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Accessibility to Education and Vocational Training of Women and Girls with Disabilities in Vietnam

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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate how to strengthen Vietnamese women and girls with disabilities (WGDs) to access their rights and opportunities in education and vocational training. To fulfill the objectives of the article, the author implemented the collection, analysis, and interpretation of the data by desk review and semi-structured interview. The theoretical framework of the research was covered by the concept of intersectionality and three models of disabilities, including the social model, the identity model, and the rights-based model. The researcher employed three case study research approaches to investigate the challenges encountered by GWDs in Vietnam and their strategies for addressing these impediments. Furthermore, the author discussed the significance of education for WGDs. Accordingly, the study used a sample of three case studies, including two women with disabilities (WWDs) and one girl with disabilities (GWDs) through the convenience sampling method. This research was based on three case studies, and some key factors were found that can profoundly impact the paths of WGDs in Vietnam in obtaining their opportunities and rights to education. Nevertheless, the research demonstrated some critical factors for WGDs to get schooling and careers. This investigation offered no claim to completely generalize the complicated situation of opportunities and rights of marginalized WGDs in Vietnam.

Keywords: *Empowerment, Women and girls with disabilities, Education, Vocational Training, Accessibility*

Introduction

According to UN Women (2017) all women with impairments, including teenage girls and young women, are accounted for in the term “women and girls with disabilities.” Thus, this research regarded GWDs as representing young or relatively young women with some types of disabilities. On the other hand, the image of GWDs can also shed light on the schooling time in the earlier stages of women’s lives. In addition, the World Health Survey reported that the number of cases of disabilities is approximately sixty percent higher in women than in men (World Health Organization, 2011).

Moreover, multiple challenges stop WGDs from approaching their fundamental rights due to the shortage of resources and reasonable accommodation, which creates discrimination and social stigma towards WGDs (UN Women, 2017). In other words, in developing countries, stereotypes and biases against WGDs have become burdens stopping them from fulfilling physiological, economic, and social functions adequately. Double stigmas emerge from negative perceptions towards WGDs based on the intersectionality of their gender and disabilities. This research suggested that initiatives of education and vocational training for PWDs, and especially WGDs, play an essential role in engaging them in the sustainable development goals of UN Women. Given Article 24 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights (UNCR) of PWDs, the rights of education for PWDs were efficiently mentioned with multiple dimensions related to acknowledging their rights to an education free from discrimination and biases. Ensuring reasonable accommodations; practical knowledge and skills training for teachers; social and life skills guidance and approach to vocational training; adult education and lifelong learning based on equality (2006). The research also proposed that education is critical to boosting WGDs in Vietnam to break barriers and bias and gradually empower themselves. As Dr. Kumari noted the importance of education for WGDs as follows:

Education is the key to the empowerment and advancement of women and girls with disabilities as it provides access to information, enables them to communicate their needs, interests, and experiences, brings them into contact with other students, increases their confidence, and encourages them to assert their rights and also paves their way to financial and economic security and independence (Kumari, 2020, p. 2454).

UNICEF Vietnam (2019) reported that a significant proportion of the population in the whole country is disabled. Nearly 6.2 million Vietnamese, or more than 7% of the population aged two and above, are disabled; meanwhile, an extra 13% - up to 12 million, are part of families with people who suffer from impairments—the more the population ages, the higher the percentages. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) was signed by Vietnam in 2007 and approved without any objections in 2014. The Law of Persons with Disabilities No. 51/2010/QH12 was passed by the National Assembly, highlighting the responsibilities and obligations of educational organizations and school settings to ensure reasonable accommodation for PWDs. Education organizations are prohibited from refusing entrance applications for PWDs (National Assembly, 2010). Phan et al. (2020) noted that “The Law on Persons with Disabilities has brought many positive changes to the lives of PWDs, better protecting their fundamental rights and legitimate interests” (p.3). On the other hand, PWDs find it very hard to engage thoroughly in the educational process due to the inaccessible classroom environment, which does not provide lifts, aids for learning (reading software), or sign language (Phan et al., 2020).

This study investigated how WGDs in Vietnam have faced challenges in accessing education and vocational training and how they have fought for their rights through three case study analyses. Furthermore, this research explored which factors involved in empowering the education rights of WGDs in Vietnam. The lived experiences in pursuing higher education and vocational training of the three above WGDs reflected the overall picture of their marginalization due to both gender inequality and perceptions of disabilities rooted in the local cultural context. All of them are on a journey of battle to overcome the biases and stereotypes and become better versions of themselves daily.

