

# RESEARCH ON PROPOSING A COMPREHENSIVE SUPPORT ECOSYSTEM MODEL FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES AND THEIR FAMILIES IN VIETNAM

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## ABSTRACT

Children with disabilities and their families in Vietnam face numerous challenges in accessing education, healthcare, government policies, social integration, and psychological support. This paper analyzes the current situation and proposes solutions to improve the comprehensive support ecosystem for children with disabilities and their families, including five key elements: family, school, community, government policies, and support services. The study employs a sociological survey method involving 215 parents of children with disabilities in 05 provinces/cities in Vietnam (Hanoi capital, Vinh Phuc, Hai Duong, Quang Ninh, Nghe An). Based on the survey results, the research will highlight the realities of how parents' economic impact, knowledge, care, and education skills affect the quality of intervention for children with disabilities. In addition, the research also aims to further observe and assess the barriers in accessing inclusive education and support services for children and their families during the intervention, care, and education process. From this reality, the paper proposes solutions to raise awareness, knowledge, and skills for parents; train specialized teachers; develop inclusive education programs; disseminate and raise community awareness; improve policies and laws; and expand and enhance the quality of support services. The research results are expected to contribute to providing an overview of the support ecosystem for children with disabilities in Vietnam, thereby proposing solutions to improve this ecosystem, creating conditions for children with disabilities to fully develop and integrate into the community.

**Keywords:** Children with disabilities, Support ecosystem, Inclusive education, Government policies, Disability support services.

## INTRODUCTION

Children with disabilities are an inseparable part of society. Like all children, they deserve equal rights and opportunities for development. However, children with disabilities and their families in Vietnam continue to face various challenges in their daily lives. According to statistics from the National Statistics Office of Vietnam, in 2019, there was approximately 1.3 million children with disabilities in Vietnam, accounting for 1.9% of the total population of children aged 0 to 17 years. Children with disabilities and their families face several challenges in many aspects. In terms of education, many children are either unable to attend school or have difficulty accessing mainstream education due to insufficient infrastructure, a shortage of specialized teachers and appropriate teaching methods. Regarding healthcare, access to medical care and rehabilitation services remains limited, particularly in rural and remote areas. Socially, children with disabilities often encounter stigma, discrimination, and social isolation, which adversely impacts their psychological development and their capacity for community inclusion. Moreover, both children and their families experience psychological pressure, stress and lack of social support, which negatively affects their mental health and overall quality of life.

The establishment of a comprehensive support ecosystem is crucial for children with disabilities to overcome these challenges and achieve well-rounded development. This ecosystem requires seamless coordination among various key stakeholders. First and foremost, the family, including parents and close relatives, serves as the foundation, playing a critical role in providing care, nurture, education, and emotional support for the children. In addition, schools should foster inclusive educational environments with curricula and teaching methods to accommodate the individual needs of every child. The community must work collectively to cultivate a friendly, inclusive, supportive and non-discriminatory social environment. This ecosystem will be further strengthened with the involvement of government policies, through the enactment and implementation of laws and policies that protect the rights and welfare of children with disabilities. Finally, professional support services are indispensable, including early intervention, therapy, rehabilitation, psychological counseling, and financial assistance for children and their families. Globally, several countries have taken the lead in developing and implementing comprehensive support ecosystem models for children with disabilities. A typical example is the "Circles of Support" model in the United States, which focuses on building a diverse support network around the child, including family, friends, professionals, and the community. In the United Kingdom, the "Index for Inclusion" model provides a guiding framework for schools to assess and improve their level of inclusiveness for all students, including those with disabilities. Particularly, the "Inclusive Education" policies in Nordic countries emphasize ensuring that all children, including those with disabilities, have access to mainstream education, hence promoting equality and social inclusion.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The development of a supportive environment for children with disabilities is a global concern, underpinned by key theoretical frameworks and exemplified by various international models. Understanding these foundational elements is crucial for situating research aimed at enhancing support systems within specific national contexts, such as Vietnam.

A "comprehensive support ecosystem," central to this study, is understood as a network of individuals, organizations, services, and policies that interact to create a supportive and empowering environment for children with disabilities and their families. This ecosystem aims to

maximize their potential, facilitate social inclusion, and enable them to lead meaningful lives. The ecological systems theory by Bronfenbrenner (1979) provides a valuable lens for conceptualizing such an ecosystem, emphasizing that individual development is shaped by interactions across various environmental systems – from the immediate family (microsystem) to broader societal structures and beliefs (macrosystem). Within this ecosystem, "children with disabilities" are defined as individuals under 18 with diagnosed physical, intellectual, mental, or sensory impairments that may affect their full participation in society.

Key components and approaches within such an ecosystem include "inclusive education" and "early intervention." "Inclusive education" is an approach where all children, including those with disabilities, learn together in mainstream school settings, ensuring access to appropriate curricula and necessary support for full participation. "Early intervention" refers to support activities provided to young children (0-6 years) and their families to identify and address developmental delays or disabilities, aiming to optimize development. The effectiveness of the ecosystem also heavily relies on "parental support," which equips parents with knowledge, skills, and resources, and robust "government policies" that establish a legal framework protecting rights and ensuring equal opportunities. International frameworks, such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), to which Vietnam is a signatory, guide the development of such national policies.

Several international models offer insights into implementing comprehensive support. For example, the "Circles of Support" model in the United States focuses on building a diverse support network around the child, involving family, friends, professionals, and the community. In the United Kingdom, the "Index for Inclusion" provides a framework for schools to enhance their inclusivity for all students. Furthermore, Nordic countries have demonstrated a strong commitment to "Inclusive Education" policies, ensuring mainstream educational access for children with disabilities to promote equality and social inclusion.

While these international models and concepts provide valuable frameworks, there is a need to understand their applicability and to investigate the specific needs and existing ecosystem components within Vietnam. This study aims to contribute to this understanding by analyzing the current support ecosystem in Vietnam and proposing a comprehensive model tailored to the national context, thereby addressing an existing gap in localized, integrated approaches.

## METHODOLOGY

This study employed a sociological survey method involving 215 parents of children with disabilities in five provinces/cities in Vietnam (Hanoi Capital, Vinh Phuc, Hai Duong, Quang Ninh, Nghe An)

### **Survey objectives:**

This study aimed to investigate the current situation, including awareness, difficulties, needs, and expectations of children with disabilities and their families in Vietnam. Based on these findings and an evaluation of economic, parental, and systemic factors affecting intervention quality and access to support services, the research proposes targeted solutions to improve the comprehensive support ecosystem across its five key components: family, school, community, state policies, and support services. These solutions focus on enhancing parental capacity, teacher training, inclusive education programs, community awareness, legal frameworks, and the quality of support services.

