

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

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Abstract: Educational attainment remains a persistent challenge in the Philippines, where nearly three-quarters of households have not completed a college degree. Within this landscape, technical-vocational education and training (TVET) has emerged as a critical alternative pathway, offering underprivileged Filipinos accessible, affordable, and industry-relevant skills training for employment, entrepreneurship, and lifelong learning. While TVET is widely recognized for its economic function, its broader contribution to social value and social equity among disadvantaged populations remains underexamined. This study addressed that gap by exploring how TVET functions as a mechanism for generating social value and advancing social equity among economically disadvantaged Filipinos. Using reflexive thematic analysis, narratives were drawn from interviews with 18 TVET graduates in Zamboanga City, Philippines.

Findings revealed two interrelated dimensions of TVET's impact. First, TVET generated social value by equipping participants with practical competencies that strengthened self-worth, confidence, and a sense of purpose, allowing them to overcome the social stigma often attached to limited formal education. These competencies, in turn, earned participants greater trust, recognition, and acceptance within their families, workplaces, and communities, while enabling them to contribute through employment, knowledge sharing, mentorship, and community service. Second, TVET advanced social equity by providing accessible opportunities for disadvantaged individuals to acquire industry-relevant skills, secure stable employment, and achieve upward social mobility, regardless of socioeconomic background or prior educational attainment. These findings carry important implications for policy and practice. They suggest that educational initiatives should more explicitly recognize TVET's role in fostering empowerment, inclusion, and social value—extending beyond conventional human capital framings that emphasize economic returns alone. In doing so, this study argues for a broader understanding of education as a means by which individuals transform acquired knowledge and skills into meaningful contributions that strengthen families, communities, and society.

Keywords: Tech-Voc Education, Social Value, Social Equity, Filipino

1. INTRODUCTION

National data underscore the scale of this educational gap. According to the 2020 Census of Population and Housing, only 24% of Filipino households had attained at least a college-level education as their highest educational qualification (Philippine Statistics Authority [PSA], 2023). This gap is driven by a range of interrelated factors, including financial constraints, poverty, the need to enter the workforce at an early age, limited access to educational institutions, and family responsibilities. Faced with these barriers, many Filipinos turn to alternative educational pathways that offer practical, affordable, and employment-oriented training.

TVET has emerged as a critical response to this need, providing a pathway for developing industry-relevant skills, improving employability, and expanding livelihood opportunities, particularly for individuals from economically disadvantaged backgrounds (Generalao et al., 2025). In light of these dynamics, the present study examined how TVET promotes social value and social equity by creating opportunities for economically disadvantaged Filipinos, particularly those with limited access to higher education.

This inquiry is grounded in Human Capital Theory, which posits that education functions as an investment generating future benefits, with returns comparable to those of other forms of capital investment (Becker, 1993). According to this theory, investments in education cultivate the competencies required for productive work, enabling individuals to perform more effectively in the labor market and achieve higher earnings (Leoni, 2025). Education, in this sense, serves as a key driver of social and economic development, allowing individuals to participate more actively in society while improving their overall living conditions.

The principles of Human Capital Theory have shaped the development of TVET systems worldwide, and the Philippines is no exception, with growing national emphasis on TVET's role in improving the lives of Filipinos living in poverty. This impact is reflected in national employment data: 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 of program completion (Generalao et al., 2025). Similarly, Arzadon et al. (2025) found that TVET, particularly through TESDA National Certificate II (NC II) programs, serves 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 persistent financial and logistical challenges, TVET has been shown to contribute to improved income, workforce competitiveness, confidence, and community development, thereby supporting long-term socioeconomic growth.

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

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Beyond its function in workforce preparation, TVET has also emerged as a vital instrument for advancing rural development. Arzadon et al. (2025) suggested that contemporary TVET policies should extend beyond labor market needs to stimulate local economic development, strengthen social inclusion, and improve the long-term well-being of rural communities. Across the Philippines, TVET is increasingly positioned as a strategic mechanism for empowering individuals, expanding livelihood opportunities, and supporting sustainable community development.

