWD and open, collaborative planning with families regardless of instruction medium.

Another critical insight is the caregivers' strong emphasis on formal education as a cornerstone for YWD independence and future employment. This theme aligns with families' cultural values in the Philippines,⁴³ where education is a key determinant of social mobility, dignity, and success. Filipino parents want their children to learn academic concepts and basic literacy skills, which they perceive as necessary for transition to future work. Studies from Vietnam and Thailand similarly show families viewing academic achievement as central to career readiness, believing it legitimizes social standing and workforce potential.⁴⁴ Filipino caregivers, like their counterparts in neighboring countries, perceive academic achievement as essential for future work opportunities. As with Eastern culture, education is associated with a person's social class, believing that high educational attainment equates to success and job security.⁴⁵ Thus, the family's cultural values and expectations affect how open and receptive they are in accepting the services provided to their child.

The Need for Life Skills Training and Individualized STW Transition Programs.

This study also emphasized the need for vocational training and practical life skills during the STW transition process. They expressed that YWDs should be equipped with independence, confidence, and functional skills beyond academic achievement to succeed in real-world work environments.⁴⁶ Caregivers highlighted the need to maximize the YWD's interests and skills in choosing possible work opportunities in the future. This aligns with a strengths-based model, which focuses on maximizing a person's skills and interests rather than their limitations. Evidence supports that such an approach leads to better long-term employment and independent living outcomes.⁴⁷

Furthermore, caregivers mentioned the value of independence training—covering basic life skills, social competence, and communication, aside from honing specific skill sets for potential work. These are key predictors of post-school outcomes where evidence shows that basic skills for independence, higher cognition, communication, and social skills are associated with an increased likelihood of employment and independent living^{16,47} Additionally, PWDs who are highly motivated are more likely to feel self-efficacy, autonomy, and competence at work.⁴⁸ Therefore, nurturing personal interests and strengths, alongside systemic support, is essential for success. Such findings align with the family functions within the framework, emphasizing how families fulfill their crucial roles in promoting their child's development for a successful transition.

Finally, caregivers advocated for tailored STW transition programs for YWDs and appropriate training for educators and other professionals. They called for more inclusive school practices, teacher sensitivity, and individualized structured programs to meet diverse YWD needs. These insights reflect the continued gaps in transition services in the Philippines—where even when programs are available, professionals often lack adequate training to tailor support to each learner's needs.⁴⁹⁻⁵⁰ Capacity-building through such training will enable YWDs to receive the guidance and accommodations needed for successful workforce transition and long-term independence. This aligns with the Family Systems framework's understanding of how external supports influence family interactions and outcomes, highlighting the importance of flexible, tailored services for unique family needs.

Limitations & Recommendations. The study has several limitations. While the study explored family perspectives on STW transition, the study did not extensively examine how these perspectives impact YWDs' opportunities for independence, skill acquisition, and job placement. Although it briefly mentioned that empowered caregivers and positive outlooks can influence future circumstances, the specific cause-and-effect relationship was not explored in detail. Additionally, the dynamics between

caregivers and YWDs, crucial for a child's transition, were not thoroughly investigated. Emotional adjustments and family dynamics are crucial components of a child's transition,²¹ and these aspects were not thoroughly investigated in this research. The study recommends that future research delve deeper into the specific cause-and-effect relationships between family perspectives, caregiver-YWD dynamics, emotional adjustments, and YWDs' outcomes regarding independence, skill acquisition, and successful job placement.

Implications. This study offers insights into Filipino caregivers' perspectives on YWD STW transition. These perspectives include the caregivers' concerns and insights that can guide relevant stakeholders in designing more effective programs for YWDs during their transition process. Integrating the firsthand experiences and diverse perspectives of Filipino caregivers from different socioeconomic backgrounds can assist in the development of more accessible and appropriate transition services for YWDs, moving beyond theory.

The findings can enhance educational institutions' understanding of YWDs and their families' challenges in accessing services. To address these challenges, educational institutions should implement Individualized Transition Plans for YWDs, ensuring personalized support of the YWD. An interdisciplinary team with a transition coordinator can bridge communication between students, families, and employers, streamlining the process. Schools should also regularly train professionals to better equip them with knowledge and skills to support YWDs. Schools and vocational training centers should mandate training on evidence-based transition strategies for YWDs.

Furthermore, the findings may raise awareness among government officials about the need for stronger enforcement of laws protecting PWD rights that can initiate policy changes. Government agencies could establish monitoring systems with regular audits and penalty frameworks for institutions failing to meet work accessibility and inclusion standards. Collaborative efforts with stakeholders, starting

from schools, are vital for improvements in policy and practice.

Finally, the study advocates for strengthened collaboration among all stakeholders, including educational institutions, government agencies, families, and YWDs. Such partnerships can facilitate the development of comprehensive support systems and effective STW transition services tailored to the needs of YWDs, ultimately promoting their success in the workforce.

Conclusion

This study examined Filipino families' perspectives on YWD STW transition and how these vary across socioeconomic backgrounds. Findings suggest that while families across all income levels recognize the importance of education and skill development in preparing YWDs for employment, their concerns and priorities differ. Lower-income families emphasized financial constraints and limited access to structured STW programs, while middle- and high-income families highlighted concerns about long-term employability, workplace accommodations, and the need for guided transition services. Despite these differences, a shared concern among families was the need for more substantial institutional support, clearer transition pathways, and greater collaboration between schools and employers.

These findings contribute to a deeper understanding of socioeconomic factors' role in shaping family perspectives on the STW transition. However, as this study focuses on a specific set of participants, future research is needed to examine these perspectives in broader contexts and to assess how existing policies and programs address the challenges faced by YWDs and their families during this critical transition and advocate for policy improvements that address the unique challenges faced by YWDs and their families.

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Individual Author's Contributions

All authors contributed equally to this study protocol.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interests.

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