## Survey Content

The survey was conducted to identify the situation of needs, expectations, and challenges of parents and families in accompanying children with disabilities; and to analyze the role of supportive factors for children with disabilities and their families in Vietnam. Based on theoretical research findings as a foundation, the paper proposes solutions to improve the comprehensive support ecosystem for children with disabilities and their families. The survey questionnaire was designed to gather comprehensive data on the support ecosystem. Key areas covered included:

- Current difficulties faced by children with disabilities (e.g., communication, cognition, comorbid conditions) and their families.
- Types of support currently utilized by families for both children (intervention programs, government policies) and parents (community support, training, financial aid), along with their perceived effectiveness.
- Needs and expectations of parents regarding various forms of support (educational, therapeutic, psychological, financial, social) and preferred channels for receiving assistance.
- Parental awareness of stakeholder roles, multidisciplinary approaches, and their engagement in the child's intervention process. These insights, combined with theoretical research, formed the basis for proposing improvements to the support ecosystem.

**Survey tools:** The survey was conducted using questionnaires distributed to parents and caregivers of children with special needs in selected localities.

## Research methods

The study uses a combination of several research methods to achieve the stated objectives, including both theoretical and empirical approaches as follows:

C1. Theoretical research methods: The study employs synthesis and analytical methods to review theoretical literature, scientific studies, legal documents, and reports related to the research topic. It establishes the theoretical foundation of the study, including key concepts, models, and components of the support ecosystem for children and families with disabilities. Concepts and scientific terms are analyzed and generalized to construct the theoretical framework of the research.

C2. Empirical research methods:

Includes the following methods:

- Practical survey method: distributing questionnaires to parents and families of children with special needs.
- Expert method: collecting expert opinions (on thematic workshops, direct interviews, or questionnaires) on specific issues related to the research topic.

C3. Practical experience summary method: used to summarize and analyze practical experiences in building and operating the support ecosystem for children with disabilities and their families in Vietnam.

**Data Analysis:** The quantitative data collected from the questionnaires were processed and analyzed using descriptive statistics, primarily focusing on frequencies and percentages to summarize parental responses regarding difficulties faced, support received, and expectations

for the ecosystem components. This analysis aimed to identify trends and patterns within the surveyed population.

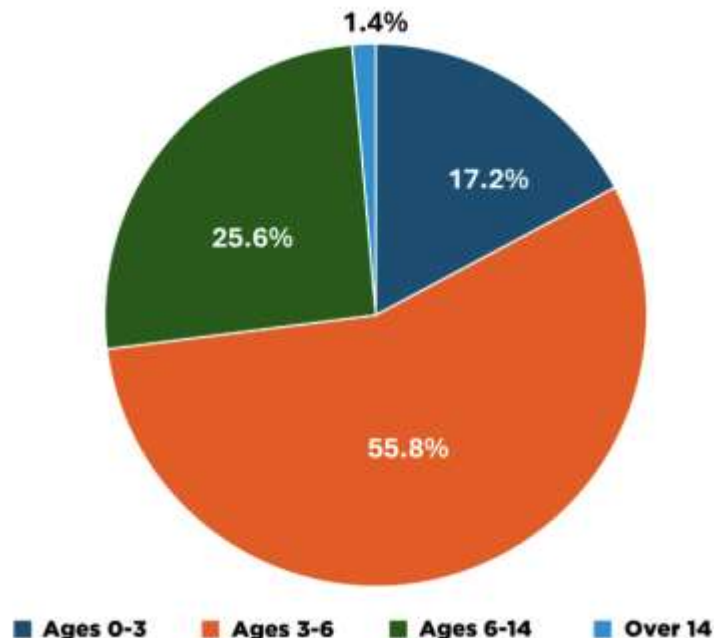
**Survey timeline:** Pilot testing period: March 2025 to April 2025. Data collection period: April 2025 to June 2025.

**Survey Locations:** The survey was conducted among parent communities in five provinces/cities in Vietnam: Hanoi capital, Vinh Phuc, Hai Duong, Quang Ninh, and Nghe An. Survey participants compose parents and caregivers who are members of online social communities.

## RESULTS AND FINDING

### The Current Situation Regarding Levels of Difficulty among Children with Disabilities

With 215 responses, the survey results show that most children are between 0 and 14 years old, with the largest group (55.8%) aged 3–6 years (Fig.1). Only 3.3% of children had not received an official diagnosis, with the remaining 96.7% diagnosed at various medical facilities. Common diagnoses included Autism spectrum disorder (ASD), Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), learning disabilities, and developmental delays, leading to difficulties in communication, motor skills, and cognition



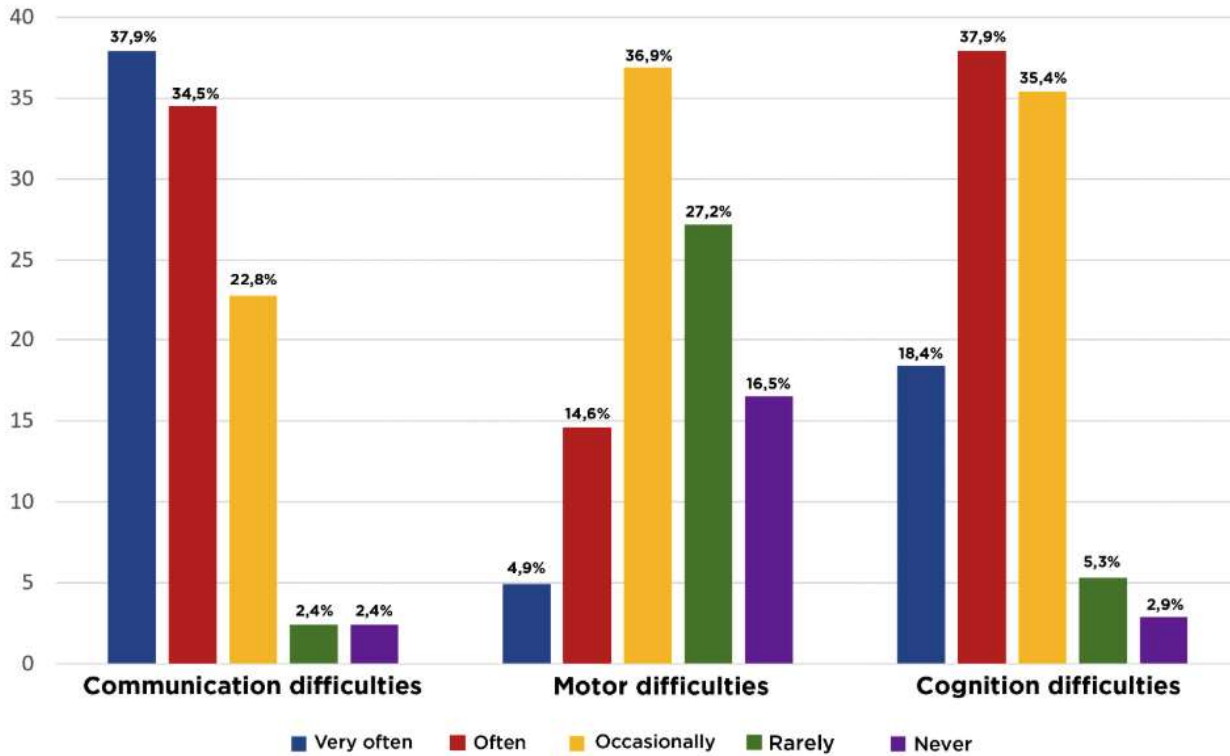
*Figure 1: Age of children participating in the survey*

