

Tech-Voc Education and Training as a Mechanism for Social Value and Social Equity for Economically Disadvantaged Filipinos

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Abstract

Approximately three out of every four households in the Philippines have not attained a college degree as their highest level of educational attainment. Technical-vocational education and training (TVET) has become an important alternative pathway by providing accessible, affordable, and industry-relevant skills training that prepares individuals for employment, entrepreneurship, and lifelong learning. This paper explored how TVET served as a mechanism for social value and social equity for underprivileged Filipinos. There were 18 Filipinos from Zamboanga City, Philippines interviewed about their experiences as TVET graduates. Narratives were analyzed through reflexive thematic analysis. The findings revealed that TVET generates social value among economically disadvantaged Filipinos. Participants described how acquiring practical skills strengthened their self-worth, confidence, and sense of purpose, enabling them to overcome the social stigma associated with limited formal education. Their competencies earned them greater trust, recognition, and acceptance within their families, workplaces, and communities, while empowering them to contribute through employment, knowledge sharing, mentoring, and community service. In addition, TVET promotes social equity by providing economically disadvantaged individuals with accessible opportunities to acquire industry-relevant skills, secure stable employment, and achieve upward social mobility regardless of their socioeconomic background or educational attainment. The findings emphasized that policies and educational initiatives should consider the contributions of learning in empowerment, inclusion, and social value. It also required the extension of traditional human capital perspectives to recognize that education also enables individuals to transform their acquired knowledge and skills into meaningful contributions that strengthen families, communities, and society.

Keywords: education, human capital theory, social value, social equity, TVET

Introduction

Based on the 2020 Census of Population and Housing, the Philippine Statistics Authority reported that only 24% of Filipino households had attained at least a college-level education as their highest educational qualification (PSA, 2023). In light of this, the present study examined how TVET promotes social value and social equity by creating opportunities for economically disadvantaged Filipinos, particularly those who have limited access to higher education.

There are several reasons why many Filipinos are unable to complete a college degree, including financial constraints, poverty, the need to enter the workforce at an early age, limited access to educational institutions, and family responsibilities. As a result, many individuals seek alternative educational

pathways that provide practical, affordable, and employment-oriented training. TVET has emerged as an important avenue for developing industry-relevant skills, improving employability, and expanding livelihood opportunities, particularly for individuals from economically disadvantaged backgrounds (Generalao et al., 2025).

Human Capital Theory posits that education is an investment that generates future benefits, with its returns comparable to those of other forms of investment (Becker, 1993). The theory believes that investments in education develop the competencies required for productive work, allowing individuals to perform more effectively in the labor market and achieve higher levels of earnings (Leoni, 2025). Essentially, access to education serves as a key driver of social and economic development, enabling individuals to participate more actively in society while enhancing their living conditions.

The realization of Human Capital Theory gave birth to the development of TVET systems worldwide. In the Philippines, there is a growing emphasis on the value of TVET in ameliorating the lives of Filipinos living in poverty. For example, a graduate tracer surveys conducted by the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) from 2015 to 2022 consistently demonstrated that the average employment rate of TVET graduates rose from 37% before training to 58% within one year after program completion (Generalao et al., 2025).

In the study from Arzadon et al. (2025), TVET, particularly through TESDA National Certificate II (NC II), serve as an important pathway to employment, career advancement, and economic mobility. Industry-recognized certifications enhance employability by ensuring workforce competency, while accessible community-based training programs expand job opportunities across various sectors. Despite financial and logistical challenges, TVET contributes to improved income, workforce competitiveness, confidence, and community development, supporting long-term socioeconomic growth.

Although TVET is well established in the Philippines and has been widely recognized for improving employability and workforce development, there remains a need to better understand its broader social implications. Existing studies have primarily emphasized employment outcomes, income generation, workforce competency, and economic productivity, while giving comparatively less attention to how TVET contributes to social value and social equity. Consequently, there is limited theoretical understanding of how Filipinos, particularly those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, engage with TVET and how they perceive its role in shaping their self-worth, social identity, sense of belonging, and capacity to contribute meaningfully to their families and communities.

Literature Review

TVET has emerged as a vital instrument for advancing rural development by extending its role beyond the preparation of a skilled workforce. Rather than focusing solely on labor market needs, Arzadon et al. (2025) suggested that contemporary TVET policies need to stimulate local economic development, strengthen social inclusion, and improve the long-term well-being of rural communities. Across the Philippines, TVET is being positioned as a strategic mechanism to empowering individuals, expanding livelihood opportunities, and supporting sustainable community development.

