

Enabling Social Entrepreneurship for the Disabled

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Abstract

Social entrepreneurship has the potential to offer job opportunities for people with disabilities (OKU). However, there is a gap between the effectiveness of existing social entrepreneurship activities and the desire of people with disabilities to become social entrepreneurs. This paper aims to detail the plan of study for exploring the basic principles practiced by social entrepreneurs with disabilities in overcoming challenges and creating opportunities within their social entrepreneurial business. This study targeted disabled entrepreneurs and five key informants to be interviewed through the Quintuple Helix method. The study is expected to become the basis of generalizing the culture of social entrepreneurship among the disabled group.

Keywords: Disable Group; Entrepreneurs; People with Disabilities; Social Entrepreneurship

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1.0 Introduction

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that ten per cent of a country's population is made up of people with disabilities (OKU). Based on the estimation, Malaysia is considered to have 4.8 million people with disabilities (OKU). However, there are only 587,608 people with disabilities registered with the Department of Social Welfare (JKM). The biggest challenge of this group in Malaysia is to get job opportunities. This is because, society's view limits the opportunities of people with disabilities (OKU) to be integrated with the employment environment causing them to be in poverty. The issue of employment opportunities among the disabled is among the matters that receive special attention from various parties, especially the government. Although various efforts that have been carried out to help this group through the provision of training, job placement and education, however, this issue has not yet been fully addressed and has become a social issue and problem among the disabled.

Along with the Malaysian family empowerment agenda which is the sixth focus of the 12th Malaysia Plan (12th RMKe) which focuses on the development of disabled people in various fields, especially entrepreneurship, the Malaysian government under the Ministry of Women, Community and Family Development (KPWMK) through the Department of Social Welfare (JKM) and the Peninsular Malaysia Manpower Department (JTKSM) as well as other government and non-government bodies have planned various initiatives. These include the entrepreneurship program for the disabled, Self-Reliance Service Center services, the Disabled Entrepreneurs Empowerment Program (Power) and the Disabled Business Encouragement Scheme Grant (SBGP-OKU) have proven the government's willingness, concern and sensitivity towards the development aspects of the disabled. Most recently, the 'CARE: Capable and Reliable Entrepreneur' Pilot Program is one of the initiatives of the Ministry of Entrepreneur Development and Cooperatives (MEDAC) to help entrepreneurs with disabilities. In addition, the Disabled Persons (OKU) Act 2008 (Act 685) greatly helps the disabled through the recognition of this special group to be entitled to protection and recognizing the cooperation of government and non-government bodies to ensure the full participation of relevant parties in providing facilities and services to the disabled. However, the issue of difficulty in getting a job faced by this group has not yet found a solution.

In general, work is a need of an individual's life, including the disabled. The challenges and obstacles of the disabled people in the employment world is a factor that greatly affects the opportunities of this group to get a job. Many of them do not have jobs. The number

of those who get a job is very low when compared to normal people. Norasmah (2013) and Ang (2012) found that the percentage of disabled people who are unemployed increases from year to year. The existing policy in Malaysia is seen as still not fully capable of defending this group of people with disabilities.

In addition, Malaysia also received the effects of global economic uncertainty which now demands a social economic approach as practiced by Western countries. This situation is a challenge for the government to balance the socio-economic position of its citizens due to the threat of a worsening unemployment crisis and an increase in the living poverty rate that occurs every year. Taking that into account, social entrepreneurship is relevant to implement. Social entrepreneurship needs to be seen as a new stepping stone and strategy in opening job opportunities and able to make a big impact in dealing with employment issues for the disabled (Parker Harris, et al., 2014; Gidron, 2013; Linton, 2013). This can be implemented when existing disabled entrepreneurs explore efforts to help people in similar situations. The challenges and obstacles of this group need to be given attention in making the field and approach of social entrepreneurship as one of the proactive steps to help this group. This social entrepreneurship is seen to be able to improve the economy and the quality of life of the disabled people so that this group is not only able to generate their income but also able to have a competitive spirit to venture into the field of entrepreneurship. Nevertheless, social entrepreneurship and the disabled are still seen as new and need to be explored more widely for the benefit of this group. The objective of this paper is to explain the plan of study to explore the basic principles practiced by social entrepreneurs with disabilities in overcoming challenges and creating opportunities within their social entrepreneurial business.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Concept of Social Entrepreneurship

Social entrepreneurship is a concept that has been around for a long time in business discussions. In the past, the term entrepreneurship was limited to pure business activities aimed at the production and delivery of products (services) required by the market and the implementation of various innovative strategies to achieve the goal of maximum profit. Now, the concept of entrepreneurship has entered a new phase when its application is expanded to social and non-profit objectives in line with today's aspirations for social transformation. Social entrepreneurship involves the application of traditional entrepreneurial principles to a context and focus related to social issues. This is clearly understood through the views of Kostetska and Berezyak (2014) and Klangboonkrong & Baines (2022) who mention that social entrepreneurship is a response to the social problems of society such as unemployment, poverty, community fragmentation and hunger, which are increasingly chronic and achieve universal social justice.