Communication difficulties were the most frequently reported challenge, with over 72% of children experiencing them "very often" or "often" (Tab.1, Fig.2). Cognitive difficulties were also prominent, with over 56% of children facing these "very often" or "often". Motor skill challenges

were reported less frequently, with 43.7% of children rarely or never encountering such difficulties (Tab.1, Fig.2)

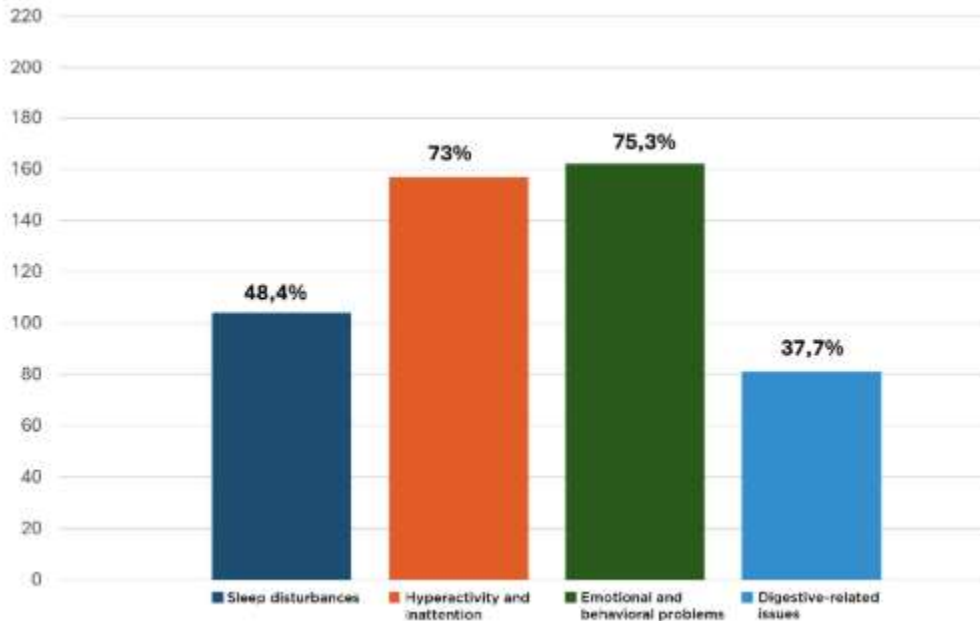
**Table 1: Children's difficulties**

Children's Difficulties	Frequency level				
	Very often	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
Communication difficulties	37,9%	34,5	22,8	2,4	2,4
Motor difficulties	4,9	14,6	36,9	27,2	16,5
Cognition difficulties	18,4	37,9	35,4	5,3	2,9



**Figure 2: Children's difficulties**

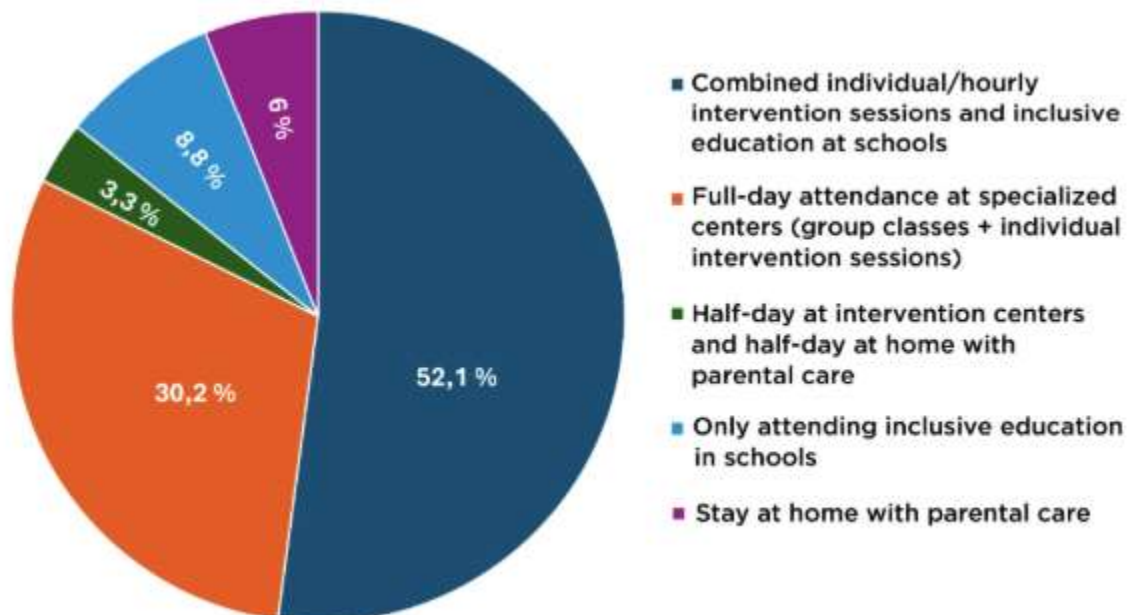
Besides these primary difficulties, children also faced comorbid disorders. Emotional and behavioral problems were the most common (75.3%), followed by hyperactivity and inattention (73%) (Fig.3). Sleep disturbances (48.4%) and digestive-related issues (37.7%) were also significant concerns.



