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Research paper



New Hope! Advancing Social Entrepreneurship for People with Disabilities in Malaysia and Indonesia

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Abstract

Social entrepreneurship has emerged as a critical tool for fostering economic and social inclusion for people with disabilities. This study explores how two social enterprises—Rumah Harapan Mulya in Karangpatihan, Indonesia, and Generating Opportunities for Learning Disables GOLD in Malaysia—utilise entrepreneurship and digital empowerment to create sustainable livelihoods for people with disabilities. Using a qualitative approach with case study design, we analyse motivations, challenges, and innovative strategies employed by these enterprises. Findings indicate that social entrepreneurs play a pivotal role in fostering inclusion through local wisdom, co-creation, and digital entrepreneurship, despite structural barriers such as stigma and limited market access. This study contributes to the literature on social entrepreneurship by integrating inclusive innovation and digital entrepreneurship perspectives.

Keywords: *Social Entrepreneurship; Inclusive Innovation; Digital Entrepreneurship; People with Disabilities; Indonesia; Malaysia.*

1. Introduction

Social entrepreneurship has gained increasing attention as a means of addressing social exclusion and economic marginalisation of vulnerable groups, including people with disabilities (Austin, James Stevenson & Wei-skillern, 2006; Kidd & McKenzie, 2014; Pavel, 2011). The concept integrates business strategies with social missions, aiming for sustainable impact (Dees & Elias, 1998; Ebrahim et al., 2014). However, in developing countries like Indonesia and Malaysia, structural barriers often hinder the success of disability-led enterprises (Fayolle & Matlay, 2010). These barriers include limited access to capital, inadequate policy support, and societal prejudices that challenge the legitimacy of disabled entrepreneurs (Csillag et al., 2019). In order to understand this interesting phenomenon, two (2) case studies are carried out in countries where the cultural practices are similar but differ in economic and political background.

Specifically, this study investigates the Rumah Harapan Mulya (RHM) in Karangpatihan, Indonesia, and Generating Opportunities for Learning Disables (GOLD) in Malaysia—to understand how social entrepreneurship contributes to the economic empowerment of people with disabilities. Specifically, it explores how social entrepreneurship and co-creation processes shape these initiatives. By doing so, this research contributes to the discourse on inclusive innovation in social entrepreneurship. Moreover, this study integrates the Identity Theory (IT) and Social Role Valorisation (SRV) Theory which provides a deeper understanding of how individuals with disabilities navigate their entrepreneurial journeys within societal frameworks. IT suggests that individuals form their self-concept based on the roles they occupy in society. For people with disabilities to be engaged in social entrepreneurship, their entrepreneurial identity serves as a means to challenge stereotypes and redefine their social positioning (Stets & Burke, 2000). By creating businesses that emphasize capability rather than limitation, these entrepreneurs construct a positive self-identity, reinforcing their sense of agency and purpose. This self-concept is particularly significant in societies where disability is often associated with dependency rather than a form of innovation and leadership.

Similarly, Social Role Valorisation (SRV) Theory emphasizes the importance of socially valued roles in improving the status and treatment of marginalized groups (Osburn, 2006; Wolfensberger, 2000). Social entrepreneurship provides a platform for people with disabilities to assume meaningful roles as business owners, employers, and innovators. These roles enhance their societal perception and increase their access to economic and social resources. By fostering an environment that values their contributions, social entrepreneurship initiatives

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contribute to broader societal change, reducing discrimination and increasing acceptance of disability-led enterprises. In the case of RHM, digital entrepreneurship plays a critical role in economic empowerment. By leveraging online platforms to sell products and services, entrepreneurs with disabilities can bypass traditional employment barriers and reach broader markets. Co-creation with local stakeholders, including non-disabled entrepreneurs and community leaders, further strengthens these initiatives by ensuring inclusive business practices and sustainable development. This aligns with IT, as digital entrepreneurship enables disabled individuals to shape their entrepreneurial identity and assert control over their economic participation in the economy.

Whereas, GOLD in Malaysia integrates mentorship programs, skill development, and digital marketing strategies, enabling disabled entrepreneurs to gain visibility and legitimacy in competitive markets. GOLD has begun to create an online presence to inform the public about its activities in pursuit of developing individuals with disabilities with daily life skills. From an SRV perspective, this initiative reinforces the notion that people with disabilities can occupy valued roles within society, thereby shifting public perceptions and fostering greater inclusivity. Despite these success stories, challenges remain in achieving full inclusion. Societal attitudes, limited funding opportunities, and policy gaps continue to restrict the scalability of disability-led social enterprises (Csillag et al., 2019). Addressing these issues requires multi-stakeholder collaboration, including government intervention, private sector investment, and community engagement. Policies that promote access to finance, digital training, and inclusive entrepreneurship education are essential in overcoming these structural barriers.

The study is structured as follows: Section 2 presents a literature review on social entrepreneurship, digital empowerment and inclusive innovation, Section 3 describes the research methodology, Section 4 discusses findings from the two case studies, and Section 5 concludes the study with policy implications and future research directions.

2. Literature Review

Social entrepreneurship has gained increasing attention as a means of addressing social exclusion and economic marginalisation of vulnerable groups, including people with disabilities (Austin, James Stevenson & Wei-skillern, 2006; Gupta et al., 2020). The concept integrates business strategies with social missions, aiming for sustainable impact (Dees & Elias, 1998). However, in developing countries like Indonesia and Malaysia, structural barriers often hinder the success of disability-led enterprises (Fayolle & Matlay, 2010). These barriers include limited access to capital, inadequate policy support, and societal prejudices that challenge the legitimacy of disabled entrepreneurs.