This broader view of TVET's role points to a key limitation in Human Capital Theory: its narrow emphasis on education as an economic investment measured primarily through financial returns and cost-benefit outcomes. Such a framing 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). Accordingly, this study examined the role of TVET in fostering social value and social equity through a modified human capital perspective, one that extends beyond traditional economic returns to encompass broader social contributions.

Central to this modified perspective are the concepts of social equity and social value, which together clarify the broader purpose of education. Social equity emphasizes the provision of fair and inclusive opportunities that enable individuals, regardless of socioeconomic circumstances or other forms of disadvantage, to access education and achieve their full potential (Eden et al., 2024). Social value, by contrast, refers to the positive contributions individuals generate for their families, communities, and society through the knowledge, skills, and competencies they acquire (Rohman et al., 2024).

These conceptual foundations take on added significance amid persistent inequalities in educational access. Despite ongoing efforts to expand educational opportunities, 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 underscore 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).

Parallel discussions in other fields reinforce this expanded understanding of value. In business, for instance, 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). A similar emphasis on social value appears in Islamic education, where values such as justice, tolerance, equality, and integrity serve as a foundation for character development, ethical behavior, and responsible societal participation, ultimately strengthening social relationships. Although prior 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).

Within TVET specifically, these same concepts of social value and social equity 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 TVET's role in promoting equitable opportunities for economically disadvantaged individuals through empowerment, social inclusion, recognition, and participation. As a result, a significant theoretical and empirical gap remains 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.

3. OBJECTIVES

This study investigated the extent to which TVET influences self-worth, social identity, and the capacity of graduates to contribute meaningfully within their families, workplaces, and communities. It further examined TVET's role in broadening equitable access to employment, livelihood opportunities, and upward social mobility. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Explore how TVET contributes to the social value of economically disadvantaged Filipinos.
2. Examine the role of TVET in promoting social equity among economically disadvantaged Filipinos.

4. METHODS

Research Design

An exploratory research design was adopted for this study, as it 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). This design was deemed appropriate given the study's aim of examining the experiences of TVET beneficiaries in Zamboanga City, Philippines. Specifically, the study drew on participant narratives to describe how TVET contributed to their social value and economic well-being, particularly through enhanced employability, the development of practical competencies, increased self-confidence, and expanded opportunities for sustainable livelihoods and career advancement.

Participants

Participants in this study were purposively sampled, as this technique was appropriate for selecting individuals who could provide meaningful insights relevant to the study's aims (Ahmad & Wilkins, 2025). Eighteen economically disadvantaged Filipinos from Zamboanga City, Philippines, who had not pursued or completed a college or university education, were selected and interviewed. 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.

Instrumentation

To capture participants' experiences in depth, the study employed semi-structured interview questions rather than a rigid, fixed-format approach. This method was chosen for its capacity to balance structure with flexibility, allowing participants room to elaborate on their experiences, perceptions, and insights beyond the boundaries of a predetermined script. Such flexibility also made it possible to probe issues as they surfaced naturally during the

conversation, yielding narratives that were both detailed and authentic while preserving participants' own voice and manner of expression (Chavez et al., 2026). A summary of the guide questions used during the interviews is presented in Table 1.

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

Interviews were conducted individually with each participant through semi-structured discussions, carried out via phone call or Messenger call, and guided by an interview guide comprising open-ended questions. This guide directed the flow of discussion while preserving enough flexibility for participants to elaborate on their experiences and for the researcher to pose probing questions when necessary.

Prior to the interviews, potential participants were identified through purposive sampling based on the study's established inclusion criteria. Each participant was briefed on the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their involvement, their right to withdraw at any stage, and the measures in place to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. Only after written informed consent was secured did the interviews proceed.

