

Social Entrepreneurship Approach Towards Leveraging Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) in Malaysia

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Abstract

Social entrepreneurship is an innovative approach to solving community problems. This social entrepreneurship approach is expected to be able to offer an alternative to providing sustainable employment opportunities to the disabled in Malaysia through the active involvement of SME traders in the social entrepreneurship movement. Traders are economic activists who have great potential to help improve the well-being of the disabled minority group who are facing employability problems considering that 19.3 percent of traders intend to hire more workers in the second quarter of 2022. Accordingly, the disabled group consisting of those with long-term physical deficiencies, mental, intellectual, or sensory needs to be considered to meet those needs. This conceptual paper aims to shed light on the types of social entrepreneurship approaches and how small and medium enterprise (SME) traders can help the disabled from the aspect of education and employability which in turn can improve their standard of living. Therefore, seven types of social entrepreneurship approach are discussed; nonprofit social entrepreneurship, for-profit social entrepreneurship, cooperative social entrepreneurship, social intrapreneurship, grassroots social entrepreneurship, corporate social entrepreneurship and social innovation incubators/accelerators. SME traders can help the disabled increase their employment opportunities by implementing inclusive hiring practices, providing reasonable accommodations, providing skill development training, offering mentoring and internship program, promoting accessibility in education, encouraging advocacy and awareness and practicing supplier diversity. The discussions and suggestions presented are expected to open a new lens to the social entrepreneurship movement among traders in this country.

Keywords:

Social Entrepreneurship, Traders, Person with Disabilities (PWD)

INTRODUCTION

Becoming a successful trader and entrepreneur is the dream of every individual who has the talent in running a business. In Malaysia, the Department of Statistics Malaysia reports that there are 8,482,655 companies and businesses registered until 31 December 2022. The number of business practitioners who activate these large companies and registered businesses can be activated to venture into the social entrepreneurship movement towards helping the disabled minority who experience employability issues with creativity and

innovation towards ensuring that the group can be empowered. Since the disabled are recognized to have physical limitations in participating in a job and this is one of the obstacles to their freedom in choosing the career they desire, it is a social responsibility for business practitioners in this country to join hands to help solve this issue without pointing finger to the government alone. The rights of the disabled in the context of education and employment opportunities should not be denied (Norfatin Nadhiah 2018).

Creative job opportunities need to be created and offered to them so that there is a balance in the economic context and job supply. Here, a social entrepreneurship approach can be pursued by business practitioners to provide employment opportunities for the disabled. Social entrepreneurship is a unique branch of entrepreneurship to be studied and explored by business practitioners in Malaysia. Furthermore, the social entrepreneurship approach can add value through creativity and innovative processes applied by traders to help solve society's problems. This approach can be realized in a continuum of for-profit or not-for-profit enterprises (Sommerrock 2010). Theoretically, social entrepreneurs and social enterprises will continue to find solutions to society's problems with impactful projects. Community problems or issues are seen as an opportunity to be explored and solved in the social entrepreneurship movement and at the same time can create value in the community (Daleela et al., 2018).

Accordingly, this conceptual paper will describe the literature highlights of the social entrepreneurship approach, Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) traders, and disabled people, followed by a discussion related to the cases of social entrepreneurs who helped the disabled around the globe as well as suggestions to attract more SME traders to join the social entrepreneurship movement to help the disabled.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social entrepreneurship has become a new phenomenon in a country to reduce social problems and further eradicate poverty (SEMy2030; Mohd Adib et al., 2014; Zahra et al., 2009; Robinson et al., 2009). Social entrepreneurship has been recognized as a method to respond to social problems such as unemployment, poverty, hunger, and social disunity, and achieve universal social justice (Kostetska & Berezyak, 2014; Jain 2012). However, despite the development of social entrepreneurship around the world; the social entrepreneurship movement in Malaysia is still new and not very widespread among local entrepreneurs (Shahrilzaily, 2017). According to Nurul Iffah et al., (2018), social entrepreneurship is a field of research that focuses on business that is socially motivated rather than driven entirely from an economic point of view. Gillis and James (2015) associate social entrepreneurship with an approach that suits today's needs, based on three main aspects namely People, Planet, and Profit (3P). These three aspects include ethical leadership, sustainability, and economic values as collective prerequisites for social entrepreneurship (Zaihana & Shuhairimi, 2021).