A limitation of Human Capital Theory is its narrow emphasis on education as an economic investment measured primarily through financial returns and cost-benefit outcomes. This perspective overlooks the multidimensional nature of education, including the influence of socioeconomic factors, personal motivations, and broader social benefits that cannot be fully explained by economic measures alone (Leoni, 2025). Therefore, this study explored the role of TVET in fostering social value and social equity through a modified human capital perspective that extends beyond traditional economic returns to include broader social contributions.

Social equity and social value are fundamental concepts in understanding the broader purpose of education. Social equity emphasizes the provision of fair and inclusive opportunities that enable individuals, regardless of their socioeconomic circumstances or other forms of disadvantage, to access

education and achieve their full potential (Eden et al., 2024). In contrast, social value refers to the positive contributions that individuals create for their families, communities, and society through the knowledge, skills, and competencies they acquire (Rohman et al., 2024).

Despite ongoing efforts to expand educational access, substantial inequalities continue to limit opportunities for many populations. Differences in socioeconomic status, educational attainment, gender, ethnicity, geographic location, and other structural barriers continue to restrict access to quality education, reinforcing patterns of social and economic disadvantage (Chavez et al., 2026; Nabi et al., 2026; Rodriguez et al., 2022). These persistent inequities highlight the importance of developing educational initiatives that not only expand access but also promote equitable opportunities and enable individuals to generate meaningful social value within their communities (Saini, 2022).

In business, contemporary perspectives on sustainability emphasize that value extends beyond economic profit to include social and environmental outcomes. Unlike traditional business models that focus primarily on creating value for customers and generating financial returns, sustainability-oriented approaches recognize value creation as benefiting a broader range of stakeholders and contributing to wider social value (Hueske & Dijkstra-Silva, 2025).

In Islamic education, social values as a foundation for developing positive character, ethical behavior, and responsible participation in society. Values such as justice, tolerance, equality, and integrity contribute to individual development and strengthen social relationships. Although previous studies have recognized the importance of education in character formation, the specific role of social values in promoting broader societal contributions remains underexplored (Rohman et al., 2024).

The concepts of social value and social equity in TVET remain underexplored, despite the growing recognition of TVET as a pathway to workforce development and economic advancement. Existing studies have largely focused on employment outcomes, skills acquisition, productivity, and income generation, while paying comparatively less attention to how TVET enables individuals to create meaningful contributions to their families, communities, and society. Likewise, limited attention has been given to the role of TVET in promoting equitable opportunities for individuals from economically disadvantaged backgrounds by building empowerment, social inclusion, recognition, and participation. As a result, there remains a significant theoretical and empirical gap in understanding how TVET contributes not only to human capital development but also to the creation of social value and the advancement of social equity.

Objectives

This study explored how TVET shapes individuals' self-worth, social identity, and capacity to contribute meaningfully to their families, workplaces, and communities, while also investigating its role in expanding equitable access to employment, livelihood opportunities, and upward social mobility. Below are the specific objectives of the study.

1. To explore how TVET contributes to the social value of economically disadvantaged Filipinos.
2. To examine the role of TVET in promoting social equity among economically disadvantaged Filipinos.

Methodology

Research Design

This paper explored the experiences of TVET beneficiaries from Zamboanga City, Philippines. The narratives were extracted to describe how TVET helped improve their social value and economic well-being by enhancing their employability, developing practical competencies, increasing self-confidence, and providing opportunities for sustainable livelihoods and career advancement. Exploratory design generates rich, descriptive knowledge that enhances understanding of a phenomenon and serves as a basis for concept development, future research, or the formulation of focused research questions (Chavez, 2025).

Participants

The participants in this study were economically disadvantaged Filipinos from Zamboanga City, Philippines, who had not pursued or completed a college or university education. Purposive sampling technique was applied to select participants who could provide meaningful insights. Specifically, participants were included based on the following criteria: (1) they were Filipino citizens; (2) they had not attained higher education; (3) they had completed TVET through recognized institutions, such as public or private high schools offering TVET programs or training centers accredited by the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA); (4) they were currently employed or engaged in income-generating work; (5) their current occupation or livelihood was related to or had benefited from the tech-voc training they received; (6) they were at least 18 years of age; and (7) they were willing to voluntarily participate in the study. Purposive sampling was helpful in extracting meaningful information from the participants (Ahmad & Wilkins, 2025). There were 18 Filipino were selected to the interviewed in this study.