Literature Review

This research applied the concept of intersectionality to investigate the multiple root causes preventing WGDs from effectively accessing education and vocational training. Psychologists, sociologists, and social workers employ the intersectionality approach to explore how PWDs face stigma and prejudice based on a variety of factors. Taddei (2019) has previously stated that a combination of personal and environmental factors exposes WGDs to multiple hurdles. Furthermore, to fully comprehend the complex relationship between gender, disability, and education and to effectively empower WGDs for education and vocational training, Nguyen and her collaborators actively adopted an intersectional approach as an academic lens. Nguyen et al., 2015 considered that carrying a disability was not equivalent to being the victim of discrimination. Due to Vietnam's innovation (Doimoi), industrialization converted the individual into an adapted and productive worker in the global economy. It generated the "normal" and kept the "difference" out—girls with intellectual challenges against this idea of modernism (Nguyen & Stienstra, 2021). Because the girls were regarded as useless employees (Nguyen & Stienstra, 2021), as a result, the socioeconomic status of their families and other forms of prejudgment were taken into account when evaluating the sufferings of WGDs in Vietnam (Nguyen et al., 2015). The study of Nguyen et al. (2021) adjusted the term "intersectionality" along with participatory visual research to bring the theories and methodologies to empower the educational rights of girls and women with disabilities. Through visual interventions of researchers, WGDs had great opportunities to express their attitudes, perspectives, and opinions about exclusive education. They can share and communicate their authentic voice to officials and policy-makers to be understood and heard. This intervention model should be popularized in Vietnamese and global contexts to bring positive changes for WGDs. On the other hand, the research team can apply different techniques like role play and group counseling therapy to help them share in-depth thoughts of needs, motivations, and actions to access their educational rights effectively.

In Vietnam, the studies related to WGDs in terms of accessing the rights of education and vocational training are not popular. Pham and Nguyen (2022) presented their findings that the WGDs were discriminated against and stigmatized because of their disabilities, as reported by the owners. Additionally, all of the WGDs of that research indicated that vocational guidance is essential to them since it helps them to earn.

This critical study, however, did not study in-depth the levels and types of discrimination in WGDs' lived experiences. Moreover, a survey of Sexual abuse towards WGDs in Hanoi and Danang, Vietnam, recorded that 4 in 10 WGDs experienced sexual abuse at least once; 11.7% of WGDs were forced to have sex, and 59% of them never shared what they have been gone through and only 1 case reported to the authority. 80.4% of participants never participated in any educational way to provide training knowledge and skills in prevention and coping with sexual harassment (The United Nations Democracy Fund, 2018). The findings of that research suggested that education toward WGDs is not only about training in academic knowledge but is also related to the guidance of confronting sexual abuse. Similar to other Asian countries, Vietnam also considers disability as a supernatural recompense for previous crimes by parents or ancestors, creating feelings of shame and guilt for the disabled family member (International Labour Organization, 2008). Besides, due to the wrong perceptions among employees, even those with slight impairment have trouble accessing schooling and jobs (Bogenschutz et al., 2021). Thus, inefficient learning and a shortage of credentials for professional training were frequently viewed as challenges to participating in the industry (Palmer et al., 2015). Furthermore, one of the main features of The Law of Persons with Disabilities in Vietnam was highlighted:

The definition of PWDs in Vietnam mainly focuses on visible physical impairments, reflecting the medical model, excluding people with cognitive and other less visual or difficult-to-determine impairments (Phan et al., 2020, p.3).

In other words, the medical model regarded disability as a disease needing treatment. This study, therefore, approached three different models of PWDs, including the social model, identity model, and the rights-based model, to adopt constructive ways of thinking and enhance the image of WGDs in Vietnam. D'Alessio (2011) stated that the social model of disabilities originated in response to the limitations of the medical model of disability, and the British disability movement greatly influenced it between 1960 and 1970. This model supposed that some individuals may have some obstacles in physical, mental, or intellectual disorders. Nevertheless, these features cannot lead to severe challenges if society behaves constructively towards PWDs. This study applied the social model of disability to illustrate how GWDs are persecuted by society in terms of accessing their education and training. On the other hand, according to the identity model, disability, such as gender or ethnicity, is an indication of belonging to a minority group... Plus, based on the identity model, disability is established by a certain kind of lived experience – a social and political life impacted by a societal structure that was not connected with disabled people in mind... (Brewer et al., 2012). This model is one of the most humanitarian approaches that strengthen vulnerable groups, including WGDs. Last, implementing the obligations designated by relevant agencies and organizations allows PWDs to approach their rights successfully. Even though the social model can be applied to explain why many PWDs stay in poverty, the human rights model brings positive suggestions for strengthening PWDs' quality of life (Degener, 2017). This model is essential to bring positive changes in the awareness of WGDs, their families, communities, and societies about their rights to approach education and vocational guidance.