To preserve the accuracy and completeness of the data, all interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent, with each session lasting approximately 30 to 60 minutes depending on the depth of participants' responses. The resulting recordings were subsequently transcribed verbatim and cross-checked against field notes, ensuring the dataset was accurate and ready for qualitative analysis.

Data Analysis

Interview narratives obtained through semi-structured interviews served as the primary data for this study. These transcripts were interpreted using reflexive thematic analysis, an approach grounded in the recognition that meaning is co-constructed through the interaction between participants' accounts and the researcher's analytical engagement. Central to this process was continuous reflexivity, achieved by critically examining personal assumptions, perspectives, and potential biases to ensure the analysis remained grounded in participants' narratives, rather than researcher preconceptions. Through this reflexive engagement, the study achieved a contextually informed interpretation of the data, while strengthening the credibility, transparency, and trustworthiness of its findings (Braun et al., 2023).

5. 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

For many participants, the value of TVET extended well beyond the technical skills themselves. What surfaced repeatedly across their narratives was a deeper shift, one where competency became a gateway to confidence, self-esteem, and a renewed belief in their own capabilities. This shift did not occur in isolation from their socioeconomic struggles; rather, it emerged precisely because of them; mastering a practical skill became proof, to themselves, that they were capable of more than their circumstances had suggested.

“Learning technical skills through tech-voc gave me greater confidence in myself. I used to feel I had nothing to take pride in, but now I know I am capable of meaningful accomplishment.”

“It felt like being given a second chance. I used to believe I had already reached my limit, but the training revealed to me that I, too, have worth.”

Theme 2: Earning Respect through Competence

Competence, participants revealed, functioned as a form of social currency, one that reshaped how they were perceived by supervisors, coworkers, and community members alike. Where a diploma had once seemed like the only marker of worth, consistent performance and demonstrated reliability became, for many, an alternative and equally powerful basis for earning trust and recognition.

“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.”

“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

For many participants, stable employment translated into more than financial relief, it became a means of redefining their place within their households and communities. No longer positioned as dependents, they began to see themselves as active contributors, capable of supporting their families financially while extending their skills to others in need.

“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.”

“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

Perception, for many participants, proved as transformative as employment itself. Where educational background had once invited judgment, some described how consistent performance at work gradually shifted the terms on which others evaluated them, moving the basis of judgment away from academic credentials and toward demonstrated competence, reliability, and contribution.

“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.”

“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

Trust, participants suggested, was earned incrementally, built not through credentials but through repeated demonstrations of skill and reliability. Over time, this consistency reshaped how others turned to them, positioning participants not simply as workers but as go-to sources of knowledge and assistance within both their workplaces and their immediate communities.

“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.”

“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

What participants gained through TVET rarely stayed contained to their own lives, it rippled outward, transformed into something they could pass on. Technical knowledge became a tool for solving everyday problems, but more strikingly, it became a currency of generosity: participants taught, mentored, and uplifted those around them, turning personal skill into collective benefit for their families, coworkers, and communities.

“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.”

“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

For several participants, technical skill carried a purpose that extended past the transactional, it became an instrument of service, deployed not only where it could earn income but where it was simply needed. In addressing everyday technical challenges and reducing their communities' reliance on outside assistance, participants positioned themselves as agents of collective self-reliance, reinforcing the idea that shared knowledge, more than individual skill alone, sustains a community's resilience.

“I don't just work to earn money. I also want to use my skills to help people who cannot afford professional services.”

“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

For many participants, the labor market had once felt like a closed door, a space where financial limitations and the absence of formal qualifications left them competing on unequal footing. TVET altered this equation. Rather than simply adding a line to a resume, industry-relevant skills training became the mechanism through which participants moved from precarious, informal work toward stable, sustainable employment, positioning them to compete for opportunities that had previously seemed out of reach. This shift was not incidental; participants directly attributed their improved employment prospects to the tangible, demonstrable skills that TVET equipped them with, skills that gave employers concrete evidence of their capability where credentials alone could not.