*Figure 3: Types of disorders/difficulties*

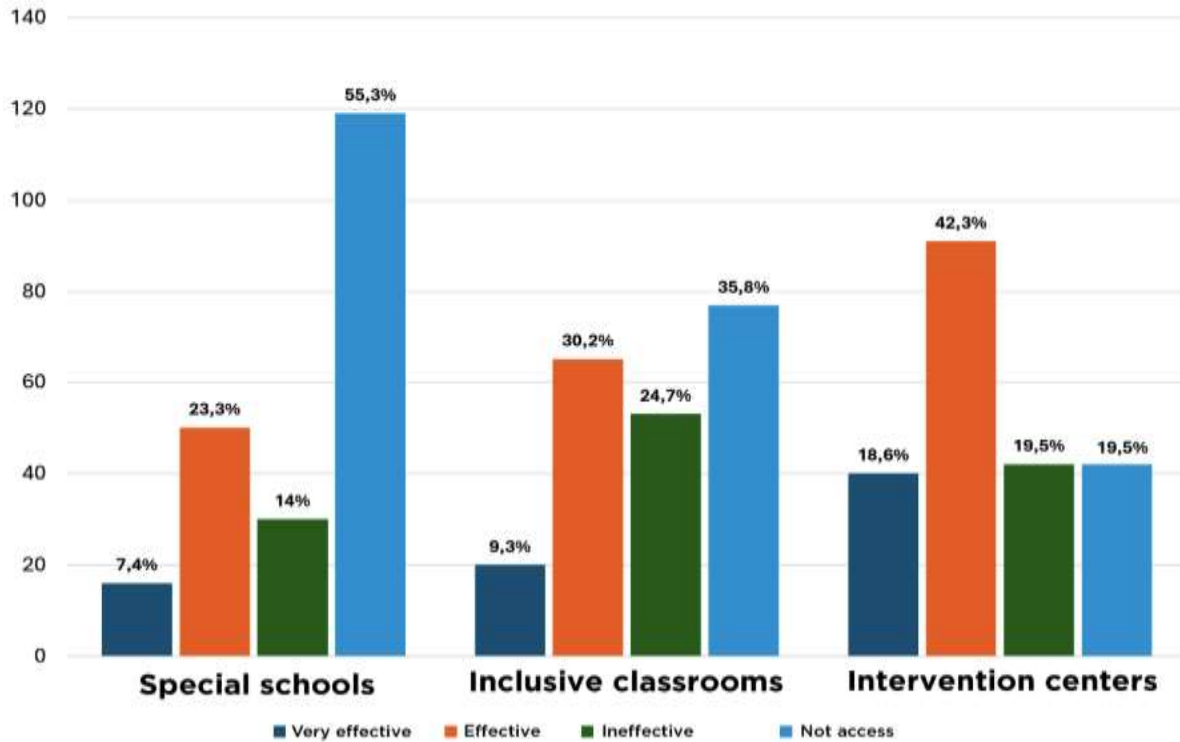
### The Current Situation Regarding Support for Children with Disabilities

The most common intervention approach was a combination of individual/hourly sessions and inclusive education at schools, utilized by 52.1% of children (Tab.3, Fig.4). Full-day attendance at specialized centers was the second most common, at 30.2%.



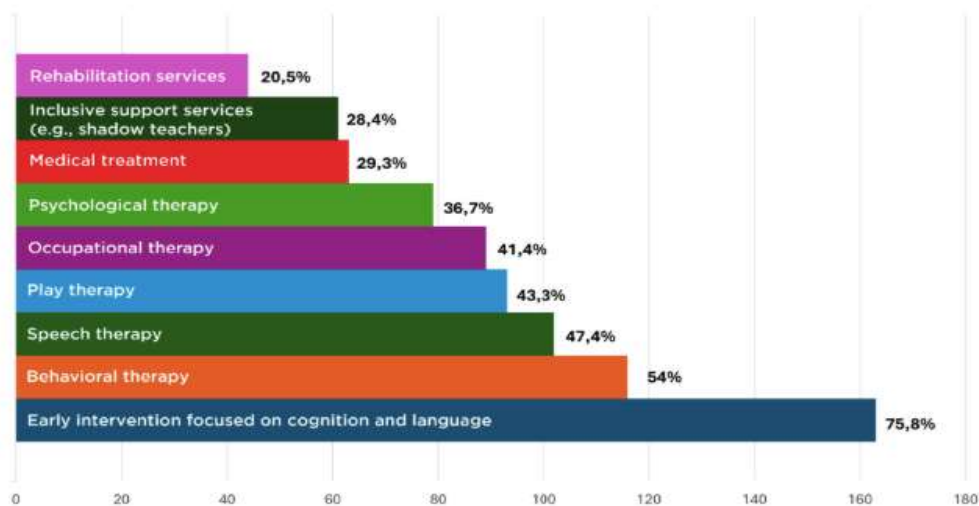
*Figure 4: Types of intervention programs participated in by children in the survey*

Parents' evaluations of intervention settings varied (Fig.5). Intervention centers were rated "effective" or "very effective" by a combined 60.9% of parents who accessed them. Inclusive classrooms, however, were deemed "ineffective" by 24.7% of parents, a relatively high rate compared to other settings, despite 39.5% finding them "effective" or "very effective". Special schools were rated "effective" or "very effective" by 30.7% but "ineffective" by 14% of those who accessed them.



*Figure 5: The effectiveness of intervention environments*

Early intervention focused on cognition and language was the most utilized therapy program (75.8%), followed by behavioral therapy (54%) and speech therapy (47.4%) (Tab.5, Fig.6). Rehabilitation services (20.5%) and inclusive support services like shadow teachers (28.4%) were less commonly accessed.



*Figure 6: Intervention and therapy programs*

## The Current Situation Regarding Support for Parents of Children with Disabilities

Parents primarily received support through training programs, with nearly 75% attending training on intervention/therapy methods and on knowledge/skills for care (Tab.2). Psychological support was also common, with 69.3% participating in therapy groups and 63.7% receiving personal counseling. Financial aid for transportation/treatment was accessed by 62.3% of parents, while 50.7% received caregiver allowances. Vocational skills training (58.1%) and flexible working conditions (55.8%) were the main forms of employment assistance.

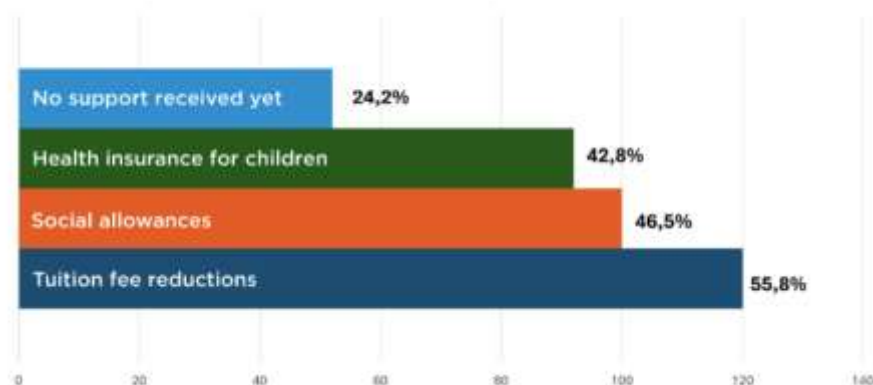
Additionally, 62.8% of families accessed recreational/play services, and 51.6% received legal assistance regarding the rights of children with disabilities.