Research Methodology

Convenience sampling was utilized in the research methodology. The present study described how WGDs engage in education through three case studies, including two women and one girl with three types of disabilities. The research adjusted a qualitative multiple-case study design to comprehend more lived experiences on the journey of occupying higher education and vocational training of different female individuals under different contexts. The researcher can analyze within and across contexts using several or collective case studies. We are supposed to investigate the parallels and distinctions when evaluating multiple case studies (Baxter et al., 2008). Yin (2003) illustrated the usage of numerous case studies as “(a) predicts similar results (a literal replication) or (b) predicts contrasting results but for predictable reasons (a theoretical replication)” (p.47).

This work involved three different WGDs in a district of Hanoi City, Bac Giang Province, and Phu Tho Province. All of these provinces and cities are located in Northern Vietnam. Three semi-interviews were conducted over two days. Before conducting in-depth interviews, the researcher obtained informed consent from interviewees. In total, three case studies engaged in semi-interview interviews, and the voices of WGDs were included and reported in this article. All of them stayed in villages in North Vietnam. Additionally, they developed their disabilities at very young ages, including birth and early childhood. Three participants were willing to share their experiences in education and vocational training and contribute to the research results. Meanwhile, they were enthusiastic about learning and actively volunteered to support marginalized individuals in communities. Since long distance, online interviews were implemented. An in-depth interview instruction was established to develop interviews in Vietnamese. Three WGDs were asked a list of open-ended questions to understand their perspectives and explore their lived experiences related to their engagement in education and vocational training. The participants provided their demographic information, previous schooling, and experiences, opinions concerning discrimination and stigma against education and vocational training toward WGDs, and how education changed their lives. After interviewing, the researcher processed the information and sent it again to the participants for correction. All participants were offered confidentiality from the research results. Accordingly, an ethical consideration was brought about.

Analysis & Findings

This study examined and discussed three case studies, including one GWD and two WWDs in multiple predefined codes, demographic data, explanations for discrimination, and opportunities to make them accessible for education and career training.

Demographic Characteristics

Three case studies come from three different locations in North Vietnam. The age of the two WWDs referred to in Case Study Two (T.D.H) and Case Study Three (T.G.H) is 42 years old, and both of them had physical impairments. The names of the three case studies were abbreviated to ensure their confidentiality.

Case Study Two has three elder sisters who have already had stable jobs. Case Study Three was born into a family with three other siblings: two elder sisters and one younger brother. Her first sister was married, and she is a farmer. Her second sister also has a physical disability, and she is already married. Her brother works in a government institution in Bac Giang province. Her mother was a farmer, and her father was a lecturer at the Hanoi University of Sciences and Technologies. Meanwhile, the girl in Case Study One (N.N.T.T) suffered from another type of disability. She has an elder sister and a brother, who have already married. Her sister works in a district hospital, and her brother works for Information Technology Company. She has good relationships with all of her family members.

Their disabilities date back to their very early childhood. In detail, Case Study One experienced lymphangioma and lymphocele when she was very young age, which made her left face distorted, and later, she went through neurilemmoma. She has gone through surgery for the 21st time. Case Study Two dwelled on congenital scoliosis. Despite the difficulty in walking, she used to be very enthusiastic about learning. Case Study Three started suffering from muscle atrophy and paralysis when she was four years old. They all participated in inclusive school settings.