2.1. Social entrepreneurship and disability empowerment

Social entrepreneurship is increasingly recognised for its role in promoting inclusion (Kiss et al., 2022; Mair & Schoen, 2007; Rawhouser et al., 2019). In the context of disability, entrepreneurship provides an alternative route for economic participation, challenging conventional employment models that often exclude people with disabilities (Parker Harris et al., 2014; Wolfensberger, 1983, 2000). By fostering innovation and self-sufficiency, social entrepreneurship enables individuals with disabilities to engage in meaningful economic activities, enhancing both their financial independence and societal integration. One of the key benefits of social entrepreneurship for disability empowerment is its ability to create tailored opportunities that align with the skills and aspirations of individuals with disabilities. Unlike traditional employment settings, which often impose rigid structures, social enterprises allow for greater flexibility, accommodation, and support (Meltzer et al., 2018). This adaptability helps in mitigating workplace barriers and fostering an inclusive environment that values diverse talents.

Furthermore, social entrepreneurship plays a vital role in challenging societal perceptions of disability. By positioning people with disabilities as entrepreneurs and leaders, these initiatives break down stereotypes that associate disability with dependency (Kašperová, 2021). Successful disability-led enterprises serve as powerful examples of how people with disabilities can contribute meaningfully to economic and social development, thereby fostering a cultural shift towards greater acceptance and inclusion (Mailloux & Ludke, 2024). Digital technology has further expanded the opportunities for disability-led social enterprises. Through e-commerce, digital marketing, and remote work, individuals with disabilities can overcome mobility and accessibility constraints, reaching broader markets and engaging in competitive business practices (van Toorn, 2024). Digital platforms also enable networking, skill development, and knowledge-sharing, enhancing the sustainability and growth of disability-led businesses.

2.2. Inclusive innovation and digital entrepreneurship

Inclusive innovation involves creating opportunities for marginalised communities through participatory approaches (Heeks et al., 2014). Digital entrepreneurship, which leverages online platforms, can bridge economic gaps for people with disabilities by providing access to new markets (Nambisan, 2017). However, studies indicate that digital barriers—such as accessibility and negative online interactions—remain significant challenges (Ghalwash et al., 2017). One of the primary advantages of digital entrepreneurship for people with disabilities is the ability to operate businesses remotely, reducing the constraints imposed by physical barriers. Online platforms allow entrepreneurs to reach global audiences, market their products, and access digital tools that enhance their business operations. This creates a more level playing field where innovation and creativity, rather than physical mobility, determine success. Additionally, digital entrepreneurship fosters social inclusion by enabling individuals with disabilities to participate in knowledge-sharing networks, mentorship programs, and online communities. These digital spaces provide opportunities for learning, collaboration, and advocacy, helping entrepreneurs gain the necessary skills and support to sustain their ventures (Neumeyer et al., 2020). Such initiatives are crucial in building an ecosystem that supports inclusive innovation.

However, barriers such as limited digital literacy, lack of accessible online tools, and negative biases in digital marketplaces continue to hinder full participation (Yu et al., 2024). Addressing these challenges requires targeted policies, such as accessible web design standards, digital training programs, and inclusive funding opportunities to empower disability-led enterprises. Governments, private sector actors, and non-governmental organisations must collaborate to create an enabling environment for digital inclusion. This study examines two case studies—RHM in Karangpatihan, Indonesia, and GOLD in Malaysia—to understand how social entrepreneurship contributes to the economic empowerment of people with disabilities. Specifically, it explores how social entrepreneurship and co-creation processes shape these initiatives. By contributing to discussions on inclusive innovation, this research enhances understanding of social entrepreneurship initiatives for disabled communities from two countries' perspectives namely Indonesia and Malaysia. Additionally, applying Identity Theory (IT) and Social Role Valorisation (SRV) Theory offers valuable insights into how disabled communities navigate structural and societal barriers while forging sustainable business ventures to ensure their survival in this challenging environment.

2.2.1. Underpinning theories: identity theory and social role valorisation theory

2.2.2. Identity theory (IT)

Identity Theory (IT) suggests that individuals form their self-concept based on the roles they occupy in society (Burke & Stets, 2009; Stets & Burke, 2000; Stets & Serpe, 2013). According to Identity Theory (IT), social entrepreneurs participate in identity labor, which entails regulating and aligning their own identities with the expectations and conventions of the social entrepreneurship field. Their identity as social entrepreneurs becomes important to their self-concept, influencing their actions, decisions, and aspirations throughout the entrepreneurial process (Burke, 2004; Stets & Burke, 2000). Social entrepreneurs are motivated by a sense of purpose and a desire to effect positive social change, and their role as change agents influences their actions and methods. For people with disabilities engaged in social entrepreneurship, their entrepreneurial identity serves as a means to challenge stereotypes and redefine their social positioning (Stets & Burke, 2000). By creating businesses that emphasize capability rather than limitation, these entrepreneurs construct a positive self-identity, reinforcing their sense of agency and purpose. This self-concept is particularly significant in societies where disability is often associated with dependency rather than innovation and leadership. (Burke & Stets, 2009) define identity as the meaning people give themselves when they engage with others and are a part of society. An individual's identity consists of three distinct roles: role, group, and person. A role identity is a set of internalized meanings linked with a specific role, such as a parent, worker, husband, or teacher role identity. Group identity is the meaning that comes from interaction with a certain group of people, such as work groups, sports clubs, or ethnic group identification. A person's identity is founded on a set of meanings that differentiate the person as a distinct individual, rather than a person who plays a specific position or belongs to a group (Burke & Stets, 2009; Stets & Burke, 2000; Stets & Serpe, 2013).
Identity Theory (IT) focuses on the individual and emphasizes the role of self-concept and personal identity in shaping behavior and social relationships (Hogg et al., 1995). Furthermore, identity theory emphasizes the importance of self-verification and identity salience in determining people's behavior and interactions (Burke & Stets, 1999; Stets & Burke, 2000). Identity theory has been applied to a variety of sectors, including social entrepreneurship, to better understand how people's identities and self-concepts influence their participation in entrepreneurial activities that generate social impact. Identity theory in social entrepreneurship holds that people's self-identities, values, and beliefs shape their motives, behaviors, and commitment to tackling social problems through entrepreneurial means (Burke & Stets, 2009; Serpe & Stryker, 2011; Stets & Burke, 2000).

