



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

**Nikka Karla R. Santos, OTD**

MR Fariñas, CJ Abenir, C Bueno, J Coyoca, JB  
Hallare, CD Ocampo, KR Palabrica, RL Santiago  
UST College of Rehabilitation Sciences  
Philippines





## Background

- Youth with disabilities face significant employment barriers.
  - Stigma
  - Limited job opportunities
  - Negative employer perceptions
  - Limited access to transition services

(Mina, 2013; Medalla & Medalla, 2018; Malapela et al., 2022)



## Background

- In low- to middle-income countries like the Philippines, challenges are intensified by:
  - Resource constraints
  - Fragmented systems
  - Uneven access to support
- Family involvement is essential in transition planning and shaping work readiness.



(Mina, 2013; Medalla & Medalla, 2018; Malapela et al., 2022)



## Gap

- Family involvement in transition planning is often inadequate.
- Information provided to families is frequently late or overly technical.
- Families report feeling unsupported during the transition process.



## Objectives

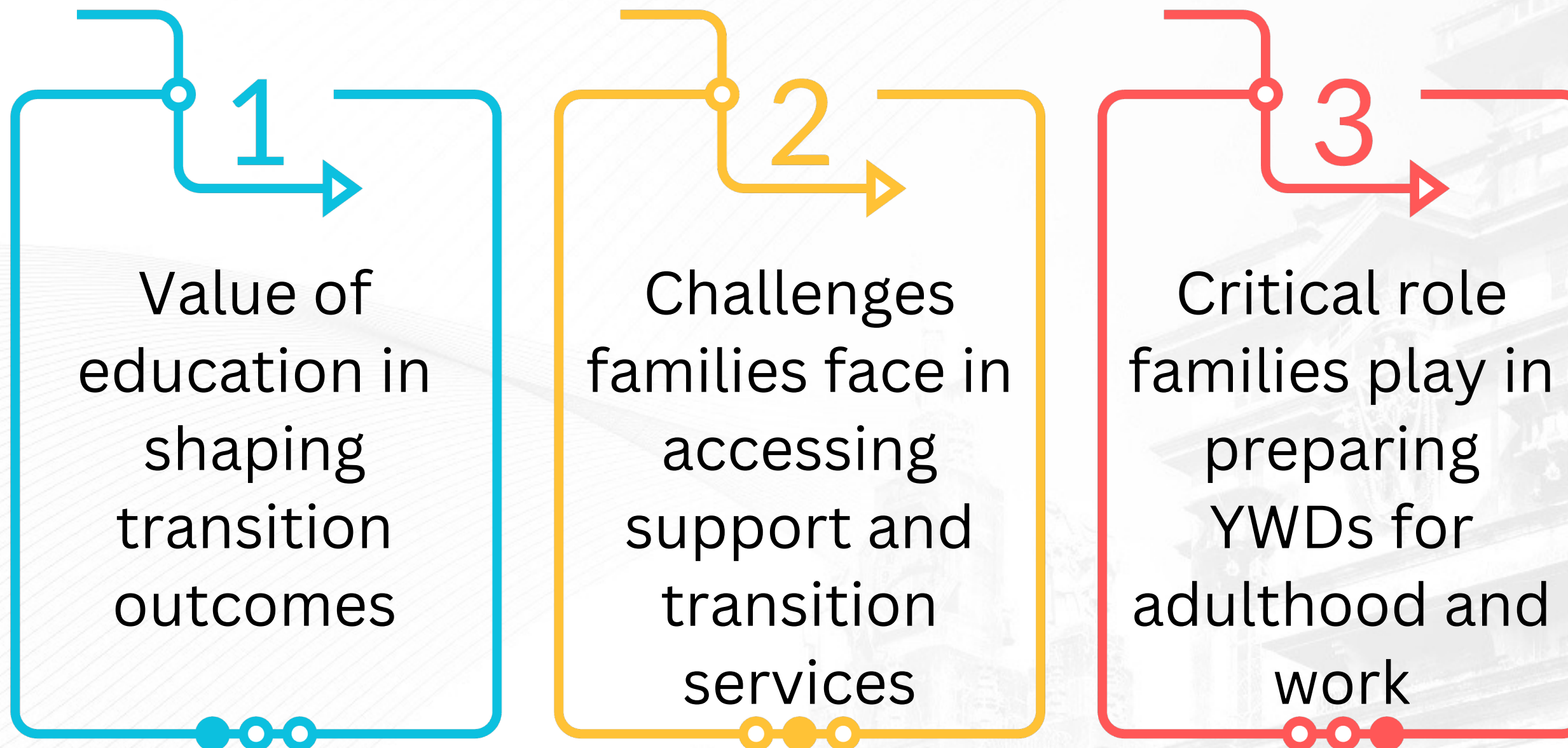
1. Explore the perspectives of families of youths with disabilities on the school-to-work transition, and
2. Examine similarities and differences across low, middle, and high-income class families regarding transition programs.