Discrimination towards WGD’s education

The finding of this study showed that all of the case studies have been compassionate about studying. Nevertheless, they have witnessed discrimination against their education in different dimensions, as follows:

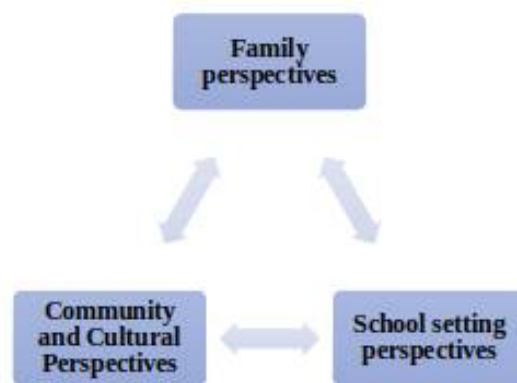


Figure 1. Aspects of discrimination towards WGDs in Vietnam.

Source: Compiled by author

Family Perspectives

This study demonstrated how the attitude of parents hurt WGDs’ educational experiences in Vietnam. Her family did not strongly support Case Study Two in her higher education since they used to think that they had to take care of her and provide her with financial support till the end of her life. She said, “My family did not believe in my bright future and studying capacity. They let me study to satisfy me without any faith.

After I graduated from high school, they just advised me to work as domestic help for their relatives with less income for survival” (Case Study Two, personal communication, October 17, 2023). Besides, Case Study Three merely completed her primary school because it was tough for her to go to school alone, and her family could not support her in pursuing other educational levels. Case Study Three said, “I wanted to study in primary school and even higher education, but my family could not satisfy my wish” (Case Study Three, personal communication, October 18, 2023). Currently, she works very hard as a laborer in a company near her house to satisfy her and her son’s basic needs.

On the other hand, Case Study One obtained full support from her family members, especially her mother. The case study investigation revealed that solid personalities and family members either totally or partially supported the WGD; they successfully tackled her schooling and social roles. Nonetheless, the WGD did not receive proper education and training from her family, and finally, she could not engage in professional life. This research, as a result, showed that the discrimination against WGDs’ education first directly occurred in their own families. The negative attitude of families toward WGD’s learning unintentionally stopped them from schooling. Therefore, it could bring some psychological issues for WGDs, such as perceived stigma and insecurities. Consequently, the rejection and unrecognition of families, the first and foremost factor, limit the door to approaching their educational rights.

School Setting Perspectives

This study also explored three case studies that witnessed discrimination during their schooling. Case Study One was a victim of discrimination because of her disability. As she mentioned, “I suffered from verbal abuse and body shaming by my classmates, which killed me inside. When I was 16 years old, I wanted to commit suicide by sleeping pills. Thank Buddha, I was transformed from mental and physical pain to live a meaningful life” (Case Study One, personal communication, October 17, 2023). When being abused, she did not want to share that with anyone, silently swelled, and found a way to overcome her problems. Moreover, her teachers treated her very well, motivating her to advance.

On the other hand, during their learning journey, sometimes Case Study Two and Case Study Three were stigmatized by their school environment, but neither of them did not take it seriously. As Case Study Three shared, “I used to be teased by my classmates when I studied in primary school; however, I suppose that since I was tiny and I was not sensitive enough to think of what they have said about me. As a result, I was not hurt” (Personal communication, October 18, 2023). She used to stay alone since she could not join other activities for non-disabled students. The second case study also revealed, "I do not remember how I did go through these schooling days. I was abused, I guess, but I did not care about that. My teachers did not give me any priority. I was treated equally like many other non-disabled friends in my classes. However, I was okay with that” (Personal communication, October 18, 2023).

The findings of this study reflected the withstanding of all participants at different levels in various inclusive school settings, from primary school to secondary school. The three case studies were verbally bullied by their classmates. Two women were abused by their peers, and they were not able to access reasonable accommodation in which there was no space for them to integrate with their classmates during break time and other extra activities. The other girl was also poorly attracted by her classmates, which made her almost committed to suicide. In addition, the teachers did not pay attention enough to their needs, except for the head high school teachers of Case Study One. This study described a difficult time in their lives, especially for the girl. Even though they have grown up, these pains and trauma from schooling may last in their memories.

Community and Cultural Perspectives

Besides, communities' bias, especially relatives, has negatively impacted the chance to access higher education and vocational rights of WGDs. All the case studies reported that their relatives interfered with their learning. "My relatives objected to my education because they used to think that being a girl with a disability, I could not do anything. Consequently, when I succeeded in my studies, I did not feel like sharing with them because I knew they would never be happy with my efforts" (Personal Communication, October 18, 2023). In every case study, the relatives had the same attitude to WGDs' education. They used to perceive WGDs as having no value, so they tried to stop their nieces from studying. Consequently, Case Study Three failed to access participation in secondary school.

