

Person with Disabilities and Business Sustainability Factors in Malaysia: A Review of Literature

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Abstract

Disability is a natural phenomenon that happens in every country in the world. Just like others, persons with disabilities (PwDs) are also involved in social and economic activities. Unfortunately, not many PwDs are employed. Unfairness still becomes the main problem for PwDs, especially for education and employment. The mistreatment of them seems to be unending. Due to this, the unemployment rate among PwDs keeps on growing including in Malaysia. Multiple solutions have been proposed to reduce this problem. Entrepreneurship is evidenced to have social value as it contributes to socio-economic development. Within this context, multiplying effect is seen to be explicit when entrepreneurial activities are undertaken among vulnerable groups like PwDs. Here, entrepreneurship can help to provide opportunities to create employment for them. The paper elaborates on the factors that help to sustain PwDs in their entrepreneurship venture. It also refers to the Malaysian Plan of Action for Persons with Disabilities 2016-2022, where the equal rights for PwDs to education, employment, and cultural life, the rights to own and inherit property, not to be discriminated against in marriage, children, and not involving them as unwilling subjects in a medical experiment. It is interesting to note that this is a review paper that combines secondary data that include past research, data gathering, and information sought from offline and online materials to come up with logical arguments thus initiating an empirical study in the future. In addition, this paper also aims to support the achievement of the 8th Sustainable Development Goal which is to promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth and full employment.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

PwDs and unemployment increasing at an alarming rate. The increase in unemployment for PwDs is due to the discrimination by an employer towards them and suggested self-employment to increase work opportunities for them (Izam & Mohamed, 2020; Blanck, Sandler, Schmeling & Schartz, 2000). Adding to this, fewer opportunities are provided by the government in providing job opportunities for PwDs. Looking at Malaysia's perspective, the quota provided by the government for PwDs to involve in the government sector is only 1% (Ministry of Woman, Family and Community Development, 2016), and only 2.4% of them who applied for business support scheme under Malaysian Companies Commission (Rosli, 2020). To add to the challenges for them, the environment in the government sector is also not disabled-friendly and leads PwDs to be self-employed but their involvement in business is relatively small as highlighted in Table 1 (The Sun Daily, 2021).

Table 1: Programmes for Persons with Disabilities

Provider	Number of PwDs that receive assistance:
(Ministry of Entrepreneur Development and Cooperatives) MEDAC (CARE program)	24
Tekun Nasional	759 (Year 2000 until now)
Tunas Usahawan Belia	57
National Entrepreneurship Institute (INSKEN)	20

It is gathered from the data that less than 1000 of PwDs in Malaysia received assistance to start an entrepreneurship venture. Immediate action from related government agencies and financial institutions is needed to provide support and assistance to PwDs who are trying to lead a good life as an entrepreneur. Thus, another objective of this study will be to determine the support given by the government and related authorities in sustaining PwDs in business. Due to this, it is important to discover the factors that influence PwDs in Malaysia to sustain themselves as entrepreneurs. Here, this paper will

find the factors that contribute to the sustainability of PwDs in maintaining their business activities.

As highlighted above, the number of PwDs involved in a business is very small and thus, this study will explain the factors that help PwDs to sustain their business. According to Prastowo, Hafiar, and Setianti, (2021), the Corona epidemic is just another significant obstacle that entrepreneurs with disabilities must overcome. Entrepreneurs are tenacious in keeping their company running and refusing to sever ties with their staff. Due to a lack of funds to support PwDs so that they can pursue their company idea as a professional alternative and the absence or shortage of special measures to encourage their entrepreneurship, there is a dearth of entrepreneurial activity among PwDs (Ortiz García, & Olaz Capitan, 2021). In the research study by Alvarado et al. (2020), it is determined that the skills that explain entrepreneurial success in PwDs include specific professional competencies, experience in the field, the capacity to learn new skills in business practice, the capacity to identify opportunities, and socio-emotional competencies, such as the capacity to deal with uncertainty in the case of an innovative business idea, the development of emotional and communication skills, and the capacity to understand others.

