

## Independent Living Skills Taught and Vocational Training Trades/Facilities Available for Students with Intellectual Disabilities at Schools

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**Abstract:** *This article investigates the independent living skills and vocational training opportunities for students with intellectual disabilities, particularly in Pakistan, where around 2.49% of the population has disabilities. The primary objective is to evaluate the effectiveness of training and support programs in facilitating the integration of individuals with intellectual disabilities. The findings emphasize the significance of personalized training and support in enhancing the skills of individuals with intellectual disabilities. However, challenges persist in providing inclusive educational environments and equitable skill development opportunities. This study underscores the urgent need for unwavering commitment to inclusive policies, particularly for school-going children with disabilities. In conclusion, the research advocates for the development of tailored career pathways and strengthened inclusive policies to empower individuals with intellectual disabilities, taking into account the unique challenges they face, including factors related to disability and gender disparities.*

**Keywords:** *Independent Living Skills, Vocational Training, Intellectual Disabilities*

### Introduction

Work plays a central role in the lives of adults worldwide, occupying a significant portion of their daily existence and contributing to their sense of identity and fulfillment. However, securing decent employment has become increasingly challenging in today's global economy, demanding substantial effort and specific skill sets. This challenge is compounded for individuals with disabilities due to unsupportive job markets, inadequate skill sets, and attitudinal barriers (Charles & Musakuro, 2023).

In Pakistan, according to official reports, 2.49% of the population is reported to have a disability, although some estimates suggest that the actual number may be higher, reaching up to 6% (Manzoor et al., 2016). A substantial portion of this disabled population consists of children of school-going age, further emphasizing the need for inclusive policies and opportunities. While efforts have been made to promote economic recovery and employment opportunities for people with disabilities through

government policies and initiatives, challenges persist in providing education, training, and employment to this marginalized group (Rizwan et al., 2023). Additionally, individuals with learning disabilities face unique obstacles in accessing and maintaining employment, requiring tailored support and skills-based programs to facilitate their transition into independent adult life. Addressing these issues should consider both disability type and gender, acknowledging the varied needs and barriers faced by women with disabilities (Solomon et al., 2023).

Work is integral to the lives of adults across the globe, impacting their sense of purpose and achievement. However, securing and maintaining employment is a complex task, particularly for individuals with disabilities who face additional hurdles in the form of an unsupportive job market, inadequate skill sets, and societal attitudes (Lettieri et al., 2022). Pakistan, with its significant disabled population, needs inclusive policies and opportunities, especially for school-going children with disabilities (Gul, 2020). While the government has made efforts to promote employment for individuals with disabilities, more focused attention is required. Moreover, individuals with learning disabilities face unique challenges and need tailored support to access meaningful employment and lead independent lives (Rehman et al., 2021). Gender considerations must also be taken into account to address the diverse needs and barriers faced by women with disabilities (Rodríguez-Pérez et al., 2021).

The research on independent living skills taught and vocational training trades/facilities available for students with intellectual disabilities at schools in Pakistan is still in its nascent stages, leaving a significant gap in our understanding of the educational and vocational support systems for this marginalized population. While there is limited information available on the types of independent living skills being imparted to students with intellectual disabilities and the vocational training trades/facilities accessible to them in Pakistani schools, there is a dearth of comprehensive studies that assess the quality, effectiveness, and inclusivity of these programs. Furthermore, the specific challenges and barriers faced by students with intellectual disabilities in accessing and benefiting from such educational and vocational opportunities within the unique socio-cultural context of Pakistan remain relatively unexplored. Bridging this research gap is crucial to inform policy decisions and improve the overall quality of life and social inclusion for this vulnerable group of individuals.

### **Research objective**

To find out the independent living skills taught and vocational training trades/facilities available for students with intellectual disabilities at schools.

### **Literature Review**

The labor market underscores the importance of diversified career development. Career development is a cyclical process involving an individual's understanding of their strengths, skills, and capabilities, comprehension of job requirements, and alignment of skills with job roles (d'Amato & Hunter, 2023). Several factors influence this process, including professional aspirations, expectations, self-efficacy, and Instagram, among others. Emotional intelligence, knowledge of disability rights, perseverance, and communication skills are also significant factors, often interconnected. For example, effective self-advocacy requires positive self-assessment, patience, and can serve as a foundation for emotional intelligence. Success in career-related pursuits suggests the need to focus on the career development of individuals with intellectual disabilities (Ran et al., 2022).