From a cultural perspective, Vietnam's society is still famous for its solid connections among community people, especially in rural areas. During the 21st century, kinship still dominates each family's decision in every Vietnamese Village, particularly in North Vietnam. It will be beneficial if they support each other every step of life. Nevertheless, the complicated and sensitive relationships among family members and especially the biases towards girls and their disabilities can destroy their futures. In other words, the lack of awareness about WGDs from community people can significantly affect the opportunities to achieve their rights to education.

Causes of discrimination

After analyzing the different aspects of prejudice in three case studies, this research illustrated and discussed the in-depth roots of such discrimination. This action was to fill the gap in the literature review of understanding the causes of discrimination towards WGD's education.

Firstly, to comprehend the core reasons for creating discrimination towards WGDs for higher education and vocational training, the researcher borrowed the term intersectionality to illustrate the whole picture of this issue. Vietnam had been influenced by Confucian theory for thousands of years. According to Confucian culture, females do not have a high status like males.

Male chauvinists existed in Oriental societies, including Vietnamese society. Vietnamese Buddhism was connected with Confucianism in China, which brought the concept of “karma” formed by good or bad actions leading to an individual's future. Therefore, some Vietnamese believe that disabilities of people are caused by their “Karma.” In other words, if a girl or a woman suffers from disabilities, the discrimination and stigma toward her will be double. As Case Study One raised her opinion, “Male chauvinism still occurs in Vietnamese society. I have heard someone say that it is better to permit a boy than a girl with a disability to go to school. There is no equality in accessing education, which goes against one of the basic rights of PWDs based on gender equality” (Personal Communication, October 17, 2023). The case-study analysis demonstrated that two other case studies agreed with the first case study’s statement on gender equality among WGDs. Therefore, a combination of male chauvinism and Karmic ideology possibly developed the prejudgments that restricted WGDs’ learning opportunities. One finding of this study was similar to the consideration of Nguyen et al. (2015), who recorded that compared to the chance available to males with disabilities, there will be fewer possibilities for WGDs to be insisted to their education.

Nevertheless, this study investigated how the long-age village culture, particularly the link between complicated and close-knit relationships in extended families and gender bias, limited the opportunities for accessing education and vocational training for WGDs in Vietnam. Considering the particular period of their birth in 1981 and 2002, Vietnam faced many socio-economic challenges after Doi Moi (Renovation Period). Therefore, the Vietnamese government could not pay enough attention to provide good opportunities for PWDs. Case-study analysis illustrated that in the 1980s and 2000s, reasonable accommodation for PWDs was not fully equipped in school settings. On the other hand, all of the case studies were abused verbally in schools, which remarked discrimination and stigma towards GWDs. In other words, the shortage of policies and laws was one of the factors leading to the failure to protect GWDs from being discriminated against and marginalized.

Secondly, this research used three PWD models, including the Social, Identity, and Rights-based, to illustrate the discrimination and stigmas towards PWDs. All case studies witnessed the discrimination against WGDs' learnings from their families, communities, and school settings. The wrong perspectives from societies on WGDs' education create disadvantages for them when entering the educational journey. Case Study Three is a typical example of this discrimination. Besides, the image of a girl suffering from disabilities was reflected in a similar way to one finding of this study:

Like other children from disadvantaged situations, girls with disabilities in Vietnam have been treated as Other: they represent a shame for their families, a ‘burden’ for the future of the country that rests on the productive labor of the workforce, and a challenge for the nationalist discourse of development when the government is restructuring policies to the goal of industrialization (Nguyen and Mitchell, 2014, p.36).

Additionally, instead of regarding WGDs as unique persons with some health issues, some families and community people considered them as a "burden" (Personal communication, October 17, 2023). Moreover, they used to question the value of their learning as being a person with a disability (Personal communication, October 17, 2023). Furthermore, it can be considered that the rejection of the families and community people in opportunities to access education and vocational training of PWDs destroyed the rights of WGDs' education. However, it should be considered carefully that Case Study Two and Case Study Three were born before the Doimoi (Renovation) period when Vietnam had not yet enacted the Law for Persons with Disabilities. Consequently, it needed to be improved to ensure the opportunities for education to WGDs. On the contrary, Case Study One was born in 2002, and after eight years, the Laws of Persons with Disabilities were issued.