**Table 2: Support for parents**

<b>Support for parents</b>		<b>Number (n=215)</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Training programs	Training on knowledge and skills for caring for children with special needs	159	74
	Training in intervention and therapy methods	161	74,9
	Workshop for sharing knowledge and experiences	130	60,5
Psychological support	Personal counseling	137	63,7
	Participation in therapy groups for parents of children with special needs	149	69,3
Financial aid	Caregiver allowance for caring for children with disabilities	109	50,7
	Financial aid for transportation and treatment	134	62,3
Employment assistance	Providing flexible working conditions	120	55,8
	Assisting in finding suitable employment opportunities	76	35,3
	Supporting vocational skills training for parents of children with disabilities (to help them achieve a stable income while having time to accompany and support their children)	125	58,1

## The Current Situation of Community Support and Government Policies

Survey results indicated that parents mainly received government support in the form of tuition fee reductions for their children, social welfare allowances, and health insurance coverage for children with disabilities. Details in the chart below:



**Figure 7:** State support policies

Government support was mainly in the form of tuition fee reductions (55.8%), social allowances (46.5%), and health insurance (42.8%) (Fig.8). Notably, 24.2% of surveyed families reported receiving no government support at all. Community support was accessed through parent associations, online groups, teachers, friends, and professionals, with less support from neighbors or acquaintances.

## The Current Situation Regarding Parents' Expectations

Based on different developmental disorders and challenges their children face, parents expect the following types of support: psychological therapy, behavioral intervention programs, occupational therapy, nutritional counseling services, sleep-related consultation services, medications and supplements to address nutritional issues, medical care, and training programs to improve parental skills. The number of parents interested in each type of support is presented in the table below:

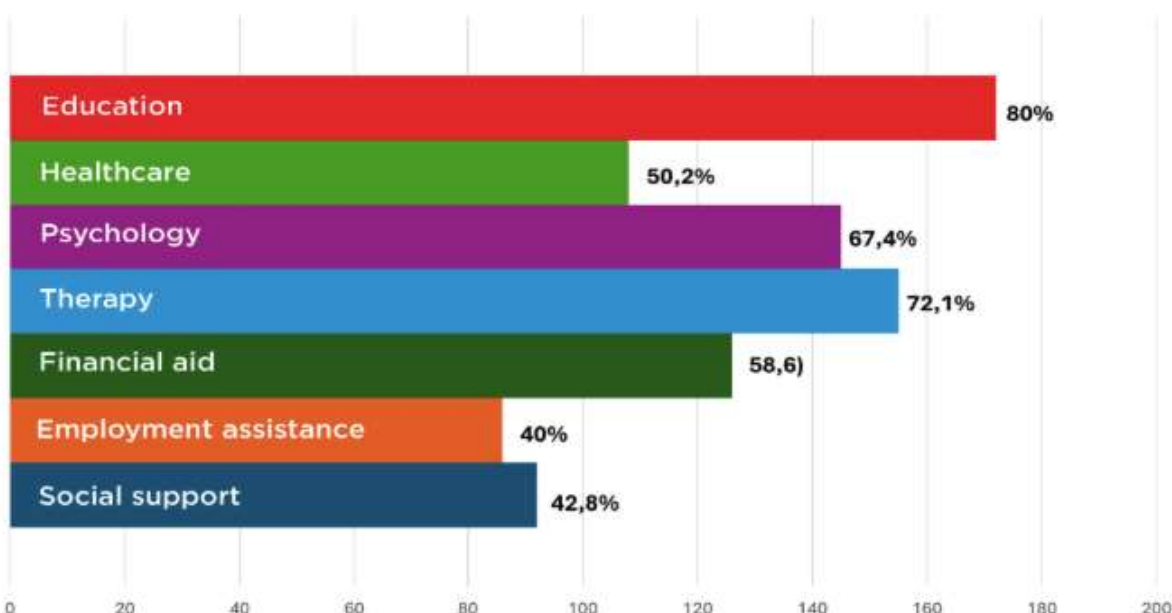
**Table 3:** Parents' Desired Solution

Solution	Number (n=215)	Percentage (%)	Rank
Psychological therapy	148	68,8	2
Behavioral intervention programs	151	70,2	1
Occupational therapy	123	57,2	3
Nutritional counseling services	105	48,8	6
Sleep-related consultation services	54	25,1	8

Medications and supplements to address nutritional issues	106	49,3	5
Medical care	62	28,8	7
Training programs on parental skills	122	56,7	4

Behavioral intervention programs were the most desired solution by parents (70.2%), followed by psychological therapy (68.8%), occupational therapy (57.2%), and parental skills training (56.7%) (Tab.3). A high percentage of parents (75.4%) were aware of multidisciplinary therapy approaches.

Reflecting these needs, parents most desired support in education (80%), therapy (72.1%), and psychology (67.4%) (Fig.8).