“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.”

“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

Poverty and limited educational attainment had long functioned, for many participants, as compounding disadvantages, obstacles that shaped not only their access to employment but how they were perceived within the labor market itself. TVET did not eliminate these barriers outright, but it did something arguably more significant: it shifted the terms of competition. Where a college diploma had once served as a default gatekeeping credential, demonstrated skill increasingly took its place, allowing participants to be evaluated on capability rather than on the educational path they had or had not taken. For some, this shift translated into gradual but meaningful material change,

a slow climb out of poverty made possible not by a single breakthrough, but by sustained employment grounded in practical competence.

“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.”

“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

TVET's value did not end at the point of hire; it extended into a longer trajectory of growth, one where an entry-level job became a foundation rather than a ceiling. Preparedness for the workforce translated, over time, into promotion, entrepreneurial ambition, and the pursuit of continued skill development, evidence that TVET's contribution was not a single moment of opportunity but an ongoing engine for upward mobility. What stood out across these accounts was the sense of trajectory: participants did not merely describe present stability, but spoke of it as a marked departure from where they once stood, and, in some cases, a springboard toward futures they were actively building for themselves.

“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.”

“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

Hardship, for many participants, was not merely a backdrop to their stories but the very condition that made TVET meaningful. Financial strain, limited education, and unstable work had once narrowed their sense of what was possible, yet rather than succumbing to these constraints, participants described using TVET as leverage, a means of converting adversity into forward motion.

“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.”

“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

For participants navigating real financial constraints, TVET's greatest value lay not only in the skills it offered, but in the fact that those skills were within reach at all. Where expensive schooling remained out of the question, TVET provided a viable alternative, one that participants credited not just with practical competence, but with restoring a sense of hope and agency over their own futures.

“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.”

“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

Exclusion, for many participants, had once felt like a quiet but persistent undercurrent, the sense of not quite belonging in spaces shaped by poverty and limited education. TVET disrupted that undercurrent. By offering a genuine chance to develop competencies the labor market valued, it gave participants not just skills, but standing, a sense that they, too, had a rightful place in economic and social life. What surfaces here is less about opportunity alone and more about fairness, participants did not simply gain access to training; they gained the sense that the system, for once, had treated them equitably.

"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."

"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

TVET, in the eyes of many participants, rewrote the rulebook of opportunity. Where the labor market so often runs on the currency of wealth and pedigree, tech-voc training operated on a different logic entirely, one where competence spoke louder than a bank account, and skill outweighed a diploma. It leveled a field that had never been level to begin with, letting disadvantaged individuals compete not on what they had, but on what they could actually do.

"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."

"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

For many participants, TVET's significance stretched beyond their own lifetimes. What they gained in employable skills and stable livelihoods, they framed not as a personal endpoint, but as a foundation, one built specifically so their children and siblings would never have to walk the same difficult path they had. In this way, TVET was not just a means of survival for the present, but a deliberate investment in breaking a cycle of poverty that had persisted across generations.

"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."

"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."

6. DISCUSSION

Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1993) frames education, training, and skills acquisition as investments that enhance individuals' knowledge, competencies, and productive capacity, thereby improving employability and economic performance (Congna & Saad, 2025). Findings from this study extend this framework by demonstrating that participants perceived TVET as more than a means of acquiring occupational skills. Rather, the competencies gained through training enabled them to navigate socioeconomic constraints, expand access to livelihood opportunities, and establish more stable sources of income.

This finding aligns with Ariusni et al. (2024), who noted that individuals with higher levels of skill proficiency are more likely to experience sustained employment and greater opportunities for career progression. For TVET participants, access to skills training served as an important starting point for improving future prospects. This is particularly relevant for individuals from economically disadvantaged backgrounds who may be unable to pursue higher education; for these individuals, TVET programs provide affordable and practical training aligned with labor market needs, enabling them to acquire competencies that would otherwise remain inaccessible and creating pathways toward employment and further career development.