# Methodology Overview

- Exploratory-descriptive qualitative design
- 7 primary caregivers with socioeconomic diversity
  - Mothers aged 41 to 56
  - Children (youths with disability) aged 16 to 20
  - Diagnosed with developmental disabilities, cerebral palsy
- One-on-one semi-structured interviews
- Thematic analysis

## Key Findings



## Key Finding 1

### *Value of education in shaping transition outcomes*



- Foundation for future employment
  - Academic learning and essential skills

*“Even if he does not like it, we force him to go to school. So as he ages, he won’t have difficulty reading and writing. Those are important.” (Participant 5)*

# Key Finding 1

## *Value of education in shaping transition outcomes*



- Need for structured school-to-work transition programs in schools
- Role of schools in the transition process
  - Proper training of teachers and school staff

*“Not just one, but everyone in school... should be given seminars [on disability].”*

(Participant 5)

## Key Finding 2

### *Challenges families face in accessing support and transition services*



- Financial strain affects families across all socioeconomic groups
- Greatest burden among low-income families
- Shared concerns about inclusion and employability

*“It’s difficult... We need to bring him to therapy. Although it’s just once a week, it still has a huge impact. And he still has other needs...” (Participant 2)*

## Key Finding 2

### *Challenges families face in accessing support and transition services*



- Limited accessibility and benefits of government programs for PWDs
- Need to seek alternative sources of support

*“I was once able to receive assistance from DSWD [government agency], but I did not want to do it again for the second time. There was a long queue! I just got lucky the first time.” (Participant 2)*

## Key Finding 2

# *Challenges families face in accessing support and transition services*



- Reflects gaps in policy implementation and weak coordination across school-to-work transition services

## Key Finding 3

# *Critical role families play in preparing the youth for adulthood and work*



- Need to foster independence at home

*“If I leave him in one place, and he knows how to go back home, he will. That’s what I want him to learn.” (Participant 6)*



## Key Finding 3

# *Critical role families play in preparing the youth for adulthood and work*



- Positive family expectations and resilience
- Honing of the YWD's interests and strengths

*“If the parents have a good perspective, then the child can succeed.” (Participant 6)*



## Limitations

- Small sample size and urban-based participants
- Caregiver perspectives only; youth voices not directly captured
- How the perspectives impact the youth's opportunities for independence, skill acquisition, and job placement not examined
- Relationship dynamics of caregivers and youth during transition not explored



# Implications for OT Practice

- Role of OTs in strengthening family-centered and culturally responsive school-to-work transition support



# Implications for OT Practice

- Support families in developing life skills and strengths-based pathways
- Facilitate stronger links between home, school, and available services
- Collaborate with families and stakeholders



## Conclusion

- This study shows how Filipino families value education, navigate systemic barriers, and actively shape school-to-work transitions, highlighting the need for more accessible, culturally responsive, and coordinated transition support for youth with disabilities.



**Para sa kabataang Pilipino  
na may kapansanan,  
isang makabuluhang bukas  
ang dapat na naghihintay.**

[Translation:  
Filipino youth with disabilities  
deserve a meaningful  
and inclusive future.]



# Maraming Salamat po!

**Nikka Karla R. Santos, OTD**  
University of Santo Tomas  
Philippines  
nrsantos@ust.edu.ph