Instrumentation

Semi-structured interview questions were developed to explore the experiences of the participants. Semi-structured interviews were applied because they provided a flexible yet systematic approach to data collection, while encouraging participants to elaborate on their experiences, perceptions, and insights. This approach enabled the exploration of issues that emerged during the interview, facilitated the collection of rich and detailed narratives, and allowed participants to express their perspectives in their own words (Chavez et al., 2026). **Table 1** presents the summary of the guide questions asked during the interviews.

Table 1. Interview questions based on the objectives of the study

Objectives	Interview Questions
To explore how tech-voc education contributes to the social value of economically disadvantaged Filipinos.	1. Can you describe how your experience in technical-vocational education has influenced your personal growth, confidence, and sense of self-worth? 2. In what ways has completing technical-vocational training changed how your family, employer, or community perceives and values you? 3. How has the knowledge and skills you gained through technical-vocational education helped you contribute to your family, workplace, or community?
To examine the role of tech-voc education in promoting social equity among economically disadvantaged Filipinos.	1. How has technical-vocational education influenced your access to employment, livelihood opportunities, or career advancement despite your economic background? 2. What challenges related to your socioeconomic status have you experienced, and how has technical-vocational education helped you overcome or address these challenges? 3. Based on your experience, how do you think technical-vocational education creates equal opportunities for individuals from economically disadvantaged backgrounds?

Data Collection

Potential participants were identified through purposive sampling based on the established inclusion criteria. They were informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, their right to withdraw at any stage, and the measures undertaken to ensure confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants before the interviews commenced.

Data was collected through individual semi-structured interviews conducted through phonecall or Messenger calls. An interview guide consisting of open-ended questions was used to facilitate the discussion while allowing sufficient flexibility for participants to elaborate on their experiences and for the researcher to ask probing questions when necessary.

With the participants' permission, all interviews were audio-recorded to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the data. Each interview lasted approximately 30 to 60 minutes, depending on the depth of the participants' responses. Following the interviews, the audio recordings were transcribed verbatim and carefully reviewed alongside the field notes to ensure accuracy and prepare the data for subsequent qualitative analysis.

Data Analysis

The primary data in this study consisted of the interview narratives obtained from the participants through semi-structured interviews. The interview transcripts were interpreted through a reflexive thematic analysis, recognizing that meaning is co-constructed through the interaction between the participants' accounts and the researcher's analytical engagement. The analysis was conducted through continuous reflexivity by critically examining personal assumptions, perspectives, and potential biases to ensure that the analysis remained grounded in the participants' narratives. This process facilitated a contextually informed interpretation of the data while enhancing the credibility, transparency, and trustworthiness of the findings (Braun et al., 2023).

Results

Objective 1: To explore how TVET contributes to the social value of economically disadvantaged Filipinos.

Question 1: Can you describe how your experience in technical-vocational education has influenced your personal growth, confidence, and sense of self-worth?

Theme 1: Rediscovering Self-Worth

Participants described how acquiring technical competencies strengthened their confidence, self-esteem, and belief in their own abilities. Their narratives indicated that mastering practical skills builds a renewed sense of purpose and personal value despite their socioeconomic challenges.

“Noong natuto ako ng skills sa tech-voc, mas naniwala na ako sa sarili ko. Dati kasi pakiramdam ko wala akong maipagmamalaki, pero ngayon alam kong may kaya pala akong gawin.” Translation: When I learned technical skills through tech-voc, I became more confident in myself. Before, I felt like I had nothing to be proud of, but now I know that I am capable of accomplishing meaningful work.

“Parang nabigyan ako ng pangalawang pagkakataon. Akala ko dati hanggang doon na lang ako, pero dahil sa training, nakita kong may halaga rin pala ako.” Translation: It felt like I was given a second chance. I used to think that I had already reached my limit, but through the training, I realized that I also have value.

Theme 2: Earning Respect through Competence

Participants shared that completing TVET and demonstrating workplace competence enhanced the way they were perceived by their families, employers, and communities. Their skills and work performance became a source of recognition, trust, and social acceptance.