Opportunities for higher education and vocational training

The results of the case study analysis showed that there were several prospects for WGDs to pursue their higher education and vocational training. Though the three case studies were suffering from discrimination and stigma in various ways with different levels, there were some opportunities for them to engage in schooling and career guidance as follows:



Figure 2. Factors affected opportunities for higher education and vocational training.

Source: Compiled by author

Needs and desire for education

All participants confirmed that education plays a vital role in their lives. As Case Study Two said: "Education changed my life. It helped me to earn and become confident" (Personal communication, October 17, 2023).

The finding of this study showed that education brought WGDs independence and confidence in their community. On the other hand, education also gives them good opportunities to meet new and knowledgeable friends and open their minds. Besides, this study investigated that whoever had a solid desire to study and determine education as their essential need, as a result, were always willing to approach their learning at any cost. In other words, they fought for their dreams no matter how hard they were. Case Studies One and Two were typical examples of this point of view. The girl withstood verbal bullying in her schools and almost committed suicide. In the end, her affection for learning triumphed over all stigmas. Similarly, the woman made great efforts in IT vocational training after experiencing various jobs that she was not interested in, such as a baby sister, a domestic helper, and a tailor. By contrast, those who never set up their target and acknowledge their need for learning to positive change need to be more confident to fight for their rights to education. Advocating WGDs to express their education needs and perform their strong personalities in going through the challenges of the learning journey is one of the best ways for them to approach the rights of education. In other words, without internal force or inner voice, WGDs do not have enough motivation to overcome every difficulty in their lives.

Family support

Besides their willingness to study, WGDs need their families' mental and financial support to pursue learning opportunities. One finding of the present study stated that those WGDs supported by families had obtained many achievements in their learning. Case Study One scored 28.75 out of 30 marks in the bachelor's degree course entrance examination at Hanoi National University of Education. She is a senior student in the Departments of Literature and History at Hanoi National University of Education. Besides, she is the Department of Children and Youths secretary under the Association of Hanoi's People with Disabilities. For Case Study Two, with the donation of a computer from her siblings, she may have enough tools to learn in that IT training program. She was awarded a global student scholarship for that IT project in 2008 due to family support and her capacity. A family is a unit of society where every member should be supported to follow their education. In reality, WGDs often suffer from mental and physical issues. Therefore, their families should encourage them to engage in education and career guidance. Families should accept their children as their nature. If parents of WGDs can advocate for their rights to study and provide practical guidance in learning for their children, they will be successful. Furthermore, families must listen to their voices to remove the pressure in school settings and education activities. Last, the families should educate their children, especially WGDs, about their value and potential to fight for proper lives. WGDs will be marginalized without family support, as in Case Study Three.

Community awareness changes

Community awareness changes are required to strengthen WGDs' access to higher education and vocational training. The biases, prejudice, and discrimination against WGDs are supposed to be removed. These stigmas towards the educational rights of WGDs from the community, especially relatives, put high pressure on WGDs themselves and their families. Due to the objection of the relatives, one of the three case studies could not be engaged in secondary school. Case Study Three shared, "Some of my relatives and neighbors used to point out that instead of investing in education, I should try to have a child, and then later, I can lay on him/her" (Personal Communication, October 18, 2023). The biased perspectives of community people stopped her from education. In reality, she works very hard in one company near her house and sometimes gets verbally abused by her co-workers.

When societies have positive thoughts towards PWDs, particularly WGDs, they can approach higher education and vocational training and contribute to society. WGDs can become a vital labor force in societies if community people make good conditions for them to engage in education and vocational training. Once the community people have a positive outlook on WGDs, they can make their educational dreams come true. It is also one of the best ways to construct an entirely humanitarian, modern, and civilized society.

School settings

Schools are the spaces where every individual can be educated and learn new things daily. WGDs must continue their education in classroom environments, but numerous challenges exist. Therefore, to improve the quality of inclusive education, the school settings are supposed to carefully consider the experience of stigma towards WGDs by constructing the mechanism to involve both students with disabilities and non-disabilities to take part in everyday activities. Moreover, teachers, particularly head teachers, play an essential role in connecting both types of students in classes and can minimize the situation of discrimination and stigma towards PWDs and WGDs as well. School settings also need to encourage peer support among students with and without disabilities. Lastly, teachers and head teachers should motivate their disabled students to perform better in their learning.