2.2.3. Social role valorisation (SRV) theory

Social Role Valorisation (SRV) Theory emphasizes the importance of socially valued roles in improving the status and treatment of marginalized groups (Wolfensberger, 2000). Social entrepreneurship provides a platform for people with disabilities to assume meaningful roles as business owners, employers, and innovators. These roles enhance their societal perception and increase their access to economic and social resources. By fostering an environment that values their contributions, social entrepreneurship initiatives contribute to broader societal change, reducing discrimination and increasing acceptance of disability-led enterprises (Hidegh et al., 2023). Our research employs (Wolfensberger, 1983) SRV theory, which provides a cohesive conceptual foundation for social entrepreneurship, with a focus on the societal devaluations of individuals or groups, as well as the valued role of disabled persons. (Wolfensberger, 1983, 2000) defines SRV to imply the "empowerment, establishment, promotion, maintenance and/or defence of valuable social roles for people, especially those with value risks, by using as many culturally valuable means as possible." The basic goal of SRV is to develop or promote socially valued positions for people in their society, because having a valued social role increases the likelihood of receiving positive outcomes from society (Caruso & Osburn, 2011; Osburn, 2006).
SRV can be achieved through two basic processes: improving the social image of vulnerable persons and their competence (Cocks, 2001). Only certain people feel accepted in society, hence SRV is vital (Kendrick, 1994). It can not only help to avoid negative things from happening to socially vulnerable or undervalued people, but it can also boost their chances of having a good life. This idea is predicated on the premise that all human perceptions, including those of others, are evaluative. The SRV applies to a wide range of groups who are vulnerable to or have experienced collective devaluation in various countries and cultures, including those with disabilities (Maritz & Laferriere, 2016; Nguyen et al., 2024) . The current study's focus on empowering people with disabilities through social entrepreneurship is underpinned by Social Role Valorization (SRV) theory, which provides a conceptual framework for understanding the societal roles and perceptions attributed to individuals with disabilities (Kumar & Theresiakutty, 2012). It provides insights on how improving the perceived value and roles of people with disabilities is critical for empowering them in the entrepreneurial environment. The SRV emphasizes the significance of allocating meaningful roles to persons in society (Osburn, 2006; Żółkowska, 2016).
In the context of empowering persons with disabilities, this entails recognizing and appreciating their skills, accomplishments, and potential in the business realm. Understanding and embracing their positions allows social entrepreneurs to create programs that empower and magnify their societal contributions. The SRV also emphasises the importance of challenging societal stigma and devaluation of specific groups, such as individuals with disabilities (Sharma, 2023). This is critical for combating unfavorable views and biases that may prevent involvement. By challenging preconceptions through empowering projects, social entrepreneurs can help to shift societal views toward people with disabilities. Furthermore, the SRV promotes the social inclusion of excluded groups into all aspects of communal life (Aubry et al., 2013). When applied to empowering persons with disabilities through social entrepreneurship, it supports their active participation in business ventures, thereby building an inclusive community. Social entrepreneurs can help with integration by developing platforms that foster collaboration, understanding, and mutual respect (Montgomery et al., 2012).
IT and SRV theories intersect in explaining how social entrepreneurship transforms not only economic opportunities but also social perceptions. While IT focuses on individual identity formation through occupational roles, SRV emphasizes the external validation of these roles within society. The synergy between these theories underscores the dual impact of entrepreneurship for people with disabilities—it not only empowers them economically but also reshapes public attitudes towards disability and capability.
By applying these theoretical perspectives to the case studies of RHM and GOLD, it becomes evident that identity formation and social role recognition are crucial components of successful social entrepreneurship. Digital entrepreneurship, in particular, allows individuals to construct entrepreneurial identities that transcend traditional barriers, while also positioning them in socially valued roles. This highlights the transformative potential of inclusive business models in fostering a more equitable entrepreneurial landscape.

3. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data was collected through in-depth interviews and field observations from RHM in Indonesia and GOLD in Malaysia. Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). was used to identify key themes related to motivations, barriers, and innovative strategies in disability-focused social enterprises. A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants, ensuring representation from social entrepreneurs. Field observations provided insights into the operational environments of both enterprises, allowing researchers to examine workplace accessibility, adaptive business strategies, and interactions between entrepreneurs and their communities. Ethical considerations were adhered to, including informed consent, anonymity, and confidentiality, to protect participant identities and ensure ethical research practices. The findings from this qualitative analysis provide an in-depth understanding of how social entrepreneurship fosters economic empowerment and social inclusion for people with disabilities in Indonesia and Malaysia.