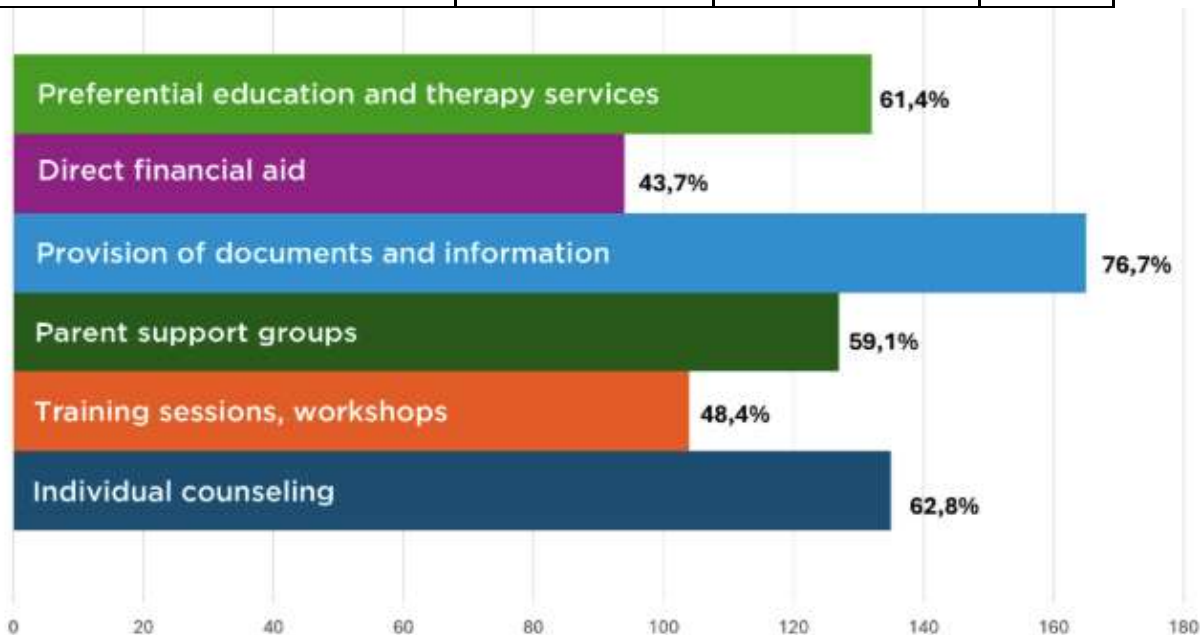


**Figure 8: Areas of Support Needed**

Parents also mentioned the forms of support they want to receive in these areas, including: individual counseling, training sessions, workshops, parent support groups, the provision of documents and information, direct financial aid, and access to preferential education and therapy services. The detailed results as follows:

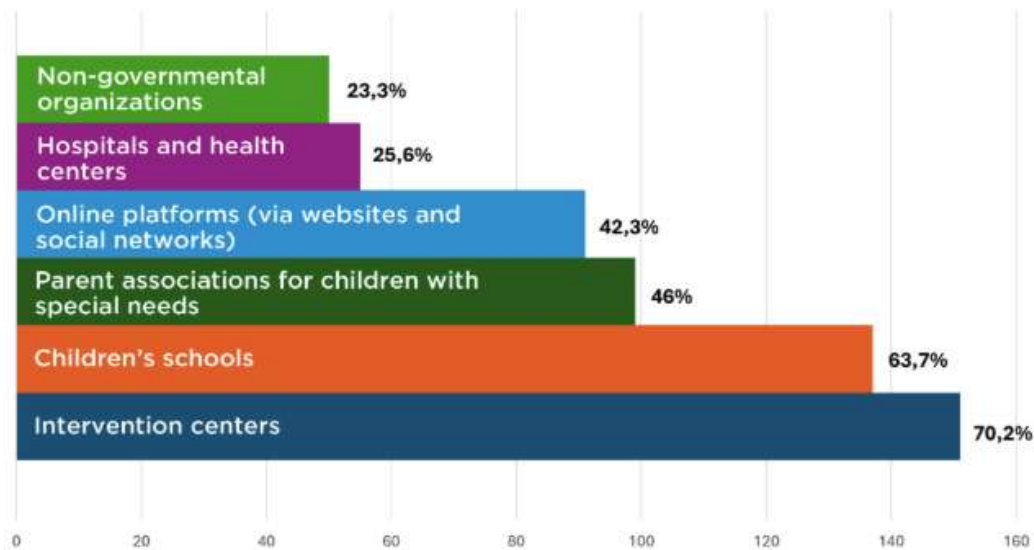
**Table 4: Forms of support**

Forms of support	Number (n=215)	Percentage (%)	Rank
Individual counseling	135	62,8%	2
Training sessions, workshops	104	48,4	5
Parent support groups	127	59,1	4
Provision of documents and information	165	76,7	1
Direct financial aid	94	43,7	6
Preferential education and therapy services	132	61,4	3



**Figure 9: Forms of support**

The most preferred forms of support were the provision of documents and information (76.7%), individual counseling (62.8%), and preferential education/therapy services (61.4%) (Tab.4, Fig.9). Intervention centers (70.2%) and children’s schools (63.7%) were the most preferred channels for receiving support (Fig.10). Parent associations (46%) and online platforms (42.3%) were also notable channels.



*Figure 10: Channels for receiving support*

## DISCUSSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

### Discussion

This study aimed to analyze the current comprehensive support ecosystem for children with disabilities and their families in Vietnam, identify existing challenges and needs, and lay the groundwork for proposing improvement solutions. The findings reveal a multifaceted situation, where significant efforts have been made, yet substantial gaps and needs persist across various components of the support ecosystem.

The prevalence of communication and cognitive difficulties, alongside high rates of comorbid emotional, behavioral, and attention deficit hyperactivity disorders among children in the survey, underscores the complexity of needs requiring specialized and multifaceted interventions. While many children participate in a combination of individual/hourly interventions and inclusive education, the mixed perceptions of effectiveness, particularly the relatively high rate of inclusive classrooms being deemed ineffective by some parents, suggest that the quality and suitability of current inclusive practices may not consistently meet families' expectations or children's needs. In contrast, intervention centers received more positive evaluations regarding effectiveness, potentially indicating a preference or perceived benefit from more specialized, intensive support settings for certain needs. This highlights a critical area for improvement in mainstream inclusive education to better serve children with diverse disabilities.

Parents themselves receive various forms of support, primarily through training programs, workshops, and psychological counseling. However, the data also indicates that parents overwhelmingly desire more support in education, therapy, and psychology for their children, with behavioral intervention programs, psychological therapy, and occupational therapy being highly sought after. This suggests that while existing parental support mechanisms are valued, the core

need revolves around accessing effective direct services for their children. The high parental awareness of multidisciplinary therapy approaches (75.4%) further indicates a readiness and desire for collaborative, comprehensive care models.

Government support, mainly through tuition fee reductions, social allowances, and health insurance, plays a role, yet a significant portion of families (24.2%) reported receiving no support at all. This gap in coverage points to potential issues in policy implementation, accessibility, or eligibility criteria, leaving many vulnerable families to navigate complex challenges without a formal safety net. This situation contrasts with the principles of robust government policies ensuring rights and equal opportunities, as highlighted in the literature review and international frameworks like the UNCRPD.

The findings of this study can be effectively interpreted through Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979), which posits that individual development is shaped by interactions across various environmental systems. The challenges identified clearly manifest at multiple system levels. [8]

The **microsystem**, encompassing the immediate family, reveals significant parental stress and need for enhanced skills and knowledge, directly impacting the child's immediate environment and development. Parents' desire for training in intervention methods and skills for caring for children with special needs (around 74% for both) highlights this.

The **mesosystem**, representing interactions between microsystem components (e.g., family-school collaboration), shows areas for improvement. While schools and intervention centers are the preferred channels for receiving support, the variable effectiveness of inclusive classrooms points to potential weaknesses in this critical mesosystem link.