This social entrepreneurship will have a positive effect on the social problems that occur and open up space to overcome them so that they can create opportunities for those who are unemployed. This social entrepreneurship has its uniqueness when individuals or groups involved in this field see and evaluate problems as opportunities to be overcome and at the same time the problem can be solved (Hasan et al. 2022; Ney et al., 2014). Social entrepreneurship teaches a person to have deep social skills that contribute to the well-being of society. According to Susana et al., (2015) and Hariyaty et. al. (2016), social

entrepreneurship is one of the ways that provide answers to social problems based on the search for innovative solutions for any social problems that arise. Social entrepreneurship is a model of entrepreneurship that is not only concerned with profit but also emphasizes the creation of a society that has a positive and fair impact (Shahrilzaily, 2017).

In Malaysia, social entrepreneurship is often associated with government and non-governmental organizations (NGO) efforts in changing the economic status of the poor. Each of these agencies or NGOs provides a social impact in improving the socioeconomic development of the country (Raudah et al. 2018). Various efforts are carried out to help the poor, such as organizing technical skills training for the needy and offering micro-financing schemes to help them get out of the poverty cocoon. This can be seen through MaGIC's clear efforts where their vision is to make Malaysia a regional leader to improve the economy of the people. Accordingly, MaGIC intends to make the potential of social entrepreneurship a platform to drive and contribute long-term benefits to society and the environment, and the mission of MaGIC is formed to support the achievement of the set vision (Nur Suriaty et al, 2020).

Various efforts have been implemented at the national and global levels to address social problems. However, this matter is widespread and puts continuous pressure on the government to help the poor, marginalized, and vulnerable. To reduce or overcome these issues at the same time, the business community in Malaysia is strongly urged to join the social entrepreneurship movement (SEMy2030) to help reduce or deal with this issue. Social entrepreneurship highlights a model that encourages business activities towards creating a positive and equitable society by not prioritizing financial gain alone (Hariyaty et al. 2019; Suraiya & Ahmad Rafliis 2015; Sommerrock 2010) and this alternative needs to be strengthened among SME traders in Malaysia to help disabled people.

Issues related to unemployment still plague many people, including the disabled (PWD) to this day. There are still many disabled people who do not have a job even though they get an education up to the age of 19. This is due to the ability of the disabled is still in doubt to complete tasks at work (Masitah Hayati & Suhaida 2013). This issue is seen as very worrying following the findings of the Ministry of Human Resources (2019) which showed that out of 3059 job applications from various categories of people with disabilities to work in the public sector, only 27 people were accepted. Berita Harian (2020) also reported that until June 2019, there were only 3686 (0.29%) who filled public service positions compared to 1.6 million civil servants nationwide. Indeed, unemployment occurs due to the lack of skills required in the job market (Ang, 2012), in addition to the significant weakness of the disabled in the mastery of employability skills, causing the quality of disabled workers to be disputed (Zaliza, 2015). Today's employers are seen to be more concerned with the quality of employees in terms of technical skills in the field studied, academic achievements, employability skills, and personal qualities (Rafiduraida et al., 2019; Shahrudin, Noraziah & Mohd Fauzi 2011).

Concerned that the problem of unemployment among people with special needs will continue to plague the disabled individual themselves, including their families and the surrounding community. Without a job, they will not have a source of search and income for basic needs and funding for their health (Saslizawati, 2020). To ensure that the disabled get a fair chance to contribute to the country's productivity, employers are the third party that plays an important role in ensuring that the right to work for the disabled is fulfilled (Norfahin Nadhiah 2021). Unfortunately, such employers are constrained by several factors and continue to dispute the ability of the disabled to perform the job perfectly. Thus, effective

approaches to curb this polemic should be explored and practiced. It is believed that unemployment among the disabled can be reduced or overcome by close cooperation between traders as employers and relevant training institutions for the disabled.

THE TYPES OF SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP APPROACH

Social entrepreneurship is a broad field that encompasses various approaches. Table 1 postulates some of the common types of social entrepreneurship approaches shown by SMEs.