3.1. Sampling and data collection technique

Qualitative research does not require a large sample (Dana & Dana, 2005). This study employed a purposive sampling approach to select participants, ensuring that the chosen social enterprises aligned with specific criteria relevant to disability-focused social entrepreneurship. The selection criteria were adapted from (Omorede, 2014), which emphasized the presence of innovative organizations addressing social issues related to disability empowerment, demonstrated social and economic impacts, leadership and creativity in their field, and a commitment to tackling the societal exclusion of people with disabilities.

Based on these predetermined criteria, two social enterprises from the craft sector were selected for this study. These enterprises were identified as having successfully implemented inclusive business models that provide employment and skills development opportunities for people with disabilities. The case studies provide insight into how these social enterprises leverage innovation and community engagement to foster economic participation. Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews and field observations. Interviews were held with the founders and volunteers of the organizations. These interviews aimed to explore their motivations, challenges, and strategies in running disability-focused social enterprises. Additionally, field observations were carried out to understand the daily operations and interactions within these enterprises, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of their organizational dynamics. The first case study focused on Eko Mulyadi (EM) and his enterprise, RHM, established in 2015 in Karangpatihan, Ponorogo, East Java, Indonesia. EM developed Batik Ciprat, a unique batik-making technique involving splattering paint or dye, providing economic opportunities for people with disabilities in his community. His enterprise exemplifies how traditional crafts can be adapted into an inclusive business model, enabling disabled artisans to contribute actively to the economy.

The second case study examined Ms. Juairiah (JA) and her GOLD Organisation, which has been operating successfully in an urban setting for over 20 years. JA manages the organization with strong parental support for disabled young adults. She is well-versed in co-creativity and actively involves disabled individuals in the baking and selling of "Kindness Cookies," a product that has gained popularity in her community. This initiative highlights the potential of social entrepreneurship and community-based business models in fostering economic inclusion for people with disabilities.

3.2. Data analysis and presentation

The analysis is carried out by tracing the elements that lead us to answer the research questions. Data analysis is a highly iterative process with a detailed examination of transcripts, data reduction, coding, and the final theme of discussion (Strauss, 1987). This process enables us to identify emerging themes without premature analytical bias, ensuring that the findings are grounded in the collected data rather than preconceived notions. Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was used to identify patterns and themes within the qualitative data. This approach involved an initial phase of familiarization with the data, followed by generating initial codes based on recurring ideas and insights. The coding process was conducted manually. Once initial codes were identified, they were grouped into broader categories that aligned with the research objectives. Themes were developed by refining these categories through multiple iterations, ensuring that they accurately captured the experiences and perspectives of the participants. This method allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the underlying factors influencing social entrepreneurship and disability empowerment.

Presentation of the findings was structured thematically, highlighting key narratives from the case studies. Direct quotations from interviews were included to provide authenticity and support for the identified themes. The final stage of analysis involved synthesizing the themes with relevant theories, including Identity Theory (IT) and Social Role Valorization (SRV) Theory. This step helped in contextualizing the findings within existing literature and provided deeper insights into how social entrepreneurship initiatives empower people with disabilities. The integration of theoretical perspectives ensured that the study's conclusions were well-founded and applicable to broader discussions on disability inclusion and economic participation.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. Case study 1: Rumah Harapan Mulya (RHM)

The case study of RHM in Karangpatihan, Indonesia, exemplifies how social entrepreneurship can empower people with disabilities. The Karangpatihan village has had a huge population of people with mental disabilities for many years. And in the early years, the disabled community were mainly dependent on food and other basic necessities provided by the donors. Realizing it is not practical to wait for donors to contribute, the village head decided to empower the disabled community and give them an opportunity to work and earn an income to meet their needs and provide them financial independence. The initiative, led by Eko Mulyadi (EM), the village head, has significantly improved the economic conditions of individuals with disabilities through the production of Batik Ciprat, a technique that accommodates their physical limitations. Batik ciprat is a special kind of design based on splash technique which can be easily made by people with disabilities. The findings indicate that the combination of product innovation, marketing and online strategies, and community engagement has resulted in economic inclusion for these individuals. A key aspect of RHM's success is its ability to provide employment and skill development for people with disabilities. By offering adaptive tools and training, EM has enabled artisans to contribute to the production process, fostering a sense of self-worth and independence. This aligns with the Social Role Valorisation (SRV) theory, which suggests that individuals with valued social roles are more likely to receive positive societal recognition and opportunities.

As part of this case study, the Representative of the Village Head of Karangpatihan, Pak Imam and Wati (volunteer) were interviewed. Pak Imam explained about RHM and its operations since 2008. The organization started with the making of doormats. Initially the people take the raw materials to their home to produce the doormats and bring them to RHM once they are completed. On average one person can produce one doormat per day. The products made by this community of people also include batik, prayer beads, stocking flowers etc. There are assistants who help the people working in the making of the products, whereas the volunteers help in marketing the products. The people involved in batik making are about 12 and their age ranges from 13 years old to 76 years old with the majority of women (60%). Starting with doormat-making, the disabled community of Karangpatihan gradually learned the technique of creating batik ciprat.