“Sa trabaho, nagtitiwala na sa akin ang supervisor ko kasi alam nilang kaya kong gawin nang maayos ang mga pinapagawa. Dahil doon, mas naging maganda rin ang tingin ng mga kasama ko sa akin.” Translation: At work, my supervisor trusts me because they know I can perform my tasks well. Because of that, my coworkers also have a more positive perception of me.

“Hindi lang pala diploma ang basehan ng respeto. Kapag maayos kang magtrabaho at responsable ka, napapansin at naa-appreciate ka rin ng ibang tao.”

Translation: I realized that respect is not based solely on having a diploma. When you work well and act responsibly, people recognize and appreciate you.

Theme 3: Becoming a Contributor to Family and Community

Participants emphasized that TVET enabled them to obtain stable employment and contribute to their households' financial well-being. They viewed themselves as productive members of society who could positively influence their families and communities through their knowledge and skills.

“Dahil sa trabaho ko ngayon, nakakatulong na ako sa pang-araw-araw na gastos namin sa bahay. Masaya ako kasi kahit papaano, hindi na lang ako umaasa sa iba.” Translation: Because of my current job, I am now able to help with our family's daily expenses. I am happy because I am no longer completely dependent on others.

“Kapag may kapitbahay o kamag-anak na may kailangan ng tulong, sinusubukan kong gamitin ang skills na natutunan ko. Masarap sa pakiramdam na may naitutulong ka sa ibang tao.”

Translation: Whenever a neighbor or relative needs help, I try to use the skills I learned. It feels rewarding to know that I can help other people.

Question 2: In what ways has completing technical-vocational training changed how your family, employer, or community perceives and values you?

Theme 1: From Social Stigma to Social Recognition

Participants described how completing TVET transformed the way they were perceived by their families, employers, and communities. There was a shift from being viewed through the lens of educational disadvantage to being recognized for their competence, reliability, and capacity to contribute meaningfully to society.

“May mga taong minamaliit ako dati dahil vocational lang ang tinapos ko. Pero nang makita nila ang ginagawa ko sa trabaho, nagbago ang pakikitungo nila sa akin.”

Translation: Some people looked down on me because I only completed vocational training. But when they saw how I performed at work, the way they treated me changed.

“Mas ramdam ko ngayon na tinatangap at pinapahalagahan ako. Hindi na ang pinag-aralan ko ang tinitingnan nila, kundi kung ano ang kaya kong gawin.”

Translation: I now feel more accepted and valued. People no longer judge me based on my educational background but on what I am capable of doing.

Theme 2: Trust and Social Identity

Participants emphasized that demonstrating technical skills and consistent work performance established trust and credibility among those around them. They developed a stronger social identity as capable professionals whose knowledge and expertise became valued resources within their families, workplaces, and communities.

“Kapag may problema sa trabaho, madalas ako na ang tinatanong ng mga kasama ko. Pakiramdam ko, nakilala nila ako bilang taong may alam at maaasahan.” Translation: Whenever there is a problem at work, my coworkers often ask for my help. I feel that they now see me as someone who is knowledgeable and dependable.

“Kapag may kailangang ayusin sa barangay o sa mga kapitbahay, minsan ako na ang nilalapitan nila. Nakakatuwa kasi pakiramdam ko may tiwala sila sa kakayahan ko.”

Translation: Whenever something needs to be repaired in the neighborhood, people sometimes come to me for help. It feels rewarding because I know they trust my skills.

Question 3: How has the knowledge and skills you gained through technical-vocational education helped you contribute to your family, workplace, or community?

Theme 1: Making Opportunities for Others

Participants described how the knowledge and competencies acquired through TVET extended beyond personal employment and became valuable resources for assisting their families, coworkers, and community members. Technical expertise enabled them to solve practical problems, share knowledge, mentor others, and create opportunities that improved the well-being of those around them.

“Kapag may gustong matuto sa pamilya namin, tinuturuan ko sila ng mga natutunan ko sa tech-voc. Masaya ako kasi kahit paano, may naibabahagi akong skills na puwede nilang pagkakitaan.” Translation: Whenever someone in my family wants to learn, I teach them the skills I gained from tech-voc. I am happy because I can share knowledge that they can also use to earn a living.

“Sa trabaho, kapag may bagong empleyado, hindi ako nagdadalawang-isip na turuan sila. Pakiramdam ko, mas maganda ang trabaho kapag nagtutulungan kami.” Translation: At work, whenever there is a new employee, I willingly help train them. I believe the workplace becomes better when we help one another.