Michael (1997) argues for a philosophical shift away from a lack of trust in the abilities and dreams of individuals with disabilities. In this context, several practices can be implemented, many of which resemble methods used for individuals without disabilities but require tailoring to meet the needs

of individuals with disabilities (Fovet, 2023). These practices include:

1. A comprehensive understanding of their abilities, interests, and goals, coupled with knowledge of their disability.
2. Understanding the world of work through career research, monitoring, and work-related experiences.
3. Enhancing self-efficacy through attribution retraining, anxiety and fear reduction, and self-revision.
4. Development of self-advocacy skills, including knowledge of rights, disclosure, accommodation, problem-solving, inclusion, assistive technologies, and compensatory strategies.
5. Job search skills.
6. Developing personal qualities such as resilience, immunity, and the ability to build a social support network. These practices should be initiated as early as possible, reflecting high expectations for the student and developing in cooperation with parents and social and healthcare providers (Yuma et al., 2019).

Individuals with intellectual disabilities can perform a wide range of tasks and be reliable employees. The type of work they can engage in depends on their specific strengths and interests. Examples include animal caretakers, laundry workers, personnel assistants, building maintenance, library assistants, data entry, administrative officers, post office clerks, relay operators, chefs, sales staff, hospital workers, housekeepers, and public office employees. To provide meaningful employment opportunities, it is essential to create inclusive workplaces in the open market (Rustad & Kassah, 2021).

Ní Shé et al. (2019) suggest that linking learning and learning about jobs during school transitions is critical. It offers students insights into training content and specific professional skills. Many employers exclude individuals with intellectual disabilities from jobs due to unfounded myths, prejudices, and stereotypes (Østerud, 2023). For example, some employers believe that hiring individuals with intellectual disabilities will result in increased costs. Research shows that hiring individuals with intellectual disabilities does not lead to increased costs or additional income as advances and loans (Alegria et al., 2021).

Similar to physically able adults, individuals with learning disabilities have the potential to work and earn if provided with adequate training, employment, and other support services. Currently, many of these individuals are not working, are employed in sheltered workshops, or work only a few hours per week. Their wages often do not reflect their abilities. To offer real employment opportunities for individuals with intellectual disabilities, a competitive workplace in the open job market is necessary (Gjertsen et al., 2021).

In schools for individuals with learning disabilities, students receive hands-on training tailored to their abilities. Students with disabilities have their own schedules or duties during their time in school, on weekends, and even during holidays. These activities aim to prepare children for school and work and provide hands-on training. Tasks include various activities such as waste collection, toilet cleaning, flower watering, gardening, mushroom cultivation, garment dyeing, clothing washing and ironing, and kitchen work, cooking, crafts, and more (Torrado et al., 2020).

These activities are organized to teach them different jobs and make them feel competent and have high self-esteem. Moreover, many of these schools collaborate with professional, Instagram, and technical institutions as part of vocational education. Some schools invite instructors from professional institutions, while others send their students to these institutions for specialized training. After

completing their education, schools may sometimes hire them to work in the school or in various jobs in the private and public sectors. Students are well-prepared and competent in their work (Dominguez-Vergara, 2023).

To prepare individuals with intellectual disabilities for work, they must be trained, qualified, and compliant with standard requirements. They should possess daily life skills and have access to education, tools, and media to access the services they need to build their careers in this field. Utilizing a functional commitment to individuals with special needs (IDS) is a significant part of adult life (Inoue, 2019). It is crucial to strengthen self-development activities and gradually reduce the need for workplace support. Support, assistance, and opportunities should be provided to individuals and their families to identify and access their rights and quality of life (WHO, 2021).

Therefore, training appears to be an effective tool for including individuals with intellectual disabilities in the labor market (Lytra & Drigas, 2021). Developing technical skills improves behavior and social outcomes, leading to improved behavior and achievements (Werdhiastutie et al., 2020). Training also helps individuals overcome challenges arising from low proficiency and limited knowledge of modern technologies, focusing on practical learning, adaptable skills, and Instagram access (Kukulaska-Hulme et al., 2022). Dinora et al. (2020) found that using the Support Intensity Scale (SIS) in-home care services helped identify specific behaviors requiring additional support. Additionally, it improved the integration of principles into an interactive environment, internalized during the human experience in the context of work and future prospects. Training is key to individuals with intellectual disabilities entering the labor market and preventing isolation and home care (Chadwick et al., 2022).

The training process should focus on the development of self-determination and skills, enabling individuals to make informed decisions about their lives and act on those choices (Shogren, 2020). To achieve this, a plan must be developed to ensure the success of the learning process (Krismadinata et al., 2022).

### Research methodology

**Research Design:** This study employed a quantitative, descriptive research design focused on describing the characteristics of the population or phenomenon under examination.

**Population:** The study's population consisted of special education and vocational school heads working in public and private sector special education schools and vocational training centers in district Multan.

**Sample:** The study utilized census sampling, including 59 specialists in the field of special education working in professional schools within the Multan division.

**Research Instrument:** The researcher developed a survey form to assess vocational training facilities, validated by a panel of experts for reliability.