Caring for the social aspects of the community is often considered the responsibility of the government and NGO sectors and is carried out through existing traditional mechanisms. Through social entrepreneurship, the approach taken in caring for the social aspects of society is through actions based on market mechanisms and resembling the behavior of genuine private entities. Social entrepreneurship is an approach that combines roles and responsibilities that used to be carried out separately (alone) by the government, the private sector and charities (Shahrul Nizam, et al., 2022). This is because social entrepreneurship offers innovation in methods of gathering and unifying resources as well as forming interaction and exchange (exchange) among individuals to achieve targeted social objectives (Kostetska & Berezyak 2014). As a result, actions based on social entrepreneurship are expected to be more capable of producing efficiency and effectiveness in achieving social goals, increasing the competitiveness and sustainability of social entities or target groups that are assisted. For example, the application of social entrepreneurship principles in the generation of charitable home funds will result in innovative, pro-active fund-raising activities that are not limited to typical donations. These steps can ultimately guarantee the survival of the organization's resources and the social goals it strives for.

This social entrepreneurship approach is necessary to solve social and environmental problems through an entrepreneurial model. Social entrepreneurs play the role of agents of change in the social sector, using the mission to create and maintain social value, recognizing and continuously pursuing new opportunities to complete the mission, engaging in a process of constant innovation, adaptation and learning, acting boldly without being limited by current resources, and exhibit high accountability

2.2 Social Entrepreneurship among the Disabled Group

Social entrepreneurship among the disabled group has been gaining momentum and increasing recognition worldwide. Social entrepreneurship refers to the use of entrepreneurial principles and business strategies to address social or environmental challenges. The disabled community has faced various barriers and discrimination in society, including limited access to employment opportunities. In this case, social entrepreneurship offers an avenue for individuals with disabilities to create their own ventures, contribute to society and have a positive impact on their communities.

Recent studies show that social entrepreneurship can be an effective strategy to promote the inclusion of economic and social among the disabled group (Wong & Hasson, 2018; Iwamoto & Lin, 2020; Tjahjono et al., 2021). These research studies emphasized the importance of access to funding, mentoring, and networking opportunities as well as training and support programs that address the unique challenges faced by this population (Suguna & Rasika, 2021; Carter et al., 2019). In addition, research has shown the potential of social entrepreneurship to generate a positive social environmental impact especially when it involves individuals with disabilities as key stakeholders in the design and implementation process (Haigh & Hoffmann, 2020; Duong et al., 2022). Although there is evidence that social entrepreneurship can have a positive social and environmental impact, however, there is a need for more research on the extent to which this effect is realized in practice and how it can be maximized (Yoon et al., 2023). There are also requirements for more

research on the relationship between disability and other social categories such as gender, race and ethnicity and how these may impact the experiences and outcomes of social entrepreneurship of the disabled group.

2.3 Social Entrepreneurship Program in Malaysia

Social entrepreneurship among the disabled is a relatively new concept in Malaysia (Abdullah, et al., 2020). As people with disabilities often face challenges in finding employment opportunities, which can lead to exclusion from society and poverty, social entrepreneurship can offer the best solution by providing opportunities to individuals with disabilities to create their own businesses and be self-employed. Furthermore, the study found that there is a lack of awareness and support for social social entrepreneurship among the disabled in Malaysia where Wong (2020) states that the disabled group are often neglected in Malaysia's social entrepreneurship policies and program. Among other things, lack of financial resources and support networks are a major obstacle for this group who want to start their own social enterprises.