The **exosystem**, which includes broader community structures and support services not directly involving the child but affecting them (e.g., parental employment support, availability of specialized services), shows that while services like vocational training for parents (58.1%) exist, other areas like assistance in finding suitable jobs for parents (35.3%) are less accessed, impacting family resources.

The **macrosystem**, comprising cultural values, societal attitudes, and overarching government policies, is reflected in the reported need for greater community awareness and the gaps in government support.

Comparing these findings to international models discussed in the literature review, such as the "Circles of Support" in the US, the "Index for Inclusion" in the UK, and comprehensive "Inclusive Education" policies in Nordic countries, it is evident that a more integrated, multi-level approach is necessary in Vietnam. These models emphasize strong community involvement, school-level systemic change, and rights-based policy frameworks, aspects that the current study suggests require further strengthening in the Vietnamese context.

However, this study has certain limitations. Due to time and resource constraints, the research could not delve deeply into the current situation of the support ecosystem in each specific locality or for each specific type of disability in great detail. The survey primarily captured

parents' perspectives, and incorporating views from other stakeholders, such as educators, service providers, and policymakers, would provide a more comprehensive picture. Furthermore, the proposed solutions, while based on identified needs, require further research, improvement, and practical refinement through pilot testing and evaluation.

The discussion of these findings underscores the complex, interconnected nature of the support ecosystem. Addressing the identified challenges and meeting the expressed needs requires a holistic and coordinated strategy, leading to the specific recommendations detailed in the subsequent section.

## Recommendations

Building a comprehensive and effective support ecosystem for children with disabilities in Vietnam necessitates coordinated, integrated solutions across five interacting key components: family, school, community, state policies, and support services. Based on the survey analysis, the following specific solutions are proposed to strengthen this ecosystem, aligned with identified needs:

### ➤ *Solutions For Families*

**Raising awareness and knowledge:** Implement diverse communication programs (media, social platforms) on disabilities and interventions; establish parent clubs/forums for experience sharing; organize expert seminars (healthcare, education, psychology); and develop user-friendly instructional materials, addressing the needs of 76.7% of parents.

**Equipping parents with skills:** Organize training courses, workshops, and hands-on sessions focusing on practical skills for care, education, and communication, particularly given that children frequently experience communication (37.9% very often, 34.5% often) and cognitive (18.4% very often, 37.9% often) difficulties.

**Support for addressing comorbid disorders:** Given the high rates of children with emotional and behavioral disorders (75.3%), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) (73%), and sleep disturbances (48.4%), it is necessary to offer counseling sessions and training workshops on psychological and behavioral therapies and methods for improving sleep quality.

**Enhancing support for early intervention programs:** Because a majority of children with 75.8% participating in early cognitive and language intervention programs, it is essential to expand and improve the quality of these programs.

**Psychological and emotional support:** 69.3% of parents having participated in therapy groups implies providing individual and group psychological counseling services and ensuring professionalism and effectiveness is essential. It can help parents cope with stress, anxiety, feelings of guilt, or inferiority associated with raising a child with disabilities. In addition, families should be connected to available support resources, including healthcare, education, social services, and disability support organizations. Additionally, there is a clear need to expand individual counseling to meet diverse needs with 63.7% of parents having accessed these services.

**Financial support:** First, it is necessary to improve caregiver allowance policies because the results indicate that only 50.7% of parents received caregiver allowances. The eligibility scope and support level should be considered and ensure allowances meet the families needs and delivered to the right beneficiaries. Another solution is to mobilize social resources by encouraging organizations, businesses, and individuals to contribute financially to support disadvantaged families. With 62.3% of parents receiving transportation and medical treatment support, it should be timely and sufficient. Finally, promoting flexible employment opportunities and vocational training is essential. With 55.8% of parents receiving flexible work support and 58.1% vocational training, these programs should be sustained and expanded.

### ➤ **Solutions for Schools**

Schools play an integral role in creating an inclusive educational environment where children with disabilities are respected, accepted, and given opportunities for holistic development.

**Diversifying intervention approaches:** With 52.1% of children participating in both individualized interventions and inclusive classrooms, a combination of individualized intervention and inclusive education should be promoted and ensure close collaboration between teachers and specialists at the same time. The quality of inclusive classrooms must be improved to attract more children with disabilities. Investment in infrastructure and equipment: Schools must be equipped with accessible facilities (e.g., ramps, elevators, accessible restrooms) and special learning aids (e.g., computers with assistive software, interactive boards, adapted teaching materials). Nurturing a friendly and inclusive school culture: Creating an open, respectful environment that embraces diversity, non-discrimination, and encourages the participation of all students. Organizing inclusive extracurricular activities: Give children with disabilities opportunities to engage in cultural, sports, and artistic activities alongside their non-disabled peers.

**Improve the quality of specialized centers:** With 30.2% of children attending full-day at specialized centers, policies to enhance specialized centers should be focused. Because children participate in a diversity of intervention and therapy programs (75.8% early intervention, 54% behavioral therapy, 47.4% speech therapy), coordination and individualization in their plan must be noticed.

**Enhance teacher capacity:** Improve training special education teachers: Ensure sufficient quantity and quality of teachers with expertise in special education and pedagogical skills appropriate to various types of disabilities. Mainstream teachers should be provided with regular professional development and equipped with basic knowledge of disabilities and inclusive teaching methods. Encourage collaboration between special and mainstream teachers to share experiences and develop Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) for students with disabilities. Ensure teachers are adequately prepared in supporting children with a range of disorders (including emotional, behavioral, attention, and hyperactivity disorders).

**Developing Individualized Education Programs (IEPs):** Conducting comprehensive assessments of each child's needs and abilities, including learning, communication, motor, emotional, and social skills. IEPs should be designed based on these assessments, to tailor educational objectives, content, teaching methods, and assessment approaches to each individual child, with input from families and relevant professionals. IEPs must be regularly

monitored and adjusted to track children's progress and update plans to support optimal development.

**Strengthening collaboration between schools and families:** Establishing regular communication channels to ensure timely and effective information exchange on children's learning, health, and development. Parents should be involved in the development and implementation of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and give their perspectives in educational decisions for their children. Organize thematic parent meetings to offer valuable information and guidance on how to support children's learning and development at home.

### ➤ **Solutions for the Community**

The community serves as a key factor in creating a supportive, accepting social environment that promotes the inclusion of children with disabilities.

**Develop parent associations for children with special needs:** With 46% of parents receiving support from such associations, their roles should be strengthened and expanded.

