





Organisation of psychological and pedagogical support for pre-vocational education of disabled students

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ABSTRACT

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The aim of this research is to establish a psychological and pedagogical support organization for the pre-vocational education of students with disabilities. In this context, information was collected from teachers of students with disabilities in pre-vocational education regarding educational processes, support methods, needs, individual differences, family cooperation, resources used, teacher competencies, success and evaluation processes, psychological support, and development suggestions through a semi-structured interview form. Four male teachers and 14 female teachers aged between 20 and 49 years participated in the study. The findings indicated that teachers reported problems with the self-efficacy of individuals with disabilities, difficulties in communication with peers, and communication problems overall. Teachers emphasized that maintaining high motivation levels, providing psychological support, utilizing interactive and practical resources, and employing auxiliary educational materials are important in overcoming these issues. It was concluded that individualized teaching programs and cooperation with families are essential in this context. Additionally, teachers argued that creating a flexible and individualized educational environment for individuals with different disabilities is necessary. Ultimately, it was concluded that the education processes for individuals with disabilities should be organized within pre-vocational education. It is recommended that teachers, students, and families be informed about disability education processes.

Contribution/Originality: This study uniquely explores the psychological and pedagogical support needs of disabled students in pre-vocational education through direct teacher insights. Unlike previous research, it provides a comprehensive qualitative framework based on diverse disabilities and emphasizes individualized, family-involved strategies tailored for pre-professional educational success.

1. INTRODUCTION

Education and training activities for people with disabilities play an important role in the social and economic development of both developing and developed societies (Zhang, Aagaard, & Mørch, 2020). Individuals with disabilities who receive psychological and pedagogical support are more successful in coping with the difficulties they

face in the educational process (Viktoria, Smith, & Lee, 2022). In this way, some of the problems experienced in ensuring their integration into society are prevented (Van De Ven, Polley, Garud, & Venkataraman, 2005). In the world, some projects are carried out to help disabled individuals integrate into society and ensure their development before vocational education. For example, the "Individualized Education Program (IEP)" in the USA and the "Inclusive Education" models in Europe serve an important purpose by aiming to improve the education and support systems for disabled individuals (Florian & Becirevic, 2011; McKenna, Solis, Garwood, & Parenti, 2024; Smith, 1990). These models, as an important part of psychological and pedagogical support, provide individualized education plans by creating an educational environment according to the characteristics of the students and aim to develop their abilities. It is also one of the most important processes in the training process, especially before starting a profession.

Pre-vocational training for people with disabilities is important for preparing them for independent living skills in an interactive manner, without isolating them from society, before they experience professional life (Gebhardt, Tretter, Schwab, & Gasteiger-Klicpera, 2011). The inclusion of people with disabilities in professional life plays an important role in removing their social and economic dependency, socializing, and integrating them into society (Bigby, 2012). Sometimes, however, the difficulties and discrimination that people with disabilities face in the world of work prevent them from participating appropriately in employment opportunities (White, Besen, & Pransky, 2016). This is where pre-vocational training plays an important role. In this way, individuals with disabilities are provided with critical psychological development, such as socialization, communication, and self-confidence, as well as vocational knowledge and skills. Through this process, individuals with disabilities achieve personal fulfillment and experience the emotional satisfaction of contributing to society.

Psychological and pedagogical support programs are very important in socializing individuals with disabilities and optimizing their education and training processes (Tursunboyevich, 2021). In addition, the psychological and pedagogical support provided to these individuals before their participation in the profession is important for helping them cope with the problems they face in their careers. Psychological support, especially during pre-vocational education processes, enhances the individual's motivation to achieve their goals while practicing their profession (Smit, De Brabander, & Martens, 2013). Pedagogical support, on the other hand, optimizes learning processes and ensures that the methods used to solve encountered problems are learned (Koustourakis, 2018). As a result, these programs help ensure the sustainability of the business lives of individuals with disabilities and minimize problems.

When analyzing the literature, it is observed that psychological and pedagogical training before vocational education is very important for more effective vocational training. There is no research on the effect of these trainings on disabled individuals and their psychological and pedagogical needs prior to vocational training. In this context, the aim of our research is to identify the problems experienced by disabled individuals before vocational training, the main reasons for these problems, and to plan an appropriate pre-vocational training process.