In many western societies, discrimination of the society against PwDs seems to be distinctive but PwDs manage to gain recognition for their rights as equals to participate in society such as employment, sport, education, and leisure activities (Gillam, 1999). However, until today, mistreatment, inequality, and discrimination toward PwDs persist even though many countries are already aware of the problems. Those injustices affect both men and women but women with disabilities are most likely to face more challenges and difficulties (Barile, 2001). In another context, Schur (2003) found that discrimination became the biggest mechanism of increasing the rate of self-employment for PwDs. They are always faced with negative perceptions and difficulties to seek financial help from banks because of the negative perspectives towards them due to their inabilities (Saxena & Pandya, 2018). From the explanation above, another objective is highlighted for this study which is to discover the factors that keep an employer from hiring PwDs.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Csillag, Gyori, and Svastics (2019) barriers faced by entrepreneurs with disabilities also comes from personal such as the overprotective family that sometimes ruins their self-determination and self-confidence. Adding on, economic barriers where lack of appropriate economic and business environment for entrepreneurs with disabilities, and last, social where the barriers are from the different perspectives and discrimination towards PwDs. This indicates that no matter what choices they take, there will be many aspects to be considered as they may experience many challenges to become entrepreneurs. In essence, one of the challenges is emotional struggles experienced by entrepreneurs in sustaining their business such as due to the economic turbulence during the pandemic (Covid-19), competition with other companies, workers' safety, and also religion and beliefs.

In another aspect, there are many successful entrepreneurs with disabilities who can be role models for PwDs to become entrepreneurs (Csillag et al., 2019). In essence, disabilities with qualities are good values that contribute to a successful entrepreneur within their context. There are different types of qualities that entrepreneurs with disabilities have such as being energized, broad-minded, and having a mission and vision. They also have a very creative analytical thoughts about nature. They also must be smart, adaptable, and problem-solver. Leadership is also one of the main features for them to become entrepreneurs although there are barriers for them to face.

PwDs manage to come out with various approaches that help them to become successful entrepreneurs despite all the barriers (Anderson & Galloway, 2012). On another note, Blanck et al. (2000) explain that self-employment should be utilized frequently as it gives a good solution to help PwDs to move on from unemployment and welfare income to being employed and self-sufficiency. Through government support, they play an important role to help disabled entrepreneurs to be successful like others (Kitching, 2014). Once in this business world, PwDs are also faced with a different challenge that is to be viable and sustainable.

2.1 Disability

In ancient Greece, a birth abnormality was viewed as a curse or even maleficent, and people were either excluded or abandoned to perish from exposure to the elements (Stiker, 2019). In late 2006, the Oxford English Dictionary recognized the terms 'disability' as synonyms for the 'inability' word (Boorse, 2010). There are different characteristics of disabilities. Not only autism, blindness, and deafness but Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), depression, and epilepsy are also classified as 'disabilities'. It can be referring to many diverse conditions that fit the terms (Wasserman, Asch, Blustein & Putman, 2011). According to World Health Organization (WHO), the interaction between individuals with health conditions such as cerebral palsy, down syndrome, and depression with personal and environmental factors such as unfavourable attitudes, inaccessible transportation, and public buildings, and a lack of social support, resulting in disability (WHO, 2021).

There are multiple definitions of disabilities from different researchers. Disabilities refer to the term impairments, restrictions of movement, and participation constraints refer to a unique phenomenon that represents a relationship between a person's body traits and the characteristics of the society in which he or she lives (Talib, Sunar & Mohamed, 2019). Here, disability is not defined by the need to use a wheelchair, but rather by the stairs that do not have an accompanying ramp or elevator. According to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2006, disabilities is defined as a person that has a long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairment that enables them involve effectively in society (Hendricks, 2007). More explanation by Harper and Momm (1989), having a disability can become a stimulus for them to be more creative and innovative in problem-solving. They described entrepreneurs as someone who put things together in new ways to become more competitive in the business environment.

2.2 Disabilities and Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneur comes from the French word "entreprendre" which means to set about or to undertake (Edelman, Manolova, Shirokova & Tsukanova, 2016). The ability to translate their thoughts into action can be

described as entrepreneurs (Filion, 2011). Other studies define entrepreneurs as a key to success and every individual that creates a new business will enter a paradigm called entrepreneurship (Barot, 2015). According to Croci and Cassidy (2016), entrepreneurs also can be defined as an operation that can operate on their own. An entrepreneur can be defined as a person who uses their creativity and initiative to create something new for society (Chowdhury, 2017). Some of the studies defined entrepreneurship as a platform for individuals to be independently successful and some of the researchers defined entrepreneurship as building a good mindset and skills. Certain characteristics have been highlighted by Abdul Kadir and Sarif (2015) and Martin and Obserg (2007) where entrepreneurs are people who are inspired, creative, and dare to take the opportunities. Concerning this study, self-employment becomes their main income-generating activity. Such activities, without access to formal employment, the entrepreneurship for PwDs are referred to as the 'necessity entrepreneurship' in entrepreneurship literature (Williams & Round, 2009).