The Peninsular Malaysia Manpower Department (JTKSM) as well as other government and non-government bodies have planned various initiatives to support social entrepreneurship among the disabled. This includes the OKU entrepreneurship program, Independent Service Center services, Empowerment Program Entrepreneurs with Disabilities (Power) and the Disability Business Promotion Assistance Scheme Grant (SBGP-OKU) have proven the readiness, concern and sensitivity of the government towards the development aspect of the disabled. In addition, the Program Pilot 'CARE: Capable and Reliable Entrepreneur' is one of the initiative programs of the Ministry of Entrepreneur Development and Cooperative (MEDAC) to help entrepreneurs with disabilities (OKU). In addition, the Persons with Disabilities Act (OKU) 2008 (Act 685) greatly helps the disabled through the recognition of the disabled so that they are entitled to protection and recognition. The cooperation of government and non-government bodies to ensure the full participation of relevant parties in preparing facilities for the disabled. Most recently, through Malaysia Madani, funding support for social enterprises through various grants and funding schemes, offering capacity building programs for social entrepreneurs, including opportunities for Training, coaching and networking, help to access new markets and customers, including through partnerships with government agencies, companies and not-for-profit organizations, support impact measurement and evaluation for social enterprise and help assess and communicate social impact on stakeholders. In the context of the Agenda Sustainable Development 2030 (SDG 2030) on the other hand, the role of entrepreneurship in improving the quality of life of ordinary people, including disadvantaged groups such as the disabled has been recognized, because they contribute to the construction of infrastructure that is resilient, encourages inclusive and sustainable industrialization and fosters the production of innovation.

In addition, there are also efforts made by non-governmental organizations to empower social entrepreneurship among the disabled group. Among them is OKU Sentral, a social business founded by two individuals with disabilities which aims to provide employment and training opportunities to individuals with disabilities in Malaysia. This organization operates coffee shops and catering services run by individuals with disabilities and also provide training and support for disabled entrepreneurs who want to start their own business. Besides that, Biji-Biji Initiative is also a social business founded by a disabled OKU focuses on sustainability, recycling and employees individuals with disabilities to work at workshop and also his own manufacturing plant. Other than that, Batik Boutique, a social business founded by a citizen of America who has moved to Malaysia with his family employees individuals with disabilities to create handmade batik products, such as scarves and bags sold online and also in retail stores.

2.4 Reasons for Lack of Involvement of the Person with Disabilities in Social Entrepreneurship

Individuals with disabilities face significant challenges in accessing resources and support, including limited access to funding, a lack of policies and regulations that support their inclusion and societal stigma and discrimination (Ahmad et al., 2020). Limited access to financial resources such as grants and loans is a major obstacle for this group who want to start and grow their business (Lindsay & McQuiken, 2017). Social barriers and culture including society's negative attitude towards the disabilities can limit opportunities for them to participate in the workforce. They face physical and environmental barriers that can making it difficult to access available resources and entrepreneurial opportunities (Garcia & Olaz Capitan, 2021; Othman et al., 2021). Such obstacles have caused the disabled to distance themselves from opportunities available. Therefore, understanding the obstacles faced by entrepreneurs with disabilities is an effort which is important to empower social entrepreneurship among this group. Although some studies were conducted to disclose the challenges faced by the group, however, more research is needed to identify specific obstacles they face when starting and growing a business. This can help in the formation of policies and programs that better support individuals from the disabled group.

3.0 Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The objective of the study is to explore the basic principles practiced by successful social entrepreneurs with disabilities in overcoming challenges and creating opportunities within their social entrepreneurial business. This study will use a qualitative approach where qualitative data will be obtained entirely through document analysis, in-depth interviews and observation. To fulfil the objective of the study, a qualitative study through interviews and document review will be conducted. Researchers will obtain information related to the challenges and problems faced by existing disabled entrepreneurs through interview sessions with disabled entrepreneurs. In addition, information will also be obtained from secondary data sources, namely the main reference journals, books, proceedings, reports and relevant electronic resources to fulfil this objective. Findings from the collection of this information will be able to help researchers to make conclusions about the challenges and problems faced by the existing disabled entrepreneurs.

3.2 Population and Sample

For this study, the focus is on the physically disabled. Physical disability refers to the permanent disability of a limb either due to the loss or absence or disability of a limb that can affect their function in performing basic activities completely. The basic activities that are meant are such as personal care, movement and changing body position. This situation can occur as a result of injury (accident) or disease on any cardiovascular, respiratory, hematologic, immunological and other nervous system that causes dysfunction (Act People with Disabilities 2008).

Based on statistical data from the Department of Social Welfare (2018), a total of 497,390 people with disabilities are registered. Of this number, a total of 300,933 people are Malays. Based on Article 160 (2) of the Malaysian Constitution, the Malays must be Muslim, so the number of ethnic Malays is linked to the number of disabled Muslims. Injury (accident) or disease in any of the cardiovascular, respiratory, hematological, immunological, and other nervous systems causes dysfunction (Act People with Disabilities 2008).

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The latest statistics from the Department of Social Welfare up to August 2022 found that there are a total of 619,273 registered person with disabilities in all states in Malaysia, of which 341,541 are aged between 18 and 60 years. Of the total number of registered disabled person in Malaysia, the five states with the highest number of registered disabled persons are the State of Selangor (100,967), the State of Johor (72,138), the State of Perak (53,936), the State of Kedah (53,643) and the State of Kelantan (44,135).