2. METHODS

2.1. Research Model

This research was examined using the phenomenology study design, which is one of the qualitative research methods, to determine the psychological and pedagogical support organization situations for the pre-vocational education of disabled students, to collect data on a voluntary basis, and to reveal imaginary ideas (Büyüköztürk, Kılıç Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz, & Demirel, 2017). In this research technique, experiences, attitudes, and perceptions, in short, are studied with the aim of predicting basic thoughts specific to the person (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). When we examine the study, it aims to establish a psychological and pedagogical support organization for the pre-vocational education of disabled students. This method was chosen because it seeks to investigate the contribution it makes to their experiences through the use of open-ended questions.

2.2. Research Group

This study involved a total of 18 special education teachers who volunteered to participate during the 2023-2024 academic year in the Kostanay and Pavlodar regions of Kazakhstan (Pavlodar Pedagogical University, Kostanay Special Education School). Fourteen of the participants are female, and four are male. The age distribution shows diversity, with six teachers aged 20-29, six aged 30-39, and six aged 40-49. The teachers are experienced special education professionals working with different types of disabilities and are involved in pre-vocational education processes. The majority of participants (n=12) work at the primary school level, while the others (n=6) work at the secondary school level. The participating teachers are professionals who, in addition to their professional experience, play an active role in psychological and pedagogical support applications in pre-vocational education processes and collaborate with families in these processes. The data include the teachers' individual experiences, observations, and views on student support processes.

Table 1 presents the demographic information of the research group, showing that the participants consist of 14 female and 4 male teachers. The age distribution is evenly divided, with six participants in each of the 20-29, 30-39, and 40-49 age groups.

Table 1. Demographic information of the research group.

Parameters	Group	n
Gender	Female	14
	Male	4
Age (Year)	20-29	6
	30-39	6
	40-49	6

2.3. Data Collection Tools

Special education teachers participating in the research were asked a series of questions, including the "Personal Information Form," "What problems do students with disabilities face in pre-vocational education (when choosing a profession)?" "What methods of psychological and pedagogical support do you use for students with disabilities in pre-vocational education?" "In which areas do you think students with disabilities need more support in pre-vocational education (pre-vocational training, future vocational training)?" "What differences do you observe in support needs among students with different types of disabilities?" "What are your thoughts on the role and support of families in the processes of pre-vocational education (pre-vocational training, future vocational training) for students with disabilities? How do you collaborate with families?" "What resources and materials do you use for psychological and pedagogical support for students with disabilities in the pre-vocational education system (pre-vocational training, future vocational training)?" "Which professional skills do you consider important for teachers' aspirations in the pre-professional education of students with disabilities?" "How do you assess your students' readiness for future professional activities? What indicators do you use to determine their readiness?" "How do you meet the psychological support needs of students with disabilities during pre-vocational education (pre-vocational training, future vocational training)?" "What difficulties do you encounter when providing psychological support?" and "What are your proposals for improving the psychological and pedagogical support of students with disabilities in the pre-vocational education system (pre-profile preparation, future vocational training)?" were the questions asked.

2.4. Analysis of Data

The content analysis method was used to analyze the data in the study. In this analysis, concepts are primarily collected on common grounds, and certain groups are formed (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). In the analysis, the inductive content method was used in order to obtain a general idea from individual ideas. In the open-ended questions analysis section of the study, the steps of (1) analysis of the questions, (2) providing information about sample questions, (3)

categorization stage and (4) ensuring validity and reliability (Saban, 2009) were performed. While coding was being performed to select the categories, four forms that were left blank or not related to the subject were removed from the database. To reach an agreement on the sample categories, information was collected in the data pool and selected according to specific rules to reveal original data. The data of 18 participants related to the special education teacher were examined. Ensuring validity and reliability: In qualitative data analysis, the data collected from the participants should be reported with certain characteristics, and the thoughts written by the participants should be conveyed as they are Yıldırım and Şimşek (2013). As a result of matching, Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2016) consensus and disagreement reliability formula ($\text{Reliability} = \frac{\text{consensus}}{\text{consensus} + \text{disagreement}}$) was concluded. The fact that these results are higher than 90% is important for the reliability of the study. The average reliability rate among the participants for the special education teacher was found to be $14/(14+1)=0.93$.

3. RESULTS

Question 1. What problems do students with disabilities face in pre-vocational training (when choosing a profession)?