Table 1: Types of social entrepreneurship approach

No.	Type	Social Entrepreneurship Approach
1	Nonprofit Social Entrepreneurship	This approach involves creating and managing nonprofit organizations with a social mission. Nonprofit social entrepreneurs typically rely on donations, grants, and other forms of funding to support their initiatives. They focus on addressing social and environmental issues and reinvest any surplus or profit into their mission (Sommerrock 2010).
2	For-profit Social Entrepreneurship	In this approach, social entrepreneurs establish for-profit businesses that aim to generate sustainable revenue while addressing a specific social or environmental problem. These enterprises employ innovative business models that prioritize social impact alongside financial profitability. They may use various strategies such as cross-subsidization, hybrid business structures, or impact investing (Sommerrock 2010).
3	Cooperative Social Entrepreneurship	Cooperative social entrepreneurship emphasizes the cooperative ownership and governance of enterprises. This model involves individuals coming together to form cooperatives that address social or environmental issues. Cooperative enterprises distribute profits among their members, who collectively make decisions and share responsibilities (Rory 2018).
4	Social Intrapreneurship	Social intrapreneurs work within existing organizations, such as corporations, government agencies, or nonprofits, to drive social and environmental change from within. They employ entrepreneurial approaches to introduce innovative solutions, change policies and practices, and promote sustainability and social responsibility within their organizations (Radin Siti Aishah et al., 2016).

5	Grassroots Social Entrepreneurship	Grassroots social entrepreneurship involves individuals or small groups initiating social change at the local level. These entrepreneurs identify community needs, mobilize resources, and create innovative solutions. Their initiatives often focus on community development, empowerment, and social justice (Daleela et al. 2018; Bornstein & Davis 2010; Litzky et al. 2010).
6	Corporate Social Entrepreneurship	Corporate social entrepreneurship refers to the efforts of established corporations to integrate social and environmental considerations into their business strategies. These corporations aim to create shared value by aligning profit-making activities with positive societal outcomes. They may develop socially responsible products, implement sustainable practices, or engage in philanthropy and community development (Vallejo-Fiallos 2022; Sommemerrock 2010).
7	Social Innovation Incubators/Accelerators	Social innovation incubators or accelerators provide support and resources to social entrepreneurs, helping them refine their ideas, develop business models, access funding, and scale their impact. These organizations foster a supportive ecosystem for social entrepreneurship and often offer mentorship, training, networking, and access to investors (Hariyaty et. al 2016).

The above approaches are not mutually exclusive, and many social entrepreneurs employ a combination of strategies depending on the nature of their initiatives and the social issues they aim to address.

THE SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES (SMEs) ROLE IN HELPING PWDs

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) can play a significant role in helping persons with disabilities (PWDs) to obtain better education and employment opportunities. Table 2 exhibits some ways in which SMEs can contribute to the empowerment of PWDs.

Table 2: The SME roles in helping persons with disabilities

No.	SME Roles	Details
1	Inclusive hiring practices	SMEs can actively promote inclusive hiring practices by providing equal employment opportunities for PWDs. By considering the unique skills and abilities of PWDs, SMEs can create a diverse and inclusive workforce, allowing PWDs to contribute their talents and capabilities to the organization (Hasan et al. 2022).
2	Reasonable accommodations	SMEs can make necessary modifications and adaptations in the workplace to accommodate the specific needs of PWDs. This may involve providing assistive technologies, making physical accessibility enhancements, or implementing flexible work arrangements to ensure that PWDs can perform their duties effectively (National Network 2018).
3	Skills development and training	SMEs can collaborate with educational institutions, vocational training centers, or disability-specific organizations to offer skills development and training programs for PWDs. By providing targeted training opportunities, SMEs can help PWDs acquire the necessary skills and competencies for specific job roles, enhancing their employability (Rory 2018).
4	Mentorship and internship programs	SMEs can establish mentorship and internship programs designed specifically for PWDs. These initiatives allow PWDs to gain practical work experience, learn from professionals in their field of interest, and develop networks within the industry. Such programs can significantly improve the employment prospects of PWDs by providing them with valuable hands-on training and exposure (Kitching 2014).
5	Promoting accessibility in education	SMEs can support initiatives that promote accessible education for PWDs. This may involve sponsoring scholarships, contributing to the development of inclusive educational materials, or partnering with educational institutions to implement accessibility measures, such as providing ramps, accessible technology, or sign language interpreters (Asici 2021; Radin Siti Aishah et al. 2016).
6	Advocacy and awareness	SMEs can actively engage in advocacy efforts to raise awareness about the rights and abilities of

	PWDs. By promoting inclusivity and challenging stigmas surrounding disabilities, SMEs can help create a more accepting and supportive society that values the contributions of PWDs in the workforce and education system (Hasan et al. 2022; Rory 2018).
7 Supplier diversity	SMEs can prioritize working with disability-owned businesses or enterprises that employ PWDs. By incorporating supplier diversity policies, SMEs can contribute to the economic empowerment of PWDs and promote their participation in the business ecosystem (Hasan et al. 2022).