Oloto and Nwokoma (2025) further argued that human capital derives its necessity from a simple premise: knowledge and skill are only as valuable as the resourcefulness with which individuals apply them. Human capital, in this sense, does not merely accompany economic and social value, it generates it, transforming existing assets into greater productivity through innovation, efficiency, and creative problem-solving. This dynamic played out clearly among participants in this study. Despite originating from underprivileged backgrounds, they leveraged TVET to build practical, industry-relevant skills that translated directly into meaningful contribution, securing stable employment, easing household financial burdens, mentoring family members and coworkers, and addressing the everyday needs of their communities through the services they now could provide.

Yet the story these findings tell is not only one of skill, it is also one of belief. Many participants who had been unable to pursue higher education described a familiar weight: low confidence and an uncertain sense of what the future held, shaped by both financial hardship and the quiet judgment of societal expectations. TVET intervened on both fronts. Beyond building technical competence, it recalibrated how participants saw themselves, strengthening their confidence, self-belief, and sense of purpose until they no longer viewed themselves through the lens of limitation, but as capable, contributing members of society. This pattern echoes existing scholarship suggesting that competence is rarely just technical; it is entangled with self-image, motivation, and personal traits that shape how individuals deploy their capabilities in the first place (Njoroge et al., 2026). For participants, then, social value was not only about what they could do, it was about finally believing they were capable of doing it, a shift that allowed them to move past the limitations imposed by their educational and economic circumstances.

Human and social capital, this study suggests, are not built on skill alone. They also rest on recognition, the acknowledgment that individuals, regardless of socioeconomic background, are capable of contributing meaningfully to society. This finding points toward an important extension of human capital theory: one that accounts for how economically disadvantaged individuals convert acquired knowledge and skills into genuine social contribution. Human capital development, in other words, cannot be reduced to employability and economic mobility alone; it must also account for the quieter processes through which individuals rebuild confidence, form social identities, and step into active roles within their communities.

That sense of contribution, once recognized, tends to generate its own momentum. When individuals come to see themselves as having something real to offer their communities, they develop a stronger sense of purpose, belonging, and social responsibility, a recognition of self-worth that, in turn, drives them to apply their skills in ways that benefit others. This dynamic reinforces a broader claim: socioeconomic background does not set the ceiling on one's capacity for social impact. Positioned this way, TVET functions not only as a pathway to economic advancement, but as a mechanism through which individuals come to recognize themselves as capable, valuable members of society.

7. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that TVET made a significant contribution to the development of social value among economically disadvantaged Filipinos, strengthening their self-worth, social recognition, and capacity to contribute to their families and communities. Acquiring practical skills enhanced participants' confidence, self-belief, and sense of purpose, enabling them to move past the limitations often associated with poverty and restricted educational opportunity. Through TVET, participants established credibility and earned the respect of employers, families, and community members, using their newfound expertise to support household needs, assist others, and strengthen the resilience of their communities.

At the same time, TVET advanced social equity by creating accessible pathways toward employment, livelihood opportunities, and socioeconomic advancement. Technical skills functioned as critical assets that allowed participants to overcome barriers rooted in financial hardship, limited formal education, and unstable employment. Through this process, individuals gained access to stable work, career progression, entrepreneurship, and an improved quality of life, underscoring TVET's role in facilitating upward social mobility.

Taken together, these findings suggest that economically disadvantaged individuals possess the capacity to generate meaningful social value when given the opportunity to develop their abilities and recognize their own potential. Through confidence, social identity, and active community participation, TVET enabled participants to see themselves not as passive beneficiaries, but as active contributors to their families, workplaces, and communities. This points to an important extension of human capital theory, one that recognizes skills development as inseparable from empowerment, belonging, and the capacity of individuals from marginalized backgrounds to create lasting, positive social impact.

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