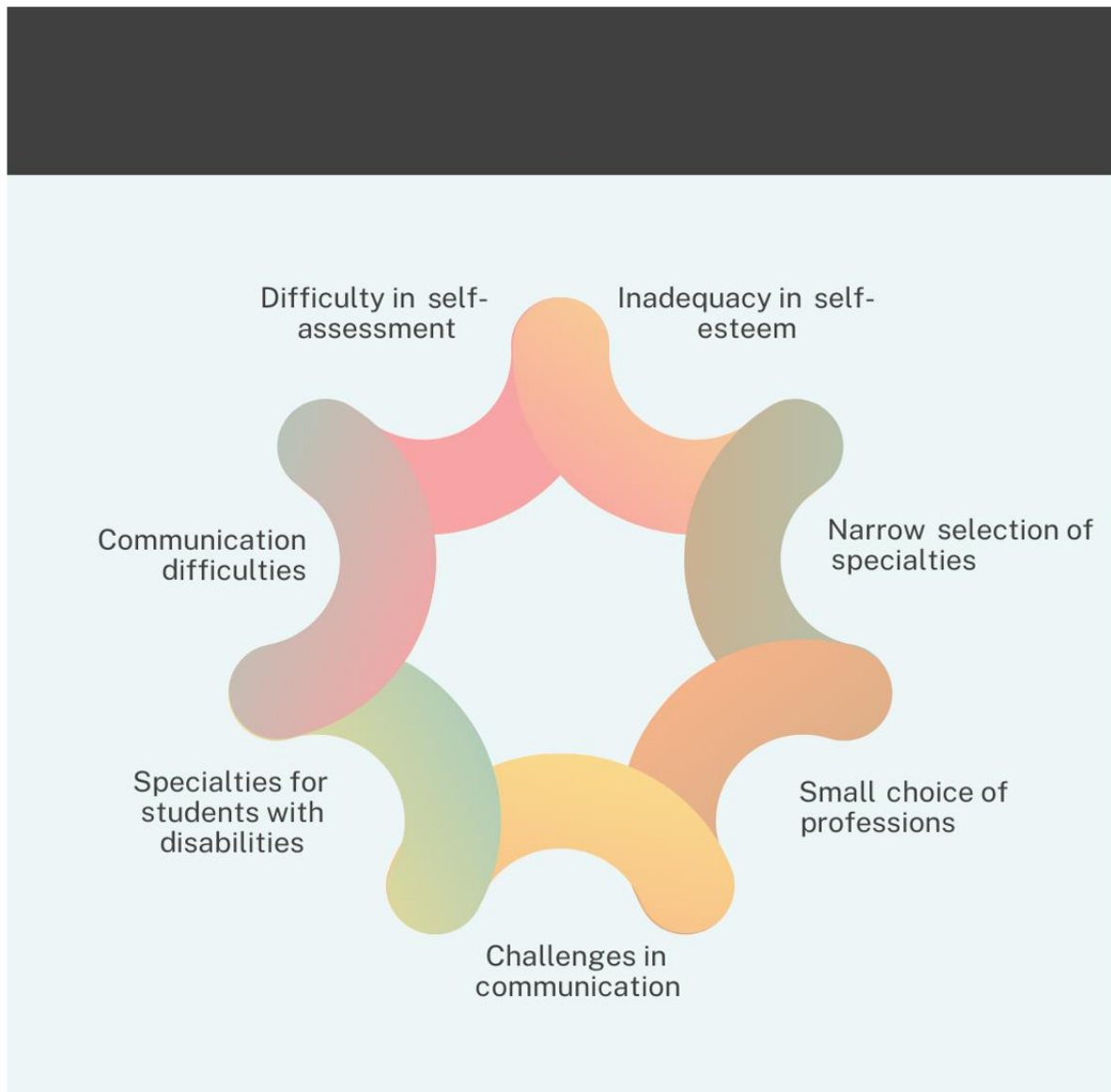


Figure 1. Answers of question 1.

Figure 1 illustrates the main challenges faced by students with disabilities in pre-vocational education, including difficulties in self-assessment, inadequate self-esteem, a narrow selection of specialties, limited choices of professions, communication difficulties, and limited options tailored for students with disabilities.

Difficulty in self-assessment: Students often struggle to accurately assess their own capabilities and plan their future careers effectively. This can be due to a lack of self-awareness or experience.