These actions taken by SMEs can help break down barriers faced by PWDs, improve their access to education and employment opportunities, and contribute to their overall socioeconomic integration (Asici 2021) . By recognizing the unique talents and capabilities of PWDs, SMEs can foster inclusive environments that benefit both individuals and the organization as a whole.

THE INSPIRING STORY OF SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND THE DISABLED AS BENEFICIARIES

Social entrepreneurs are individuals who engage in entrepreneurship and social enterprises, while social enterprises refer to businesses or organizations that use profit-based or non-profit-based spaces to make or sell goods with the main purpose of meeting social goals. Dahaman et al. (2018) showed that almost all of the disabled in this country are made up of people who need to be helped and supported to continue their survival. It is a call and encouragement to the trading community to see and refine their role to help the group. There are several inspiring stories related to social entrepreneurship carried out by innovative traders to help the disabled both in and outside the country.

The following Table 3 describes some inspiring stories of social entrepreneurship with the motive of helping the disabled. This story hoped to give an idea of how disabled people can be empowered, given work skills, and able to contribute towards productivity and self-advancement as well as the business of the employer as a trader.

Table 3: Inspirational stories of social entrepreneurship focused on PWD

Business Name	Social Entrepreneurship Approach
Myrtillo	In Greece, there is a social cooperative called Myrtillo, which was established with the specific aim of integrating disabled people into the labor market. This enterprise is in the form of a cafeteria and an Art Center located in the capital city of Athens in Ambelokipi. This social enterprise is an innovative self-supporting business and training center that employs approximately 90% of disabled employees. It was found that the disabled worker was honest and worked hard. They show

responsibility as workers and feel that they are also co-owners of the social enterprise (Vasilis 2021).

Dasomi Foundation In South Korea, there is an organization called the Dasomi Foundation that offers nursing and care services, hospice without caregivers, and palliative services. Dasomi Foundation employs 600 nurses who are disabled. They are offered jobs, given sufficient training, and serve the community around them. To ensure that this social enterprise is successful and continues to be sustainable, the joint efforts of the government, the market, and non-profit organizations need to create a close collaboration network (Kim Dung 2020).

Incluyeme Incluyeme.com was founded by Gabriel Pablo Marcolongo in 2012 in Argentina to help people with disabilities find jobs. Incluyeme works to ensure that PWDs can live their lives to the fullest through access to health care, education, social protection, and work programs without barriers. Incluyeme promotes the marketability of OKU and accompanies companies to implement social and labor inclusion strategies (Incluyeme.com).

Kerjabilias Kerjabilias is the largest job search platform in Indonesia that facilitates employment for people with disabilities in the country. Since 2015, the Kerjabilias platform has provided services to over 12,000 job seekers and assisted recruitment for more than 2,000 companies looking to hire employees. Kerjabilias also provides consulting services for companies to be fully inclusive employers (<https://kerjabilias.com/>).

The Silent Teddies In Malaysia, there is a social enterprise called The Silent Teddies which aims to empower hearing-impaired people with useful knowledge and skills to complete themselves as a workforce inside or outside the Silent Teddies Bakery premises. This social enterprise offers vocational training to hearing-impaired people starting on 6 July 2017, in Kuala Lumpur. This enterprise trains several hearing-impaired teenagers with skills in the preparation and sale of biscuits, pastries, and cakes, which has finally opened up opportunities for the teenagers involved to get jobs (silenteddies.com 2021).

Coffezone In Malaysia, there is also a company that offers jobs to the disabled community, namely Coffezone in Shah Alam which is responsible for training people with disabilities to be employed as baristas or coffee makers starting from October 2016. Coffezone also collaborates with the Disabled Persons Unit under the Department of Social Welfare (JKM) to select candidates for disabled employees, as well as provide job training services for disabled people (coffeestore.com).