Theme 2: Building Community Resilience

Participants emphasized that their TVET skills allowed them to respond to the everyday needs of their families and communities by providing reliable services, addressing technical challenges, and promoting self-reliance. Practical expertise strengthened community resilience by reducing dependence on external assistance and encouraging collaborative problem-solving.

“Hindi lang ako basta nagtatrabaho para kumita. Gusto ko ring gamitin ang skills ko para makatulong sa mga taong walang pambayad.” Translation: I don’t just work to earn money. I also want to use my skills to help people who cannot afford professional services. “Pakiramdam ko, mas nagiging matatag ang komunidad kapag nagtutulungan at nagbabahaginan ng kaalaman. Iyon ang isa sa pinakamahalagang natutunan ko sa tech-voc.” Translation: I believe the community becomes stronger when people help one another and share their knowledge. That is one of the most important lessons I gained from tech-voc education.

Objective 2: To examine the role of TVET in promoting social equity among economically disadvantaged Filipinos.

Question 1: How has technical-vocational education influenced your access to employment, livelihood opportunities, or career advancement despite your economic background?

Theme 1: Opening Doors to Economic Opportunities

Participants described how TVET expanded their access to employment, sustainable livelihoods, and income-generating opportunities despite financial limitations. Acquiring industry-relevant skills enabled them to compete in the labor market and pursue occupations that were previously beyond their reach.

“Kung wala akong tech-voc, siguro hanggang sideline lang ako. Dahil sa training, nakahanap ako ng maayos na trabaho na hindi ko akalaing makukuha ko.” Translation: If I hadn’t taken tech-voc, I would probably still be doing odd jobs. Because of the training, I was able to find a stable job that I never thought I could get.

“Marami akong inaplayan dati pero walang tumatanggap. Pagkatapos kong mag-tech-voc, mas dumami ang pagkakataong ma-hire ako kasi may maipapakita na akong skills.” Translation: I applied to many jobs before but no one hired me. After completing tech-voc, I had more opportunities because I finally had skills to show employers.

Theme 2: Overcoming Socioeconomic Barriers

Participants emphasized that TVET helped mitigate the disadvantages associated with poverty and limited educational attainment. They perceived technical competencies as valuable assets that allowed them to overcome barriers to employment, demonstrate their capabilities, and improve their socioeconomic circumstances.

“Unti-unti naming naiahon ang buhay namin dahil sa trabaho na nakuha ko gamit ang natutunan ko sa tech-voc. Hindi man naging madali, malaking tulong talaga ito para makaalis kami sa hiral.” Translation: Little by little, we were able to improve our living situation because of the job I obtained through my tech-voc training. It wasn't easy, but it truly helped us move forward from poverty.

“Hindi naging hadlang na wala akong diploma sa college. Nang makita nila ang kaya kong gawin, mas naging importante ang skills kaysa sa educational background ko.” Translation: Not having a college diploma was no longer a barrier. Once they saw what I could do, my skills became more important than my educational background.

Theme 3: Advancing Social Mobility

Participants shared that TVET served as a pathway toward career growth and long-term economic stability by preparing them for the demands of the workforce. Their experiences reflected increased opportunities for promotion, entrepreneurship, continuous skill development, and improved quality of life, illustrating the role of TVET in encouraging upward social mobility.

“Hindi ko akalaing darating ako sa punto na may maayos na trabaho at regular na sahod. Malayo na talaga ang buhay ko kumpara noon dahil sa tech-voc.” Translation: I never imagined that I would have a stable job and a regular salary. My life has changed so much compared to before because of tech-voc.

“Dati naghahanap lang ako ng kahit anong pagkakakitaan. Ngayon, nakapag-ipon na ako at plano ko pang magtayo ng sarili kong maliit na negosyo.”

Translation: Before, I was just looking for any source of income. Now, I've been able to save money and I'm planning to start my own small business.

Question 2: What challenges related to your socioeconomic status have you experienced, and how has technical-vocational education helped you overcome or address these challenges?

Theme 1: Turning Adversity into Opportunity

Participants described how financial hardship, limited educational opportunities, and unstable employment initially constrained their aspirations and life choices. TVET transformed these challenges into opportunities by equipping them with practical competencies that enabled them to pursue meaningful work and improve their circumstances.

“Marami kaming pinagdaanang hirap sa pamilya kaya minsan nawawalan na ako ng pag-asa. Pero naging daan ang tech-voc para makabangon ako at makatulong sa amin.” Translation: My family went through many hardships, and there were times I almost lost hope. But tech-voc became the path that helped me get back on my feet and support my family.