Inadequacy in self-esteem: Insufficiently developed self-esteem can hinder students from recognizing their potential and making confident career choices.

Narrow selection of specialties: There are often few career options available, particularly for students with disabilities. This can limit their opportunities and make it harder to find a suitable career path.

Small selection of professions: The limited number of available professions can restrict students' ability to pursue careers that align with their interests and skills.

Challenges in communication: Difficulties in communicating with peers and teachers can exacerbate the challenges of making career choices. Effective communication is crucial for gathering information and receiving guidance.

Specialties for students with disabilities: The limited number of specialized career paths for students with disabilities can restrict their options and make it harder to find a suitable career.

Communication Difficulties: Students may face challenges in effectively communicating with peers and teachers, which can complicate the process of making career choices.

Question 2. What methods of psychological and pedagogical support do you use for students with disabilities in pre-vocational education (pre-vocational training, future vocational training)?

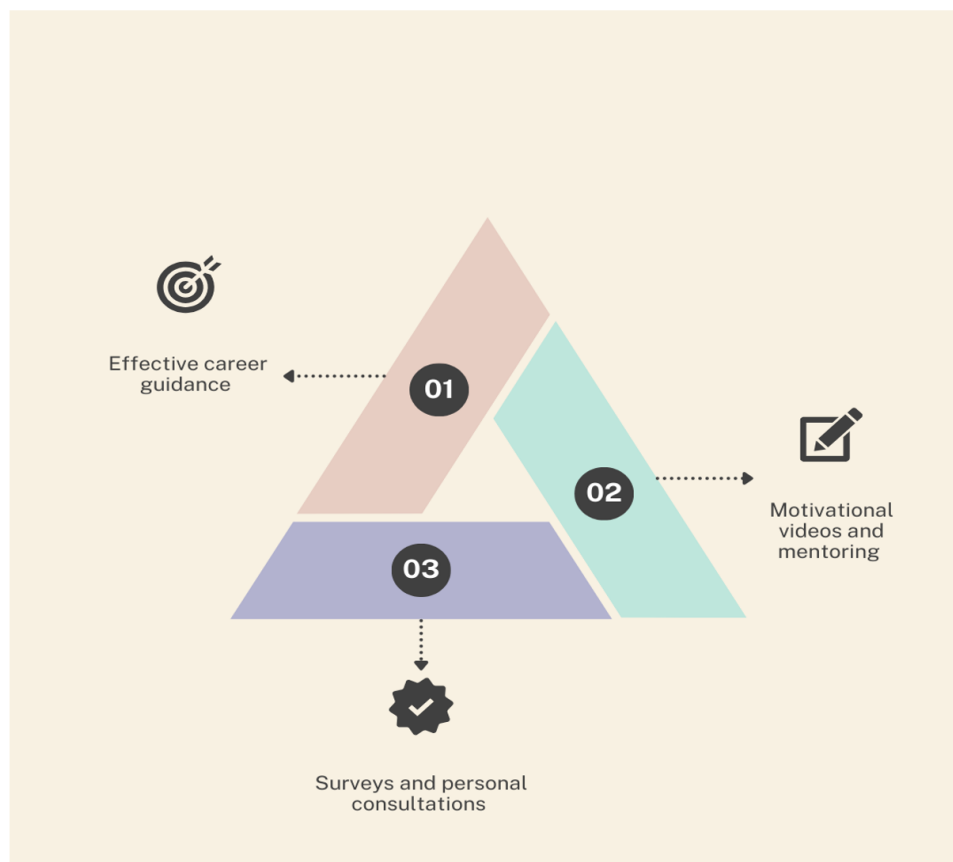


Figure 2. Answers of question 2.

Figure 2 illustrates that effective career guidance involves a variety of strategies to support students. Engaging in conversations with parents and students about their dreams and future plans helps explore different professions.

Organizing visits to specialized educational institutions and arranging excursions provide practical exposure. Motivational videos and mentoring can inspire and boost students' enthusiasm for learning. Additionally, employing information and educational activities, psychodiagnostic methods, and active career guidance techniques ensure comprehensive support. Surveys and personal consultations further aid in addressing individual career concerns and helping students make informed decisions.

Question 3. In which areas do you think students with disabilities require additional support in pre-vocational education, including pre-vocational training and future vocational training?