Among the selected criteria are:

- i) Disabled entrepreneurs who are still active in business
- ii) Disabled entrepreneurs who register their business with the Companies Commission of Malaysia (SSM).

Apart from disabled entrepreneurs, through the Quintuple Helix model, researchers will also conduct interview sessions with experts in the field of entrepreneurship and disabled groups. A total of 5 key informants consisting of academic experts (university representatives), successful disabled entrepreneurs (Industry Representatives), the Social Welfare Department (Representative of the Authority), the public and ECOpreneur Malaysia (Community).

3.3 Data Collection Procedure

Data collection will be carried out based on three phases, namely through document analysis, semi-structured interviews with the disabled entrepreneurs and semi-structured interview through the Quintuple Helix model with five main stakeholders; academic experts, successful disabled entrepreneurs, the Government Agencies, the society, and the community.

Generally, the data collection for the study will be based on the triangulation method. First, document analysis in which written documents such as books, journals and reports from the Social Welfare Department will be consulted and reviewed to obtain information regarding the scope and activities of disabled entrepreneurs and social entrepreneurs and to identify the challenges and problems faced by disabled entrepreneurs in relation to social entrepreneurship throughout conducting business activities. Second, interview in which a semi-structured interview will be conducted between the researcher and the informant, who are the disabled entrepreneurs. The researcher will prepare semi-structured questions based on the research objectives that have been set. Third, semi-structured interviews will be conducted through the method suggested by the Quintuple Helix model to interview stakeholders consisting of academic experts (university representatives), successful disabled entrepreneurs (industry representatives), representatives from the Social Welfare Department (authority representatives), the general public and ECOpreneur Malaysia (community) to learn more about the scope and activities of disabled entrepreneurs and social entrepreneurship and also challenges, problems and suggestions to empower disabled entrepreneurs especially in the field of social entrepreneurship.

Table 1. Data Collection

Data Collection Method	Sample	Objective
Document analysis	Journals, books, proceedings, reports and relevant electronic resources	To identify the challenges and problems faced by disabled entrepreneurs in relation to with social entrepreneurship throughout conducting business activities.
Semi-structured interview	Disabled entrepreneurs	To obtain information regarding the scope and activities of disabled entrepreneurs and social entrepreneurs
Semi-structured interview	Five main stakeholders (academic experts, successful disabled entrepreneurs, the Government Agencies, the society, and the community)	To learn more about the scope and activities of disabled entrepreneurs and social entrepreneurship and also challenges, problems and suggestions to empower disabled entrepreneurs especially in the field of social entrepreneurship.

3.4 Plan for Data Analysis

Data analysis will be done using the latest Nvivo software. Qualitative data obtained through interviews will be analyzed inductively. Next, a thematic analysis will be carried out to identify the main themes and sub-themes after carrying out the transcription of the data.

4.0 Expected Findings

This study is an effort to improve the economy and the quality of life of the disabled entrepreneurs. This study will become the basis for boosting the country's economic growth, improving the well-being of Malaysian families especially the disabled group, eradicating

extreme poverty and bridging the income gap and empowering the agenda of Bumiputera and Malaysian families. The findings of the study may create a framework of basic principles practiced by disabled social entrepreneurs in overcoming challenges and creating opportunities within their social entrepreneurial business. Besides, it is expected that, the study will become a great effort in producing the disabled entrepreneurs who cultivate social entrepreneurship and contribute to the economic transformation process in line with the policy and aspirations in the 12th Malaysian Plan which is to mainstream social entrepreneurship in Malaysia.

5.0 Conclusion

The objective of the present paper is to explain the plan of study for exploring the basic principles practiced by disabled social entrepreneurs. Understanding the obstacles faced by disabled entrepreneurs is of utmost importance for promoting inclusivity, equal opportunity, and empowerment. It enables the development of targeted support mechanisms, encourages economic contribution, challenges stereotypes, and fosters an environment where disabled individuals can thrive as entrepreneurs. Without any intervention, the disabled entrepreneurs may continue to struggle with barriers that prevent them from fully participating in the entrepreneurial ecosystem. They may also continue to face limited access to employment, economic independence, and the ability to contribute to society through entrepreneurship. Thus, this study will focus on developing a framework to shape the disabled entrepreneurs who can compete in the global landscape. Consequently, a limitation of this study is that the data collection will only take place in selected states in Malaysia. However, to minimize the potential bias, the study will include physical disability entrepreneurs from selected states with the highest number of registered disabled entrepreneurs.

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Paper Contribution to Related Field of Study

This paper aims to contribute to the field of social entrepreneurship by examining the barriers faced by persons with disabilities in their entrepreneurial endeavours and proposing strategies to promote their inclusion and empowerment.

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