Nowadays, entrepreneurship has gained the attention of PWD (Caldwell, Parker & Renko, 2016). Aside from the sole reason for the sake of living, EWD may not focus on getting a profit but more to help the growth of the disabled community through the business he or she chooses. According to Dhar and Farzana (2017), in Bangladesh, being disabled consider a burden for the family and they prefer to isolate themselves from society. So, to prove that they are not a burden as the family assumes, they need something to achieve on their own. The result of the study found that entrepreneurship is the only opportunity for them to do something for society and also as a self-satisfaction to have a respectful position in the community.

Different studies were done by researchers from the past regarding how PWD participate in social entrepreneurship and also why they choose to have this kind of employment strategy to gain income for themselves (Caldwell, Parker & Renko, 2016). One of the participants from the interview said that she feels motivated to change the mindset of others towards PWD where becoming disabled does not stop them to own a business (Caldwell, Parker & Renko., 2016). To a greater extent, to meet the social, cultural, and legal requirements of individuals with disabilities, national and EU

authorities adopt various initiatives. Strategies developed by national entities serve as the basis for these efforts (Atanasova, Krastev, Parvanov, & Todorov, 2019). These motivational supports are important to lessen and narrow the discrimination toward entrepreneurs with disabilities.

2.3 Contributing Factors to Sustain PwDs in Business

In relation to entrepreneurs and PwDs, it seems that PwDs also need to have a plan to make sure that their businesses will not go downturn. According to Chijioke (2016), one specific problem faced by Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) leaders in Nigeria are their lack of strategies to sustain their business operations. In addition to the point above, Bazza, Maiwada, and Daneji (2014), pointed out that financial capital is the main factor that will affect the growth and development of SMEs in Nigeria. Another perspective from Obrenovic et al. (2020), findings show that businesses with scattered leadership, a flexible staff, and an adaptive culture can keep running during a pandemic. Additionally, resilient businesses enable more informed and decentralized decision-making. To establish trust and build ties with employees, stakeholders, and customers during and after a crisis, successful firms use Internet and Communication Technology (ICT) and integrate Intranet, social media, and online communication platforms into their everyday business routines. Finally, in the event of a crisis, striking a balance between resource stockpiling and resiliency is critical.

2.3.1 Motivation

Another important aspect is motivation. Motivate means to be moved or something (Deci & Ryan, 2000). A person who is not inspired by something considers someone unmotivated while people who are energized and active consider as someone motivated. Different people have different kinds of motivation as far as an equal treatment among them is concerned. Here, physical abilities and inabilities are taken into consideration. It depends on the reason or goals for the particular person. An individual's behaviour is affected by attitudes and motivations towards specific goals or events. The study by Katz (1960) showed that Gen Z has high enthusiasm to learn new things and a strong desire to prepare for their future career. Another explanation, motivation can make

a significant impact to understand the changes process in someone's behaviour.

Motivation can be the reason for entrepreneurs to improve their company's accomplishments. Good financial support can be one of the motivating factors that can influence entrepreneurs. According to Dyer, Nenque & Hill (2014), they come out with the theory that the more financial support from the family, the better and more beneficial it will be for a start-up's intentions. In contrast, Sieger and Minola (2015), found that the availability of financial support from family and entrepreneurial intention does not have any positive relationship. Another study by Khavul, Bruton, and Wood (2009) supports this theory where he said that the importance of financial support from family is acknowledged but also aware of the disadvantages from it. It seems that financial support is of debate among the normal people and PwDs that are involved in the business. Other factors showed that most people are likely to start their businesses to make their dreams come true, the need to be independent, to experience self-achievement, to be their boss, and to make their own money.

2.3.2 Networking

Aside from motivational support, networking also becomes one of the sustaining factors. Researchers have a different opinions regarding business networking for the success of a business. Over the past 20 years, the idea of networking has been used in a variety of subjects, including management, sociology, organization studies, and business history. According to Pearson and Richardson (2001), some researchers have a different opinion where they assume that networking is a transient phenomenon that can fail young economies. However, it is now widely argued that networks are the most crucial part of economics, where the environment is molded by social, cultural, and political influence as well as market mechanisms. During this new era of economy, it is important to have the ability to quickly and efficiently connect with different business partners and it became one strategic necessity where they refer it as 'networkability' (Alt, Fleisch & Werle, 2000).