**Online support:** Given 42.3% of parents receiving online support, platforms and apps for virtual assistance should be developed to improve this kind of support.

**Raise awareness and change attitudes:** Launch communication campaigns: Use mass media and social media to raise public awareness of disability rights and eliminate stigma and discrimination. Organize community education activities: Host talks, workshops, film screenings, and exhibitions to provide accurate information and promote empathy. Promote participation of persons with disabilities: Create opportunities for them to share their stories and drive social change.

**Fostering inclusion:** Encourage participation in cultural, sports, and artistic activities, by offering equal opportunities for children with disabilities to express themselves and engage with the community. Enhance access to public services: Ensure public facilities (e.g., parks, libraries, cultural centers) and services (e.g., public transportation, healthcare) are accessible to persons with disabilities. Promote employment opportunities: Raise awareness of the capabilities of persons with disabilities and encourage businesses to provide suitable job opportunities for them.

**Strengthening the role of social organizations:** Support organizations of and for persons with disabilities by enabling them to function effectively in protecting rights and providing assistance. Encourage volunteer participation: Involve community members in supporting children with disabilities and their families. Enhance collaboration among organizations: Create networks connecting social organizations, government agencies, and other stakeholders to optimize resources and improve the effectiveness of activities.

### ➤ **Solutions on Government Policy**

State policy plays a crucial guiding role, providing the legal framework and guaranteeing resources to support children with disabilities and their families:

**Improving the legal system:** Ensure that no family is left without support. 24.2% of families on the survey stated that they have not received any form of support leading to the need to review to guarantee that all families are supported. Examine, amend, and supplement legal documents to ensure consistency, feasibility, and alignment with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the actual conditions in Vietnam. Introduce targeted policies: Develop prioritized and support policies for children with disabilities and their families in areas such as education, healthcare, employment, and social welfare. Strengthen sanctions for violations to ensure strict enforcement of the law and protect the rights and interests of persons with disabilities.

**Increase resource investment:** Allocate sufficient government budget resources by prioritizing funding for programs and projects that support persons with disabilities, particularly children. Encourage socialization: Stimulate participation and contributions of organizations, businesses, and individuals both domestically and internationally. Invest in scientific research: Support research on disabilities, effective intervention and support methods.

**Improving the effectiveness of state management:** Strengthen inspection and supervision such as ensuring effective and goal-oriented policy implementation. Promote decentralization and empowerment: Empower local authorities in implementing support programs suitable to local conditions. Enhance intersectoral collaboration: Ensure close coordination among ministries and sectors (such as Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs; Education and Training; Health; Finance, etc.) in the development and implementation of policies.

**International cooperation:** Applying experiences of developed countries with effective models and policies supporting persons with disabilities from around the world. Participate in international forums and conferences to share Vietnam's experiences and to gain access to new knowledge and technologies. Attract international cooperation projects to leverage resources and expertise from global organizations to improve support for persons with disabilities.

### ➤ **Solutions on Support Services**

A diverse, high-quality, and accessible support service system is a key factor in meeting the diverse needs of children with disabilities and their families:

**Develop diverse types of services:** Provide physical therapy, speech therapy, occupational therapy, and psychological therapy of high quality and appropriate to each type of disabilities. Provide psychological therapy, behavioral interventions, and occupational therapy due to high demand of parents for these services (70.2% for behavioral intervention, 68.8% for psychological therapy, and 57.2% for occupational therapy) with the proper availability and quality.

**Nutritional counseling services, sleep-related consultation services:** Specialized services of nutritional and sleep-related counseling should be provided with the need for these services is 48.8% and 25.1%, respectively.

**Expand and improve the quality of early intervention services:** Early detection of disability along with timely intervention to optimize child development.

**Develop psychological counseling services:** Apply for both children with disabilities and their families to deal with emotional and behavioral issues. Make special education support services available to children with disabilities which are tailored to their individual needs. Expand employment assistance and vocational guidance services to help persons with disabilities access vocational training and secure suitable employment opportunities. Develop community-based support services: Guarantee support services more accessible, especially for people living in remote and rural regions.

**Ensure accessibility and equity:** Build an extensive service network: Develop service providers in all localities, especially disadvantaged areas. Provide complete and understandable information: Make information about support services easily accessible to persons with disabilities and families. Implement support policies to ensure services are affordable or partially/fully subsidized for families with difficult circumstances. Improve service access through intervention centers and schools which are channels parents prefer to receive support, with 70.2% choosing intervention centers and 63.7% choosing schools.

**Increase technology application:** Use online platforms: Provide remote counseling and support services via the internet and mobile apps. Apply assistive technologies: Use technology devices and software to enhance the effectiveness of intervention and rehabilitation services. Build databases: Effectively manage information on persons with disabilities and support services.

This proposed ecosystem model visualizes an interactive network with the family at its core, supported by interconnected circles of school, community, government policies, and specialized services. Effective collaboration between these components, such as school-family partnerships in IEP development and community engagement, is crucial for creating an optimal environment for the holistic development of children with disabilities. Government policies underpin this structure by providing legal frameworks and ensuring resource allocation for high-quality support.

## Conclusions

Building a comprehensive support ecosystem for children with disabilities and their families in Vietnam is an urgent task which has profound humanistic meaning. This ecosystem not only helps improve the quality of life for children with disabilities but also reflects the fairness and civility of a society. Achieving this goal requires collective effort from all factors of society: families, schools, communities, and government authorities.

This paper contributed to understanding this complex issue by analyzing the current support ecosystem for children with disabilities in Vietnam, drawing primarily from the perspectives of parents. The key findings highlight significant challenges faced by children and their families in accessing adequate support, alongside a clear articulation of their needs and expectations across the five critical components of the ecosystem: family, school, community, government policies, and support services. Based on this analysis, the research proposed a range of targeted solutions aimed at enhancing parental awareness, knowledge, and skills; improving teacher training and inclusive education programs; fostering greater community engagement; refining policies and legal frameworks; and expanding the quality and accessibility of specialized support services.

In the future, more in-depth studies can be conducted on the situation in each locality and for each type of disability; assess the effectiveness of support and intervention models for children with disabilities; study the factors affecting successful social inclusion for children with disabilities; and develop tools to evaluate the effectiveness of the support ecosystem. It is hoped that this paper will contribute to raising public awareness of the importance of building a comprehensive support ecosystem for children with disabilities and their families in Vietnam. Ultimately, it is hoped that the insights and recommendations presented in this paper will contribute significantly to raising public awareness and catalyzing actionable improvements in the comprehensive support ecosystem for children with disabilities and their families throughout Vietnam, fostering an environment where every child can develop to their full potential and integrate meaningfully into the community.

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