“Hindi naging madali ang sitwasyon namin, pero imbes na sumuko, ginamit ko ang natutunan ko sa tech-voc para makapagsimula ulit. Unti-unti ring gumaan ang buhay namin.”

Translation: Our situation wasn't easy, but instead of giving up, I used what I learned from tech-voc to start over. Little by little, our lives became better.

Theme 2: Empowerment

Participants emphasized that TVET provided an affordable and attainable pathway for acquiring industry-relevant skills despite their socioeconomic limitations. The accessibility of training empowered them to become self-reliant, strengthen their confidence, and gain greater control over their economic future.

“Malaking tulong sa akin ang tech-voc kasi hindi naman namin kayang magbayad ng mahal na pag-aaral. Kahit ganoon, natuto pa rin ako ng skills na nagagamit ko ngayon sa trabaho.” Translation: Tech-voc helped me a lot because we couldn't afford expensive schooling. Even so, I was able to learn skills that I now use in my job.

“Noong una, akala ko wala na akong pag-asa dahil sa hirap ng buhay namin. Pero ipinakita sa akin ng tech-voc na may paraan pa rin para makabangon.” Translation: At first, I thought there was no hope because of our financial struggles. But tech-voc showed me that there was still a way to improve my life.

Theme 3: Inclusion

Participants shared that TVET reduced feelings of exclusion associated with poverty and limited formal education by providing opportunities to develop competencies valued in the labor market. There was a greater sense of belonging, fairness, and inclusion, demonstrating how equitable access to skills training enabled them to participate more fully in economic and social life.

“Dati nahihiya akong makisabay sa iba kasi hindi ako nakapag-college. Pero dahil sa tech-voc, pakiramdam ko may lugar na rin ako at kaya ko ring makipagsabayan.” Translation: I used to feel embarrassed because I didn't go to college. But because of tech-voc, I now feel that I have a place and that I can compete with others.

“Masaya ako kasi hindi naging hadlang ang pagiging mahirap para matuto at magkaroon ng trabaho. Pakiramdam ko, nabigyan din ako ng patas na pagkakataon para umasenso.” Translation: I'm happy that being poor did not stop me from learning and getting a job. I feel that I was also given a fair opportunity to improve my life.

Question 3: Based on your experience, how do you think technical-vocational education creates equal opportunities for individuals from economically disadvantaged backgrounds?

Theme 1: Education as an Equalizer

Participants perceived TVET as an avenue that shifts the basis of opportunity from socioeconomic background to demonstrated competence. With practical skills and performance over financial status or formal educational attainment, TVET enables individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds to compete on a more equitable footing.

“Sa tech-voc, hindi naman tinitingnan kung mayaman o mahirap ka. Ang importante, marunong ka at kaya mong gawin ang trabaho.” Translation: In tech-voc, it doesn't matter whether you're rich or poor. What matters is that you have the skills and can do the job.

“Kahit wala akong college diploma, nabigyan pa rin ako ng pagkakataon ng makahanap ng magandang trabaho. Doon ko nakita na hindi lang diploma ang sukatan ng kakayahan.” Translation: Even without a college diploma, I was still given the opportunity to find a good job. That's when I realized that a diploma is not the only measure of one's ability.

Theme 2: Breaking the Cycle of Intergenerational Disadvantage

Participants described TVET as a catalyst for disrupting the recurring cycle of poverty experienced by many low-income families. This provided employable skills, stable livelihoods, and opportunities for continuous growth, they believed that TVET not only improved their own circumstances but also created better educational, economic, and social prospects for future generations.

“Ang gusto ko talaga, hindi na maranasan ng mga anak ko ang hirap na pinagdaanan namin. Dahil sa natutunan ko sa tech-voc, mas kaya ko na silang suportahan.” Translation: What I really want is for my children not to experience the hardships we went through. Because of what I learned in tech-voc, I am now more capable of supporting them.

“Pinangako ko sa sarili ko na gagamitin ko ang pagkakataong ito para mapag-aral ang mga kapatid at magiging anak ko. Ayokong maulit sa kanila ang nangyari sa akin.” Translation: I promised myself that I would use this opportunity to help my siblings and future children finish their education. I don’t want them to go through what I experienced.