Figure 3. Answer of Question 3.

Figure 3 illustrates students with disabilities need more support in several key areas of pre-vocational and future vocational education:

Building individual training programs: Tailoring programs to meet individual needs and ensuring effective adaptation is crucial.

Specialized Training: Providing targeted training in relevant fields such as medicine and social sciences.

Communication and Socialization: Enhancing skills in communication and social interaction.

Economic Literacy: Teaching financial and economic skills.

Psychological and social development: Addressing psychophysiological characteristics, conducting psychodiagnosics, and incorporating psychology classes into the curriculum.

Material Resources: The success of these initiatives often depends on the availability of adequate resources and facilities.

Question 4. What differences do you observe in support needs among students with various types of disabilities?

Support needs among students with different types of disabilities vary significantly. While the general concept of disability encompasses a wide range of conditions, the specific educational needs depend on the type of disability. For instance, students with visual impairments may require special textbooks in Braille, text-to-speech software, and adaptations in classroom materials, such as spoken instructions for written tasks. Those with hearing disabilities might need sign language classes, interpreters, and modifications to the learning environment to facilitate

communication. Students who use wheelchairs generally require adaptations in physical education and improvements in the school's architectural accessibility, such as ramps and lifts. For students with intellectual disabilities, the focus should be on teacher qualifications and specialized teaching techniques tailored to their developmental needs. Overall, effective support involves addressing these specific needs to ensure equitable access to education.

Question 5. What do you think about the role and support of families in the processes of pre-vocational education (pre-vocational training, future vocational training) with disabilities? How do you collaborate with families?

Families play a crucial role in the pre-vocational education of children with disabilities, alongside teachers and educators. Effective support involves providing psychological support, education, family counseling, and conducting diagnostics. Families contribute significantly to their children's self-confidence and career guidance. However, it is essential that both parents and children have a realistic understanding of career possibilities. Families can sometimes pose challenges, such as having excessive expectations or being overly protective. Therefore, it is important to engage in professional, individual conversations with parents and maintain close cooperation. Special correctional schools aim to involve parents in the child's social and vocational development, employing targeted and differentiated approaches to ensure effective family involvement throughout the educational process.

Question 6. What resources and materials do you use for psychological and pedagogical support for students with disabilities in the system of pre-vocational education (pre-vocational training, future vocational training)?

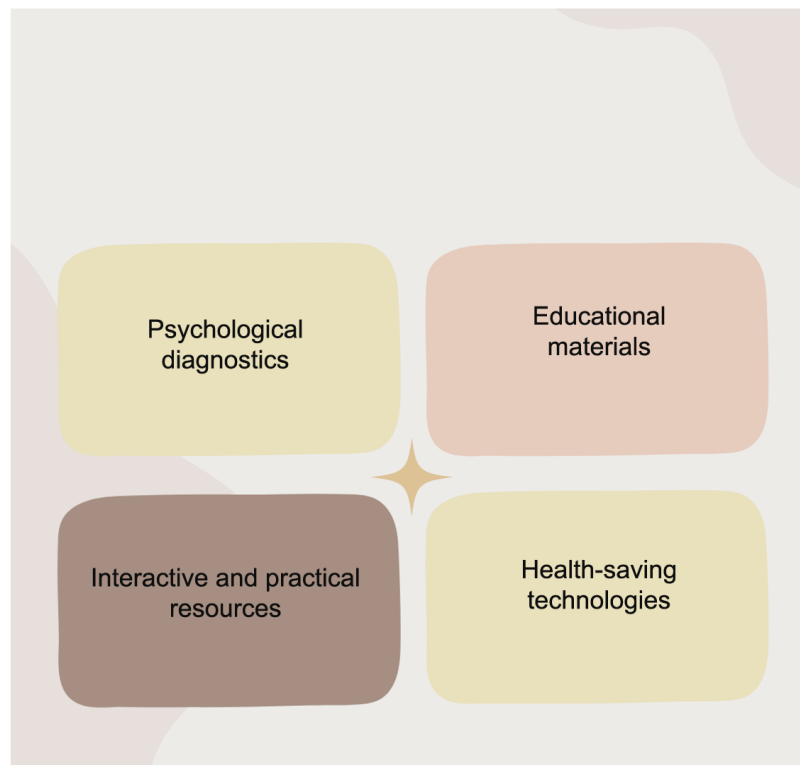


Figure 4. Answers of Question 6.