4.1.1. Creating income through batik ciprat

On a day to day basis, the batik work begins in the morning and is completed by the afternoon. Batik making provides reasonable income for the community. This was further explained by Wati (volunteer) as follows:
"The craftsmanship fee for one piece of batik is approximately IDR 35,000. If four artisans are involved, the amount is divided among them. In a day, they can produce five pieces, so the income is quite reasonable."
She also emphasized that they take good care of the artisans:
"Every month, we visit their homes one by one to ensure that the food and money they receive are being used properly and that they are getting proper nutrition."

4.1.2. Training method

The training is conducted to the artisans once a week. If there are many orders, the artisans come on a daily basis. People with disabilities are invited by visiting their homes door-to-door due to communication difficulties. Among the 12 people involved in batik making, at least two are not productive and sometimes, there are individuals who come to work but do not contribute to the production of batik. Wati mentioned that they use various strategies to motivate them to work. She said..
“Usually we give them gifts of food (rice, sugar, flour) to attract them to come, but we still give them money for their work”

4.1.3. Challenges

The main challenge in working with artisans with disabilities is communication. Since they suffer from mental illness, it is difficult to interact with them. Additionally, their voices are soft, making them hard to understand. Although they are not as aggressive now, they used to be in the past. Wati explained:
“Thank God, the people working here are no longer aggressive since we now know each other. However, in the past, some were aggressive—they even threw stones at others”.
Another challenge is the low number of volunteers. Since most volunteers work only part-time, there is a need for more support to sustain batik-making and effectively monitor the artisans.

4.1.4. Sales and marketing of batik ciprat

Online sales and marketing has played a crucial role in the sustainability of RHM. Participation in fashion shows and online sales through platforms such as Instagram and Shopee has expanded the reach of Batik Ciprat. These efforts have not only increased sales but have also raised awareness of the capabilities of people with disabilities, challenging societal stigmas and promoting inclusivity. According to Wati, “We sell batik ciprat on Shopee and Instagram. Normally, we don't sell wholesale; however, we do receive large special orders from Public offices. We typically sell around 10 to 12 pieces online. We also participate in fashion shows, and an external model from Surabaya was used to promote batik.”

4.1.5. Challenges in digital entrepreneurship

Despite its successes, RHM faces several challenges especially in digital space. A significant barrier is the limited digital literacy among its artisans, necessitating external support for marketing and sales operations. In this case, social media and online sales are managed by Wati (the volunteer), and she acknowledges that she has limited online marketing knowledge and is willing to attend training sessions. This highlights the need for structured training programs to enhance digital skills among both volunteers and people with disabilities

4.1.6. Collaboration with stakeholders

EM’s (the Village Head) role as a social entrepreneur extends beyond economic empowerment; he actively works to change societal perceptions of disability. By collaborating with local organisations, educational institutions, and government agencies, he has positioned RHM as a model of inclusive entrepreneurship, demonstrating that people with disabilities can be productive economic contributors. Collaboration with stakeholders has further strengthened Rumah Harapan’s initiatives. Government institutions and financial organisations have provided support through grants and business development programs. These partnerships have facilitated the growth of RHM, enabling it to scale its operations and reach wider markets.

4.1.7. Resilience

The resilience and perseverance of RHM’s artisans have been instrumental in overcoming challenges. Many initially faced scepticism from their community regarding their ability to engage in economic activities. However, through continuous exposure and showcasing their craftsmanship, they have gained acceptance and recognition, reflecting a shift towards a more inclusive mindset in the local community.

4.1.8. Adaptability

Another critical factor contributing to RHM’s impact is its adaptability. The initiative customises work responsibilities based on the abilities of each individual, ensuring that all participants can contribute effectively. For instance, those with greater mobility focus on batik production, while others manage aspects such as product packaging and marketing.

4.1.9. Thinking beyond batik: future plans for RHM

RHM's future plan is to focus not only on batik products but also on other popular items. They intend to experiment with the marbling technique and, in addition to fabric, aim to develop Karangpatihan glasses using this method. Furthermore, they have received inquiries about producing batik clothing rather than just fabric. However, there is concern that varying fashion preferences may make it difficult to sell these products. If demand increases, they may consider producing garments.
Case Study 1 showcased that RHM's approach to inclusive entrepreneurship can serve as a blueprint for similar initiatives in other rural communities. By integrating traditional crafts with social empowerment, it has successfully created a self-sustaining model that benefits both the artisans and the broader community.

4.2. Case study 2: GOLD – Malaysia

The Case Study 2: GOLD (Generating Opportunities for Learning Disables) Organisation in Malaysia, provides insightful perspectives on the potential of social entrepreneurship in fostering economic inclusion for people with disabilities. Led by Ms. Juairiah (JA), the founder of GOLD and a former secondary school teacher. The organization has successfully operated in an urban setting for over 29 years since its inception in 1997. The organization provides skills training and employment opportunities to 15 special young adults who are suffering from Down Syndrome, Prader-Will Syndrome, William Syndrome, Autism, multiple handicap, slow learners and depression. The age range of special young adults at GOLD are from 19 to 39 years, with an average of 26-27 years. Additional 50% of them are from middle income families, 10% from well-off families and the remaining 40% from lower-income backgrounds. The organisation thrives on a strong foundation of parental support, which has been crucial in ensuring sustainable engagement and empowerment for disabled individuals.