With the pandemic and inflation happening right now, a solution has been used to help disabled entrepreneurs to strengthen their social cohesion which is telework. The increased use of telecommuting has been

one of the Covid-19 pandemic's most fruitful projects and strategies. Although this was initially implemented as a short-term, emergency strategy to maintain business continuity, numerous studies have demonstrated its efficacy as a long-term solution that businesses must utilize frequently and continually. Above all, telework has produced significant advantages for preserving social and familial cohesiveness. For people who are less able to work or who are shut out of the labour market due to physical limitations or social and familial obligations, promoting the usage of telework will open up new horizons (Kooli, 2022).

2.3.3 Knowledge

Knowledge is another important point for sustaining PwDs in business. According to Clercq and Arenius (2006), they found that education has some bearing on one's chances of becoming a business owner. More specifically, people with secondary education are more likely to start a business than people with less education. Additionally, they discovered a link between someone's conception of having the ability to start a firm and their propensity to own a business. Knowledge management is important for an organization as it will affect the decision-making process. The success of an organization largely depends on the continual investment in learning and acquiring new knowledge that helps to improve existing performance and the possibility to create a new business (Jelenic, 2011).

According to Devi and Rajamohan (2020), Many disabled people lack the technical and professional knowledge necessary to launch a new business. To evaluate their career, they need some training, information, and skill development. The Indian government is setting up numerous workshops and awareness campaigns for activities that promote skill development. However, they do not know much about the training facilities. One of the causes of the lack of experience in this.

2.3.4 Financial support

Another important aspect of sustaining a business is financial support. Unexpected events, like the COVID-19 epidemic, may force owners to reconsider their business strategies, reduce operational expenses, and seek outside financial backing to keep the cash flowing and the company open. In the United States, the government

signed into law the Coronavirus Aid Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act on March 27 to help small businesses during pandemics. A few programmes also have been launched such as Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) & Emergency Economic Injury Grant, SBA Express Bridge Loan, Small Business Debt Relief, and Small Business Tax Provision (Schlake, 2020). In Malaysia, during the pandemic covid-19 outbreak, the government has given a different kind of financial support to help entrepreneurs to sustain their businesses.

During this difficult time, the Prime Minister of Malaysia, Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin has stated that the tourism industry, in particular, has been crippled with an estimated loss of RM 3.37 billion in the first 2 months (Dzulkiily, 2020). Initially, at the end of February 2020, Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, the former prime minister of Malaysia, announced a RM 20.0 billion financial stimulus package based on three main strategies: (1) lessen the impact of COVID-19, (2) promote people-based economic growth, and (3) encourage quality investments (The Start, 2020). This support helps to lessen the burden on entrepreneurs during the pandemic, especially during the lockdown.

3.0 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In general, the factors to sustain PwDs in business come from different perspectives. According to Ajmal, Helo, and Kekäle (2010), knowledge is very important for sustaining entrepreneurs and due to this, some companies spend more on knowledge management initiatives to strengthen the company. To enhance knowledge management, a few factors are critical for it such as; familiarity, coordination, incentive, authority, system, and culture. According to Chittithaworn et al. (2011), the factors that help the success of businesses of Small and Medium Enterprise (SMEs) in Thailand are; SMEs' characteristics, management, and know-how, products and services, customer and market, the way of doing business and cooperation, resources and finance, strategy and external environment. During the pandemic Covid-19, a few factors have been discovered by Obrenovic et al. (2020) which are networked structure, supply chain resilience, organizational culture, distributed leadership, digitalization and ICT, and financial contingency planning.

Taking the increasing number of entrepreneurs with disabilities in Malaysia and the barriers that they faced to maintain their business, this research is seen to be

essential. With that, information on variables from past research was gathered to come up with the research questions. Table 2. highlights the variables mentioned:

Table 2: Information on Variables from Past Research

AUTHOR(YEAR)	ARTICLE TITLE	SUMMARY OF VARIABLES
Ajmal, M., Helo,P., and Kekale, T. (2010)	Critical Factors for Knowledge Management in Project Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Familiarity • Coordination • Incentive • Authority • System • Culture • Knowledge management
Chittithaworn, C., Islam, M. A., Keawchana, T., & Yusuf, D. H. M. (2011).	Factors affecting business success of small & medium enterprises (SMEs) in Thailand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SMEs characteristics • Management and know-how. • Products and services • Customer and market • The way of doing the business and cooperation • Resources and finance • Strategy • External environment • Business success in SMEs
Howard, T. L. (2017)	Strategies for Entrepreneurs with Disabilities to Sustain a Successful Small Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning a start-up • Managing risk • Networking • Managing finances • Sustain a successful small business
Sugiarto, M., Wakhidati, Y. N., & Gandasari, D. (2021)	The Decision of Broiler Chicken Farmers to Sustain Business during Pandemic Era in Indonesia.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age of farmers • Experience • Farm size • Perceived Covid-19 impact • Sustain the business
Obrenovic, B., Du, J., Godinic, D., Tsoy, D., Khan, M. A. S., & Jakhongirov, I. (2020).	Sustaining Enterprise Operations and Productivity during the COVID-19 Pandemic: “Enterprise Effectiveness and Sustainability Model”.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Networked structure • Supply chain resilience • Organizational culture • Distributed leadership • Digitalization and ICT • Financial contingency planning • Enterprise effectiveness and sustainability. -

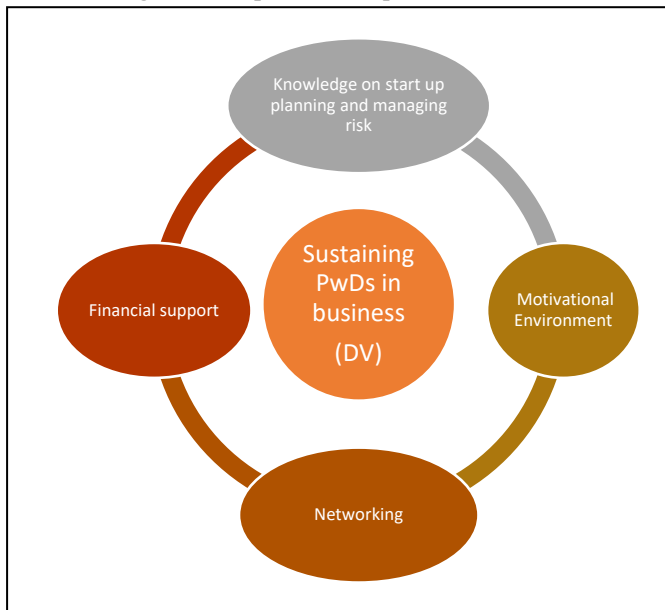
Figure 1: Proposed Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 illustrates the factors that help to sustain PwDs in the business including planning start-ups, managing risk, networking, and managing finances. Agee (2009) has highlighted that to come up with good research, appropriate questions should be asked. In dealing with the PwDs, sensitive questions should be eliminated.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The disabled are more than capable to become a successful entrepreneurs. Past researchers have proved that PwDs faced discrimination for a long time. It is one of the reasons why PwDs decide to become entrepreneurs or self-employed. Nowadays, there are more types of businesses that PwDs can involve in. The points that need to be highlighted in this study are the factors that help to sustain PwDs in business which are knowledge, motivational environment, networking, and financial support. The government and related authorities play an important role to help in sustaining PwDs in business. A study on experiences of entrepreneurs with disabilities by Tihic (2019), showed that an entrepreneurship programme really helps entrepreneurs with disabilities by giving them a sense of belonging and it also helps to provide them support in relevant resources to start and sustain their businesses. Within this context, relevant authorities, policymakers, leading companies, entrepreneurship gurus, and industry players must step forward to create proper guidance and hands-on training

and re-training to ensure the sustainability of the PwDs in business.

This study brings forward the main theme which is that factors help in sustaining PwDs in business. This study makes a significant contribution to the body of knowledge, especially in the field of entrepreneurship and disabilities. It outlines several cores which include the difficulties faced by PwDs to apply for work, challenges faced by PwDs as entrepreneurs, factors that help in sustaining PwDs in business, and also provide ecology and setting that encourage the growth of entrepreneurship.

Author Contributions: This paper is completed by the contributions of the authors with respect to the following tasks:

Introduction, literature review, conceptual framework and conclusion have been written by Nur Afiah Ahmad Rofe. She has tabulated the past research and came out with a conceptual framework that took into considerations the factors that contribute to sustain PwDs in business

Reviewing, editing, proofreading and technical support is done by Sharifah Zannierah Syed Marzuki. It is important to do all the necessary checking to fulfill the requirements set by the journal.

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Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest and the writings are done to ensure that all people are more sensitive to the well-being of the PwDs and the treatment that they deserve to get. It is to emphasize that this review paper has taken a serious approach in gaining all data

and information. Furthermore, this paper maintains equality as far as the write-ups is concerned.

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