Figure 4 illustrates the resources and materials used to provide psychological and pedagogical support to students with disabilities in the vocational pre-training system (vocational pre-training, future vocational training).

Psychological diagnostics:

- Experiments and questionnaires.
- Information from psychologists and class teachers.

Educational Materials:

- Presentations and multimedia (e.g., slide shows, films).
- Visual materials and sample resources.

- Internet resources, videos, and brochures.
- Books and other printed materials.

Interactive and Practical Resources:

- Excursions and site visits.
- Conversations and lectures.
- Invitations to meet working graduates.

Health-Saving Technologies:

- Techniques and tools aimed at maintaining student well-being during learning.

Question 7. What professional qualities do you consider important for teachers' aspirations in the pre-professional education of students with disabilities?

In pre-vocational education for students with special needs, several key competencies and approaches are essential. Educators must integrate socio-psychological, professional-communicative, and information-communication skills to effectively support these students. Tailoring educational materials to align with students' psychophysiological characteristics and blending modern techniques with classical methods enhances learning. Identifying and leveraging students' strengths is crucial for providing targeted support. Social support and psychological assistance, combined with strong communication skills, are necessary for effective teaching. Educators should possess not only theoretical knowledge but also practical experience in their subject areas, continuously improving their qualifications and expanding their horizons. Competencies in social-psychological, professional-communicative, subject-specific, information-communicative, and reflective domains are vital for differentiated and effective teaching.

Question 8. How do you assess how ready your students are for future professional activities? By what indicators do you assess their readiness?



Figure 5 is presented to illustrate how well your students are prepared for future professional activities.

Diagnostics and Testing:

- Use of diagnostic tools and tests.
- Observation of student performance.

Developmental Indicators:

- Evaluation of gross and fine motor skills.
- Assessment of emotional-volitional maturity and cognitive processes.

Questionnaires and Conversations:

- Gathering information through questionnaires and individual conversations.
- Final Exams:
- Results of final exams in labor training.

Practical Experience:

- Participation in practice sessions, competitions, and clubs.
- Assessment of visible results from these activities.

Skills and Abilities:

- Evaluation of work skills, responsibility, and ability to plan activities.
- Dialogue and Feedback:
- Ongoing dialogue and feedback regarding readiness and performance.

Question 9. How do you meet the needs of students with disabilities for psychological support during pre-vocational education (pre-vocational training and future vocational training)? What difficulties do you encounter when providing psychological support?

To meet the psychological support needs of students with disabilities in pre-vocational education, creating a barrier-free environment and providing specialized conditions for their upbringing and education are essential. Support is delivered through individual conversations, career guidance counseling, and consultations, where students are encouraged to have a positive attitude towards their career choices and to set realistic goals. Difficulties arise from students' high aspirations and the challenge of adapting to vocational education due to their individual characteristics. Some students may struggle to master the required skills or secure employment in their chosen field. Addressing these challenges involves maintaining open dialogue, offering reassurance, and helping students build confidence and resilience while providing tailored support to navigate their vocational training and future careers.

Question 10. What are your proposals for improving the psychological and pedagogical support of students with disabilities in the system of pre-vocational education (pre-profile preparation, future vocational training)?

To enhance psychological and pedagogical support for students with disabilities in pre-vocational education, several improvements can be made. Regular monitoring of student development by specialists should be implemented to ensure positive outcomes. Comprehensive support programs need to be developed and executed. Increasing visits to production facilities and colleges can provide practical exposure, while more frequent communication via social media and positive career guidance examples can offer additional support. Expanding the range of available specialties and organizing more frequent meetings at educational institutions and future workplaces, both for students and their parents, is crucial. Additionally, reducing paperwork and providing additional salary incentives for career guidance teachers can help improve overall effectiveness.