**Data Collection:** Data were collected through a questionnaire with three parts, including demographic information, a checklist of available vocational training services, and close-ended items on service quality and availability gaps.

**Data Analysis:** Data were analyzed using SPSS software, involving descriptive and inferential statistics, frequencies, percentages, independent sample t-tests, and One-way ANOVA to draw conclusions and make recommendations.

### Table I

Please indicate the independent living skills being taught at your schools to students with intellectual disability.

Statement	Yes f(%)	No f(%)	Mean	S.D.
Daily Life	54(91.5)	5(8.5)	1.08	.28
Conversation	54(91.5)	5(8.5)	1.08	.28
Independent Travelling	59(100)	0(0)	1	0
Selling Purchasing/Transaction of	39(66.1)	20(33.9)	1.33	.47
Use of Computer	19(32.2)	40(67.8)	1.67	.47
Telling the Home Address	44(74.6)	15(25.4)	1.25	.43
Awareness about Health Facilities	47(79.7)	12(20.3)	1.20	.40

**Table 2**

Please indicate the vocational training trades/facilities available at your school to students with intellectual disability.

Statement	Yes f(%)	No f(%)	Mean	S.D.
Cooking	26(44.1)	33(55.9)	1.55	.50
Stitching/Embroidery	28(47.5)	31(52.5)	1.52	.50
Wood Work/Carpenter	16(27.1)	43(72.9)	1.72	.44
Candle Making	17(28.8)	42(71.2)	1.71	.45
Carpet Making	9(15.3)	50(84.7)	1.84	.36
Furniture Polish	9(15.3)	50(84.7)	1.84	.36
Weaving	13(22)	46(78)	1.77	.41
Decoration Piece Making	29(49.2)	30(50.8)	1.50	.50
Block Printing	17(28.8)	42(71.2)	1.71	.45
Photocopy and Book Binding	10(16.9)	49(83.1)	1.83	.37
Shop Keeping	23(39)	36(61)	1.61	.49
Cane Work	14(23.7)	45(76.3)	1.76	.42

**Table 3**

Statistical technique Independent Sample t. test was used to compare the male and female responses and results were interpreted in below tables

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	t	Sig.
Male	9	90	4.92	57	-.538	.255
Female	50	91.32	7.03			

\*P >.05 Level of Significance

Statistical technique independent t-test was applied at the male and female responses to compare the opinions of respondents. A total of 9 Males and 50 Females participated to answer the questions asked in the questionnaire. The results are tabulated which shows that the difference of means is 1.32 as the mean for Male respondents was 90 and for the Female respondents was 91.32. The value of standard deviation for respondents was respectively 4.92 and 7.03. The df value was 57. The value of t is -.538. The significant value is .255 which is greater than the standard value of .05, it shows that there is no difference between the opinion of Male and Female respondents.

**Table 4**

Statistical technique Independent Sample t. test was used to compare the responses at the basis of nature of job of respondents and results were interpreted in below tables

Nature of job	N	Mean	SD	df	t	Sig.
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Public	57	91.28	6.71	57	.986	.908
Private	2	86.50	7.77			

*\*P > .05 Level of Significance*

Statistical technique independent t-test was applied at the nature of job to compare the opinions of respondents. A total of 57 Public and 2 private sector employees participated to answer the questions asked in the questionnaire. The results are tabulated which shows that the difference of means is 4.78 as the mean for public respondents was 91.28 and for the Private respondents was 86.50. The value of standard deviation for Public and private respondents was respectively 6.71 and 7.77. The df value for both respondents was 57. The value of t is .986. The significant value is .908 which is greater than the standard value of .05, it shows that there is no difference between the opinion of public and private employee's respondents.

**Table 5**

*The difference in the opinion among teachers based on experience of Respondents (one-way ANOVA test).*

Experience	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	78.702	2	39.351		
Within Groups	2553.467	56	45.598	.863	.427
Total	2632.169	58			

*\*P > .05 Level of Significance*

Statistical technique one-way ANOVA test was applied at the base of working experience of respondents. The results are tabulated which explains that the sum of squares between the groups is 78.702 and within the group, its value is 2553.467 while their Sum is 2632.169. The df value for both groups was respectively 2 and 56 and the value of their sum is 58. The difference of mean square between the groups and within the groups is 6.247. The value of F is .863. The significant value is .427 which is greater than the standard value of .05 which proves that there is no difference of opinion between the groups and within the groups.

**Findings**

The findings of this research study indicate that schools for students with intellectual disabilities in the study area place a strong emphasis on teaching essential independent living skills. Daily life and conversation skills are commonly taught, suggesting a focus on practical and social competencies. Notably, all schools in the study reported including training in independent traveling skills, highlighting a comprehensive approach to fostering autonomy among students. In terms of vocational training facilities, the study found that cooking and stitching/embroidery were the most commonly offered trades, indicating an emphasis on practical and hands-on skills. Woodwork/carpentry, candle making, and decoration piece making were also prevalent options, offering students a diverse range of vocational training opportunities.