4.2.1. Kindness cookies

GOLD's objective is to equip individuals with disabilities with the skills needed for independence. Therefore, GOLD began focusing on a co-creativity, actively involving people with disabilities in the production and marketing of "Kindness Cookies." This approach not only fosters skill development among the disabled community but also strengthens their sense of belonging and purpose. The initiative underscores the role of social enterprises in empowering marginalised groups through vocational training and entrepreneurial exposure. One of the most significant aspects of GOLD's operations is its product innovation. "Kindness Cookies" serve as a symbol of inclusivity and community-driven impact.
During the interview session, Ms. Juairiah, the founder of GOLD called themselves as social enterprise and explained the reason for particularly choosing cookie-making for the disability community, as follows:
"We chose cookie-making because it teaches essential life skills, such as mathematics—measuring and weighing ingredients—washing dishes, cleaning the workspace, etc. These are everyday living skills, and it's a form of integrated learning."
She further explained:
"During the initial stage of GOLD, we visited several centers but realized that individuals with disabilities were not acquiring skills for independence. That's why we call ourselves a social enterprise—because here, we teach them technical and social skills."

4.2.2. Creating sustainable income through kindness cookies

Through the sale of Kindness Cookies, GOLD is able to generate a sustainable income for the disabled community. The single bottle is sold for RM 18 and they have packs of 2, bundle packages etc.,
According to Ms. Juairiah:
"In the beginning, we started baking as just one of the activities. Soon, we realized its potential to provide a sustainable income. We sell cookies in small packaging, making them easy to sell and encouraging repeat purchases from customers, unlike other businesses."
Before starting Kindness Cookies, they tried other ventures, such as making ceramics and batik, but were unable to sustain them. Ms. Juairiah explains:
"For instance, with ceramics, people buy a mug once but not repeatedly. Similarly, people may purchase a batik shirt once or twice, but not continuously. However, with cookies, people keep buying them, which creates sustainable income."
The revenue generated from Kindness Cookies is promising. All 15 special young adults involved receive monthly payments, which are deposited directly into their bank accounts. After covering operational expenses, the organization saves money to arrange local and international trips. Ms. Juairiah shared:
"After expenses, we use the remaining funds for trips. For instance, we took a group to Perth for team building. We are also planning a coffee trial in Aceh. Future plans include visiting Melbourne to learn about the disability community there."

4.2.3. Activities other than kindness cookies

GOLD primarily focuses on selling cookies, but they recently introduced a private dining setting at GOLD office. According to Ms. Juairiah:
"We invite those who donate or contribute to GOLD for a thank-you lunch, where the food is prepared by the young adults themselves. Sometimes, organizations also request private dining for small groups during festive seasons and RM 65 is charged per pax, GOLD has two teams: a baking team and a cooking team. The high-functioning young adults are placed in the cooking team. They are also sent for barista training, where they learn to make coffee, lattes, hot chocolate, and more."

4.2.4. Training methods

The young adults are trained to produce a maximum of 110 bottles of cookies per day, with each bottle containing approximately 120 to 130 grams of cookies. They are taught to bake, pack the cookies, and label the bottles with "Kindness Cookies" stickers.
A whiteboard is used to draft order information daily. The staff guide the young adults by showing them the board and explaining the number of orders. They also bring out the bottles that need to be filled, helping the young adults understand how many batches of cookies need to be baked. Ms. Juairiah explained:
"Most of them cannot count and have difficulties reading the orders. But when they see lots of bottles, they know they need to prepare a large number of cookies and start working."

Additionally, job matching is done based on the abilities of each young adult. When they first join GOLD, they are observed to assess their skills. After this evaluation, they are assigned tasks that best suit their capabilities.
The young adults are also involved in discussions about planned trips—both local and international—as a reward for their hard work and dedication. This motivates them to attend the center regularly and work actively. According to Ms. Juairiah:
"We go trekking together, visit mosques, and engage in activities that feel like family bonding. This encourages them to come to the center every day."
To simplify the cookie-making process, all Kindness Cookies are round in shape, as making different shapes is challenging for the young adults. Training is provided based on their common abilities, ensuring that the cookies are simple and easy to make.
In cases where young adults experience mood swings, they are given time to relax. They can go to a designated room to rest before having a discussion with the founder to help clear their minds. Once they feel better, they resume their tasks.

4.2.5. Challenges in training the young adults

At GOLD, young adults must strictly follow rules and regulations as part of their training process. For instance, they are required to attend the center regularly, clock in and out, follow procedures, and participate in baking-related tasks. At 3:30 PM, they must stop cooking or baking and begin cleaning. These rules are in place to help train them and enhance their skills.
However, challenges arise, particularly from the parents of the young adults, as some struggle to accept feedback or criticism about their child. To address this, Ms. Juairiah explained the steps taken:
"Every young adult who joins GOLD undergoes a three-month observation period. After this period, we meet with the parents to explain their child's abilities and behavior, ensuring they can accept the feedback. If they are not satisfied with GOLD's approach, they have the option to leave."

4.2.6. Sales and marketing of kindness cookies

The primary sales channel for Kindness Cookies is through physical booths. While not all visitors make a purchase during booth sales, many take a Kindness Cookies name card and place an order later. Word-of-mouth marketing—especially through parents—is the main strategy that drives cookie sales. To improve the visibility of Kindness Cookies, the GOLD team frequently shares stories about the community and the baking process. GOLD's branding strategy emphasizes social contribution rather than purely commercial gain, which has resonated well with customers. This demonstrates how businesses with a social mission can attract consumers who prioritize ethical and impactful consumption.Ms. Juairiah explained:
"We showcase the young adults baking on our social media platforms—Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. We describe the cookies as tasty and request support. Our content is more like storytelling."
Additionally, the young adults themselves share their activities on their social media accounts. GOLD also has a website where customers can place orders and make payments via direct banking to GOLD's account.