4. DISCUSSION

In this study, the needs, difficulties, and support methods of students with disabilities in their professional development processes were examined based on the responses to open-ended questions posed to special education teachers. The data revealed teachers' observations of students, the difficulties they encountered, and the support strategies they provided. In particular, the most significant difficulties faced by students with disabilities in choosing a profession were identified as an inability to evaluate themselves accurately, limited career options, low self-confidence, and communication problems. These findings are consistent with existing literature; research indicates that increasing the participation of students with disabilities in the workforce is closely related to the support provided during the educational process (Lindstrom & Doren, 2014; Wehman, 2013). Additionally, teachers believe that these

challenges in career selection are primarily due to a lack of self-efficacy, low self-confidence, communication problems, and limited career options. Teachers stated that they used various psychological and pedagogical support strategies to overcome these difficulties. Individualized guidance, motivational activities, close cooperation with parents, and practical experiences were presented as effective approaches to assist students in choosing a profession. These results support studies emphasizing the importance of psychosocial support for students with special needs in education. According to the results of these studies, it has been concluded that individualized guidance practices, career introduction trips, workshops, and family cooperation strategies are important in this process (Test, Fowler, & Wood, 2016). It has been shown that increasing motivation and developing students' self-confidence positively affect decision-making skills in the career selection process (Shogren & Plotner, 2012). Supporting talented students within the framework of curriculum programs (Goodley, 2007; Yates & Roulstone, 2012) and developing them by setting goals for students and utilizing individualized teaching methods is very important (Lahelma, Lappalainen, Mietola, & Palmu, 2013). For this reason, teachers have recommended increasing activities and social skills support programs that contribute to the development of students' self-confidence.

The fact that students' needs vary according to different types of disabilities reveals the need for personalized vocational guidance. It has been stated that special educational materials, such as Braille materials for visually impaired students and sign language education for hearing-impaired students, should be provided, and physical accessibility measures should be taken for students with physical disabilities. These findings show that developing teaching methods suitable for each type of disability is of critical importance for success in education (Morningstar, 2011). The way students are described in educational policy documents affects their position in school practice. We do not, therefore, deny the possibility that disabilities and specific work-related difficulties may be challenges in students' lives (Davies & Bansel, 2007). On the contrary, we think it is very important to rethink how society responds to disabilities and how we define normality (Vehmas, 2010). The most important goal for teachers and other education professionals is to prepare each student for life after the preparatory program (Niemi, 2014).

In addition, the role of families in students' career development processes has been emphasized. Teachers stated that cooperation with families is an important support for students in achieving their career goals. However, it has been noted that, in some cases, overprotectiveness or high expectations hinder students' ability to make independent decisions. It has been suggested that encouraging more active participation of families in educational processes can increase students' self-confidence and enable them to make healthier career choices (Turnbull & Turnbull, 2015). This is important in terms of students' professional competence and their attitudes towards themselves, as it highlights their responsibility towards themselves and their self-sufficiency (Hughes, 2015). It has been stated that in Finland, people with learning disabilities have internalized limited options to influence their own lives but still reflect the current moral vision of their social position as citizens who are as self-sufficient as possible within these constraints (Kauppila, Lappalainen, & Mietola, 2020).

Finally, teachers' competence and professional development also emerge as important factors. The success of vocational training is directly related to the quality of support services that teachers provide to students. Teachers emphasized the importance of participating in continuous professional development programs to make the educational processes for students with disabilities more effective. This result is consistent with other studies emphasizing the need to develop teachers' professional competence (Bouck, 2012).

5. CONCLUSION

This study analyzed the difficulties faced by students with disabilities in their career choice processes and the support provided by teachers. The results indicated that students encounter various obstacles, such as self-evaluation issues, limited career options, and low self-confidence during their career development. Teachers employed individual guidance, cooperation with families, and personalized support strategies to address these challenges. Additionally, it was found that teachers should continuously invest in their professional development to effectively facilitate the career

choice process. These results indicate that more resources and strategies should be developed to support the professional development processes of students with disabilities. Customized educational programs according to the needs of students, psychological and social support, and more effective participation of families in these processes should be ensured. In addition, increasing the competence of teachers in the career guidance process stands out as a critical element for students with disabilities to benefit from vocational education to the maximum extent.

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Institutional Review Board Statement: The Ethical Committee of the Kazakhstan Zhetysu University, Kazakhstan has granted approval for this study on 13 January 2024 (Ref. No. 4).

Transparency: The authors state that the manuscript is honest, truthful, and transparent, that no key aspects of the investigation have been omitted, and that any differences from the study as planned have been clarified. This study followed all writing ethics.

Competing Interests: The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

Authors' Contributions: All authors contributed equally to the conception and design of the study. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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