Furthermore, the research revealed that there were no significant differences in opinions between male and female respondents regarding the skills and facilities offered in schools for students with intellectual disabilities. Additionally, the nature of the respondents' jobs (public vs. private sector) did not significantly influence their perspectives on these educational offerings. Moreover, the study found no significant variations in opinions among teachers with different levels of experience. Regardless of their years in the profession, teachers held similar views regarding the skills and facilities provided in

schools for students with intellectual disabilities.

These findings suggest that schools in the study area are dedicated to equipping students with intellectual disabilities with a range of practical life skills and vocational training opportunities, with consistency in the perceptions of various demographic groups and experience levels among teachers.

### **Discussion**

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the state of special education programs for students with intellectual disabilities in the study area. These insights carry significant implications for both policymakers and practitioners in the field of special education.

One of the key findings of this research is the strong emphasis on teaching independent living skills in the schools examined. Daily life skills and conversational abilities are not only commonly taught but also fundamental to the curriculum. These skills are essential for students with intellectual disabilities as they empower them to lead more independent lives, enhancing their self-sufficiency and quality of life. These findings are aligned with the research conducted by Clark (2023).

Another noteworthy discovery is the diversity of vocational training opportunities offered in these schools. Cooking, stitching/embroidery, woodwork/carpentry, and various other trades are made available to students. This diversification recognizes the unique talents and interests of each student, ensuring that they have access to training that aligns with their abilities and aspirations. This aspect of the findings underscores the importance of offering a broad array of vocational options in special education (Jabeen et al., 2020).

Equally significant is the neutrality observed in the findings regarding gender and employment sector. The study reveals that there are no substantial differences in opinions between male and female respondents or between those working in the public and private sectors. This neutrality underscores the principles of equity and consistency in educational offerings, highlighting that special education is accessible and inclusive for all students, regardless of their demographic or institutional background (May et al., 2021).

The consistency in teacher perspectives across varying levels of experience is a promising finding. It suggests that the commitment to providing high-quality education to students with intellectual disabilities remains unwavering over time. This shared dedication among educators is crucial for maintaining the standard of education and ensuring that students continue to receive the support and opportunities they need to thrive.

These findings offer valuable insights into the current state of special education for students with intellectual disabilities. They emphasize the importance of equipping these students with both life skills and diverse vocational training opportunities to enhance their prospects and quality of life. Furthermore, the findings underscore the principles of equity and consistency in educational offerings, reinforcing the need for inclusive and accessible special education. These insights can serve as a foundation for future research and as a guide for the development of policies and practices in the field of special education, ultimately improving the educational experiences and outcomes of students with intellectual disabilities.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the findings and discussions presented in this study provide a comprehensive view of special education programs for students with intellectual disabilities in the study area. The emphasis on teaching essential independent living skills, including daily life and conversational abilities, reflects a commitment to equipping these students with the practical and social competencies necessary for greater autonomy and participation in everyday life. The diversity of vocational training opportunities, ranging

from cooking and stitching to more specialized trades, ensures that students have access to training that aligns with their individual talents and aspirations, fostering a sense of empowerment. Furthermore, the gender and employment sector neutrality observed in teacher perspectives underscores the principles of equity and consistency in educational offerings, reaffirming the idea that special education should be inclusive and accessible to all students, regardless of their demographic or institutional background. The consistency in educator commitment to high-quality education across varying levels of experience is also a significant finding, emphasizing the enduring dedication to improving the lives of students with intellectual disabilities.

These insights hold important implications for both policymakers and practitioners in the field of special education. Policymakers should consider the importance of continuing to develop and expand the teaching of independent living skills while also encouraging the provision of a broad array of vocational options to cater to the diverse interests and abilities of students. Additionally, maintaining and reinforcing the principles of equity and consistency in educational offerings should remain a central focus in the formulation of educational policies. Overall, the findings and discussions in this study provide a valuable foundation for shaping the future of special education programs for students with intellectual disabilities. They underscore the significance of holistic education, empowerment, and inclusivity in enhancing the quality of life and prospects of these students, thereby contributing to a more equitable and accessible educational landscape for all.

### Recommendations

The recommendations made at the basis of conclusion are listed below;

1. Enhance collaboration between special education schools and vocational training centers to broaden vocational training opportunities for students with intellectual disabilities.
2. Develop and implement standardized curriculum guidelines for teaching independent living skills in special education programs.
3. Promote continued research and awareness to ensure equity and inclusivity in special education, fostering a supportive environment for students with intellectual disabilities.

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