WD Smart Farmability WD Smart Farmability is a social enterprise recognized by Malaysia's Global Innovation & Creativity Center (MaGIC). The purpose of its existence is to empower the Malaysian disabled community through

urban agriculture by providing nutritious food and meaningful jobs for them. The main goal of WD SMart Farmability is to help the disabled community acquire the skills they are looking for that will enable them to be part of the workforce, or as entrepreneurs. Through this effort, it is hoped that the disabled community can inherit the knowledge and entrepreneurial skills to become independent and contribute to the organization's commitment (<https://www.PWDsmartfarmability.com/>).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ATTRACTING MORE TRADERS TO PARTICIPATE IN SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP FOCUSED ON PWD

The number of businesses participating in social entrepreneurship projects that support the disabled is found to be increasing across ASEAN today. The State of Social Enterprise in South East Asia published by UNESCAP and the British Council in 2021 reported that there are 1 million social enterprises that are currently addressing social and environmental issues across Southeast Asia (British Council et al., 2021). The social issues in question include the right to equal employment for people with disabilities, which is a common focus for skills training and employment programs provided by social enterprises throughout Southeast Asia. Additionally, many non-profit organizations also support PWDs across ASEAN, many of which are increasingly pursuing the revenue-generating model practiced by social enterprises. Along with the positive development of social entrepreneurship in Southeast Asia, Malaysia needs to respond to this call by encouraging more traders in the country to engage in social entrepreneurship to help people with disabilities. To attract more traders to participate in social entrepreneurship focused on persons with disabilities, it is important to create an environment that fosters inclusivity, awareness, and sustainability.

To materialize the above matters, awareness of social entrepreneurship must be created and spread. Government support and policy advocacy that support social entrepreneurship and disability inclusion must be aligned. The engagement of government agencies, policymakers, and legislators to raise awareness about the importance of these initiatives and encourage the creation of an enabling environment through supportive policies, funding, and regulations; is much needed. Government and Public sectors play vital roles to develop targeted marketing campaigns and educational initiatives to raise awareness about social entrepreneurship focused on persons with disabilities. The success stories need to be highlighted. Successful social entrepreneurs need to showcase the impact of such ventures on society and emphasize the business potential and social benefits. On top of that, social entrepreneurship mentoring, mentorship, and training must be offered by the government and public agencies to propel. Offer mentorship programs and training opportunities to traders who are interested in venturing into social entrepreneurship. This can include workshops, seminars, and networking events that guide starting and managing a social enterprise focused on persons with disabilities.

Collaboration with disability organizations is also important to establish partnerships with them and the advocacy groups. This collaboration can provide valuable insights into the needs and challenges faced by persons with disabilities, while also helping to create a supportive network of stakeholders. Collaborate with existing traders and investors instead by engaging with existing traders and investors who are interested in social impact investing or have a focus on disability inclusion. Then, the organization of networking events and conferences is significant to connect them with social entrepreneurs working in this field. The

facilitation of knowledge-sharing and partnership opportunities between traders, investors, and social entrepreneurs can be realized. Financial incentives can be developed and offered to encourage traders to invest in social entrepreneurship focused on persons with disabilities. This can include grants, loans, and tax benefits that specifically target and incentivize businesses working in this domain. Additionally, it promotes diversity and inclusion within the trading community itself by encouraging participation from people with diverse backgrounds and abilities.

To foster an inclusive social entrepreneurship ecosystem, an inclusive ecosystem that supports the participation of persons with disabilities needs to be created. This includes providing accessible infrastructure, technology, and resources to facilitate their engagement in social entrepreneurship. Leverage the utilized technology to enhance the accessibility and reach of the PWD beneficiaries. Develop online platforms or marketplaces that connect traders and investors with social enterprises focused on persons with disabilities. This can provide a convenient and efficient way for interested parties to discover and engage with such ventures. Hence, establishing transparent impact measurement frameworks is important to demonstrate the social and economic impact of social enterprises focused on persons with disabilities. Highlighting measurable outcomes and success metrics can attract traders who are interested in making a positive difference in the lives of individuals with disabilities.

By implementing these recommendations, it is hoped that the creation of a more vibrant and inclusive ecosystem for social entrepreneurship focused on persons with disabilities will help in attracting more traders to participate and contribute to this impactful sector.

CONCLUSION

Social entrepreneurship has a wide potential to contribute to the business community, especially toward a prosperous, inclusive, and competitive country. Employment opportunities created through a social entrepreneurship approach have the potential to benefit the disabled community by providing employment opportunities for those in need. Through the provision of job opportunities or the willingness of traders to venture into social entrepreneurship, this effort is expected to help the community to generate income and enjoy the longevity of life. The inspiring stories of social entrepreneurs who benefit the disabled are expected to provide understanding and awareness that the group needs to be empowered by providing enough space and job opportunities to enable them to live life without having to rely on others. It is hoped that the traders will take advantage of the opportunities provided and will be able to realize the disabled Malaysians who can rise with a strong spirit to advance themselves and their families.

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