Discussion

In Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1993), education, training, and the acquisition of skills are viewed as investments that enhance individuals’ knowledge, competencies, and productive capacity that helps in improving their employability and economic performance (Congna & Saad, 2025). It was observed in this study that Filipinos perceived TVET as more than a means of acquiring occupational skills. Competencies gained through training enabled them to navigate socioeconomic constraints, expand access to livelihood opportunities, and establish more stable sources of income.

Ariusni et al. (2024) noted that individuals with high levels of skill proficiency are more likely to experience sustained employment and greater opportunities for career progression. For TVET professionals, the opportunity to participate in skills training serves as an important starting point for improving their future prospects. For example, individuals from economically disadvantaged backgrounds who may be unable to pursue higher education can access TVET programs that provide affordable and practical training aligned with labor market needs. Such opportunities enable them to acquire competencies that would otherwise be inaccessible, creating pathways to employment and further career development.

Furthermore, Oloto and Nwokoma (2025) emphasized that human capital is necessary because individuals apply their knowledge, skills, and capabilities to maximize the productive use of available resources. Human capital enables the generation of greater economic and social value from existing natural and financial assets through innovation, efficiency, and creative problem-solving. Filipinos emphasized that despite coming from underprivileged backgrounds, TVET enabled them to develop practical and industry-relevant skills that enhanced their capacity to contribute meaningfully to their families, workplaces, and communities. For instance, the competencies they acquired allowed them to secure stable employment, assist with household expenses, mentor family members and coworkers by sharing their technical knowledge, and provide services that addressed the everyday needs of their communities.

The findings revealed that many Filipinos who were unable to pursue higher education experienced low confidence and uncertainty about their future because of financial constraints and societal expectations. However, TVET not only developed their practical competencies but also strengthened their self-confidence, self-belief, and sense of purpose, enabling them to recognize their potential and become productive members of society. Likewise, studies suggested that competence extends beyond observable technical skills to include underlying attributes such as self-image, motivation, and personal traits that shape how individuals apply their capabilities (Njoroge et al., 2026). Filipinos emphasized that an important aspect of social value was believing in oneself and recognizing one’s own capabilities despite experiences of socioeconomic disadvantage. They expressed that developing confidence, self-worth, and a

sense of purpose enabled them to overcome feelings of limitation associated with their educational and economic circumstances.

Human and social capital do not only emerge from the possession of skills and competencies but also from the recognition that individuals, regardless of their socioeconomic background, have the capacity to contribute meaningfully to society. This study proposed that an important extension of human capital concepts is acknowledging how economically disadvantaged individuals can transform their acquired knowledge and skills into social contributions. Beyond viewing education and training as mechanisms for improving employability and economic mobility, human capital development should also consider the processes through which individuals regain confidence, establish social identities, and participate actively in community development.

When individuals believe that they have a clear contribution to the community, they develop a stronger sense of purpose, belonging, and social responsibility. This recognition of their own value encouraged them to actively apply their skills and knowledge in ways that benefit others, supporting the idea that socioeconomic background does not limit one's capacity to create meaningful social impact. In this context, TVET serves not only as a pathway for economic advancement but also as a means of empowering individuals to recognize themselves as capable and valuable members of society.

Conclusion

TVET contributed significantly to the development of social value among economically disadvantaged Filipinos by strengthening their self-worth, social recognition, and capacity to contribute to their families and communities. Acquiring practical skills enhanced their confidence, self-belief, and sense of purpose, allowing them to overcome feelings of limitation associated with poverty and limited educational opportunities. TVET enabled individuals to establish credibility and earn respect from employers, families, and community members. They used their knowledge to support household needs, assist others, share expertise, and strengthen community resilience.

TVET promoted social equity by creating accessible pathways toward employment, livelihood opportunities, and socioeconomic advancement. Technical skills as important assets that allowed them to overcome barriers associated with financial hardship, limited formal education, and unstable employment. Through skills development, individuals gained opportunities for stable work, career progression, entrepreneurship, and improved quality of life, illustrating the role of TVET in facilitating upward social mobility.

The study highlighted that economically disadvantaged individuals possess the capacity to generate social value when provided with opportunities to develop their abilities and recognize their own potential. With confidence, social identity, and community participation, TVET enabled individuals to view themselves as active contributors who support their families, workplaces, and communities. Thus, an important extension of human capital concepts is the recognition that skills development should also account for empowerment, belonging, and the capacity of individuals from marginalized backgrounds to create a lasting positive social impact.

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