Besides, Case Study One mentioned that some inclusive schools lack reasonable accommodations that do not satisfy the unique needs of different types of disabilities. She also suggested some solutions to empower the rights to access education for GWD: "Firstly, special schools, semi-inclusive schools, and inclusive schools need to educate and cultivate the love, care, and understanding towards WGDs. It is the foundation to strengthen GWDs gradually to integrate and abolish prejudice about PWDs. Secondly, the school setting ought to cooperate with the head teachers to establish and develop domains about PWDs through plenty of activities like role-play, situation analysis of school violation towards students with disabilities so that all of them will have constructive outlooks about PWDs" (Personal communication, October 17, 2023).

Nongovernment Organizations (NGOs)

In Vietnam, vocational training projects funded by NGOs are popular. This type of education is practical because it is primarily free for PWDs, and it is not time-consuming. This research showed that both WWDs joined the vocational training projects of American NGOs in Hanoi. They all participated in IT training projects for PWDs in Vietnam at different times. After graduating from the course in 2008, Case Study Two implemented IT training programs for authorities at the village level in other places nationwide. Next, she worked for FPT Corporation in Danang City for two years. Then, she shifted to a Sweden company and became a manager of a 10-member team. Currently, she is the leader of a team with four members.

Meanwhile, Case Study Three also participated in an American IT training project for Vietnamese PWDs. Although she did not work in the IT area, she highly appreciated the course since it provided her with opportunities to improve her English capacity and life skills and to make friends. Later, she got to work at an international restaurant as a staff ordering.

Both WWDs pointed out that the vocational training programs are vital to PWDs and WGDs because they support them in occupying stable jobs, enabling them to be active in finance and power to protect themselves from discrimination and stigma. This conclusion was in line with a study on discrimination against women with disabilities in vocational training, where participants reported experiencing stigma and prejudice because of their disability and agreed that career counseling was vital because it allowed them to have a job. However, the second case study highlighted that the government needs to abolish the programs that misuse or exploit PWDs for non-educational purposes. Besides, the other woman considered that some vocational training programs in private and public sectors should avoid being formalistic and ineffective.

This study suggested that institutions and organizations should provide efficient and practical information on vocational training projects for WGDs so that they will take advantage of the chances for admissions since these projects may change their lives in constructive ways. Moreover, besides vocational training, they may get more benefits such as connections, social and life skills, and confidence.

Career orientation

The study explored that career orientation for WGDs is essential since it is both time-consuming and money-consuming. The research investigated that a woman had a decade to find a professional job. Meanwhile, after almost 20 years of staying home, the other lady learned about the recruitment notification of an IT training program for PWDs on the radio and decided to participate. However, she did not pursue an IT career later. Case Study Three said, "When I was young, I knew I was interested in music. If my family or someone provided me career orientation, I might become a good singer" (Personal communication, October 18, 2023). That statement mentioned career orientation, which is very important for PWDs and WGDs. Professional career orientation directs WGDs to select their occupation in practical ways. In other words, with proper career orientation, Case Study Two could quickly fill the decade gap in searching for a profession as an IT manager; instead of working hard as a laborer, Case Study Three would be very successful in a music career.

Conclusion

Either being a woman or a girl is somehow a disadvantage in a society with the ideology of Male chauvinism. As a result, the combination of gender inequality and disability created in-depth roots for bias against WGDs' education. This research successfully fulfilled the objective of exploring the aspects of discrimination towards WGDs' learning journey, analyzing how they overcome their problems and which factors determine their approach to education and vocational training. This research showed that to access educational rights, the three case studies have fought discrimination and stigma from various sources, such as their families, communities, and inclusive school settings. In other words, all participants indicated that the more WGDs obtained motivation and support from these above factors, the better they could approach their studies. Furthermore, the research demonstrated that education is essential in empowering WGDs in Vietnam. This study also explored that the three case studies considered education and vocational training as new doors for their lives.

Similarly, the more they access knowledge, the more successful they become. Specifically, two case studies have been performed confidently and independently in every aspect of their lives, owing to proper learning. In another case study, the lady unable to effectively obtain career training and schooling consequently manages her life by working as a laborer. This article also analyzed and suggested critical factors such as active family support, positive community awareness changes, constructive school settings, influential NGO contributions, and professional career orientation, essential to empower the educational rights of WGDs in Vietnam. Last but not least, this study proposed a new research approach in applying the combination of three models of PWDs, including the social model, identity model, and rights-based model, to fill the gaps in empowering the WGDs' education in Vietnam.

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