4.2.7. Challenges in digital entrepreneurship

Despite its efforts to expand online, GOLD has faced challenges in digital entrepreneurship. These challenges reflect barriers that many small social enterprises face when trying to expand their digital presence, highlighting the need for better processes and targeted digital training initiatives.
The organization has attempted to leverage e-commerce platforms such as its website, Shopee, and Lazada. However, a lack of committed volunteers to plan, manage and monitor has created sustainability issues.
Another major challenge in online sales is cookie delivery. Ms. Juairiah shared:
"We receive orders from various parts of Malaysia, but some cookies are soft and break during delivery. Since we use premium ingredients, the cookies are delicate. So, when we get online orders, we inform customers that some cookies may break during shipping. We also recommend certain cookies that are firmer and easier to deliver."

4.2.8. Collaboration with stakeholders

GOLD is primarily supported by parents. Parental involvement and volunteer efforts have been defining characteristics of GOLD's model. Families of disabled individuals play an active role in the daily operations and marketing of the enterprise, reinforcing the importance of community support in sustaining social businesses. Their commitment ensures continuity, knowledge transfer, and a strong sense of ownership, which enhances long-term viability.
GOLD also collaborates with other social enterprises registered under the Registry of Societies of Malaysia (ROS). Ms. Juairiah explained the collaboration:
"We collaborate with other social enterprises. For example, if they produce items like batik, they create corporate gift bags featuring their products and include small packs of our cookies as part of the bundle. This is how we work together and sell our products alongside other NGOs."
She also mentioned that some university academic staff order cookies and sell them at their booths during events. Some of them are even kind enough to share GOLD's cookie menu with their colleagues and students, which helps generate more orders.
In addition to parents, GOLD is supported by volunteers. Ms. Juairiah shared the story of a dedicated volunteer who has been serving GOLD for the past three years. She was even invited to join GOLD members on a team-building trip to Perth last year. Similarly, a group of adults visits the center every month to help paint the facility. Although they are unable to contribute financially, they offer their time and effort, and as a token of appreciation, they are served lunch.
GOLD's collaborative efforts with volunteers and local businesses further illustrate the potential of cross-sector partnerships in strengthening social enterprises. By integrating various stakeholders into its operations, GOLD has successfully built a resilient ecosystem that supports the personal and professional growth of disabled individuals. However, challenges remain in scaling the business beyond local markets. The reliance on in-person sales and community networks limits the organisation's ability to reach a wider audience. Developing a comprehensive online marketing strategy and securing partnerships with larger distribution channels could enhance GOLD's market reach and financial sustainability. GOLD requires more volunteers to support cookie sales. They need individuals who can bring fresh ideas and innovative ways to market the cookies, ultimately increasing revenue and providing financial support for people with disabilities

4.2.9. GOLD's future plans and path to growth

Along with Kindness Cookies, GOLD aims to expand its training for disabled young adults by offering barista and small-group catering services through Kindness Kitchen. However, they still intend to retain cookies as their main business, as it remains the most sustainable option. GOLD's experience underscores the broader role of social enterprises in reshaping perceptions of disability. By demonstrating the capabilities of disabled individuals in a business setting, GOLD challenges societal stereotypes and advocates for greater inclusivity in economic activities. This case study serves as a compelling example of how social entrepreneurship can drive both economic empowerment and social change. The similarities and differences of the two cases are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Comparative Analysis: RHM vs. GOLD

Factors	RHM (Indonesia)	GOLD (Malaysia)
Location	Rural	Urban
Business Model	Craft-based (Batik Ciprat)	Food-based (Cookies)
Income Generation Strategy	Reasonable Income	Sustainable Income
Workplace Strategy	Flexible	Structured
Motivation Strategy	Gifts (Food, Rice, Flour)	International & Local Bonding Trips
Sales & Marketing Strategy	Online Sales, Online Marketing, Fashion Shows	Booth Sales, Word of Mouth Marketing & Online Marketing
Level of Digital Engagement	Limited but growing (Instagram)	Attempts made, but challenging
Key Challenges	Digital illiteracy, market access	Logistics, limited online engagement
Community Support	Volunteers, local government	Parents, collaboration with other social enterprise, volunteers
Future Plans	Marbling techniques, batik garments	Barista and small-group catering services

These findings highlight how social entrepreneurship models vary based on location and community involvement. While RHM benefits from local cultural wisdom, GOLD leverages urban market dynamics. However, both face challenges in digital integration. The comparative analysis between RHM in Indonesia and GOLD in Malaysia provides a nuanced understanding of how social entrepreneurship models adapt to different environmental and economic contexts. While both initiatives aim to empower people with disabilities through entrepreneurship, their approaches and challenges differ significantly. RHM operates in a rural setting, focusing on craft-based economic activities, particularly Batik Ciprat production. This model leverages local cultural wisdom and traditional craftsmanship, making it highly relevant to the community. In contrast, GOLD, situated in an urban area, has adopted a food-based business model, producing and selling cookies under the "Kindness Cookies" brand. The urban environment offers a broader market but also presents higher competition and operational complexities.

In terms of workplace strategy, RHM offers flexibility allowing employees to work at their own pace and it is community driven, whereas GOLD has structured processes with clear guidelines. It has a professional setting that fosters focus and productivity. RHM motivates employees through offering gifts such as food, rice, flour whereas GOLD motivates employees by organizing bonding trips. In terms of sales and marketing strategy, RHM uses online sales and marketing platforms (Shoppee, Instagram, Whatsapp) and promotes their products through fashion shows. Whereas GOLD primarily sells through booths and promotes cookies through word-of-mouth marketing and online marketing (storytelling in Facebook, instagram etc) as well. Digital engagement is an area of both opportunity and struggle for these enterprises. As stated above, RHM has begun to utilise social media platforms such as Instagram to promote its products, though digital literacy remains a barrier. GOLD has made attempts to expand through e-commerce platforms like Shopee and Lazada, yet online engagement and logistics continue to be a challenge due to a lack of expertise and resources.

One of the key differentiators between the two models is community support. RHM benefits from a strong network of volunteers and backing from the local government, which facilitates its sustainability and reach. GOLD, on the other hand, relies primarily on parental involvement, with minimal support from universities and external institutions, which may limit its scalability. The challenges faced by both enterprises underscore the broader issue of market access. RHM struggles with reaching larger markets due to its rural setting and limited digital integration. GOLD, despite its urban advantage, faces logistical difficulties in managing production and distribution effectively, particularly when attempting to scale its operations beyond local networks. In the future, RHM aspires to expand its business to utilise the marbling technique in the production of glasses and also may invest on batik garments. Whereas, GOLD still aims to focus on cookies, however has plans to expand to barista and small catering services through kindness kitchen.

Adaptability remains a crucial factor for the sustainability of these enterprises. RHM continues to refine its craft-based approach by introducing innovative designs and collaborative projects. GOLD, in turn, seeks to strengthen its branding and expand its consumer base by emphasising the social impact of its products, particularly in promoting sustainability and inclusivity. Both enterprises highlight the role of social entrepreneurship in challenging societal perceptions of disability. By providing employment opportunities and integrating disabled individuals into the business ecosystem, they contribute to reshaping public attitudes and advocating for greater inclusivity. Despite their differences, RHM and GOLD share a common goal of fostering economic independence for people with disabilities. Their experiences suggest that while geographical and cultural contexts shape business strategies, fundamental principles such as community involvement, adaptability, and digital competency are universally relevant.

5. Discussion

This study highlights the significant role of identity in shaping the motivations of social entrepreneurs. Our findings confirm that social entrepreneurs actively engage in addressing societal issues due to their sense of duty and desire to contribute to the well-being of their communities. They view their initiatives as a means to create tangible change, particularly in empowering people with disabilities. By fostering inclusive innovation and economic independence, these entrepreneurs play a crucial role in challenging social stigmas and advocating for systemic improvements. An essential aspect of social entrepreneurship is knowledge sharing, which enables entrepreneurs to equip disabled individuals with valuable skills. Sharing expertise fosters collaboration and enhances the sustainability of social enterprises. This study supports previous research that suggests altruistic motivations drive entrepreneurs to disseminate knowledge, ultimately strengthening their impact within the community (Bonfanti et al., 2024; Brieger et al., 2021; Ghalwash et al., 2017).

In the case of RHM, digital entrepreneurship plays a critical role in economic empowerment. By leveraging online platforms to sell products and services, entrepreneurs with disabilities can bypass traditional employment barriers and reach broader markets. Co-creation with local stakeholders, including non-disabled entrepreneurs and community leaders, further strengthens these initiatives by ensuring inclusive

business practices and sustainable development. This aligns with Identity Theory, as digital entrepreneurship enables disabled individuals to shape their entrepreneurial identity and assert control over their economic participation. Similarly, GOLD in Malaysia demonstrates how social entrepreneurship, when supported by inclusive policies and technology, can create significant economic opportunities. GOLD's model integrates mentorship programs, skill development, and digital marketing strategies, enabling disabled entrepreneurs to gain visibility and legitimacy in competitive markets. From an SRV perspective, this initiative reinforces the notion that people with disabilities can occupy valued roles within society, thereby shifting public perceptions and fostering greater inclusivity.

This study analyzes the distinguishing traits of social entrepreneurs, such as enthusiasm, compassion, and high empathy, creativity and innovation, risk-taking, resilience and perseverance, flexibility and adaptation, proactive and well-connectedness, and mobilization. Our findings show that the personal attributes of social entrepreneurs who are committed to following their social mission have helped their businesses grow and succeed. Austin, Stevenson, and Wei-Skillern (2006) discovered that emotions and empathy are critical components of the entrepreneurial process, particularly in preserving an organization's momentum. Several studies have also found that compassionate individuals inspire social entrepreneurs to pursue their social goals (Grimes et al., 2013; Mair & Noboa, 2006; Ruskin et al., 2016; Shaw & Carter, 2007). In our interview analysis, we discovered that humanity and concern for the society are personal attributes that all social entrepreneurs possess.

Despite these successes, challenges remain in achieving full inclusion. Societal attitudes, limited funding opportunities, and policy gaps continue to restrict the scalability of disability-led social enterprises. Addressing these issues requires multi-stakeholder collaboration, including government intervention, private sector investment, and community engagement. Policies that promote access to finance, digital training, and inclusive entrepreneurship education are essential in overcoming these structural barriers. Integrating IT and SRV theories provides a nuanced perspective on how social entrepreneurship contributes to the empowerment of people with disabilities. By fostering positive identity formation and promoting valued social roles, disability-led enterprises serve as powerful instruments of economic inclusion and social change. Recognizing and supporting these initiatives is not only a matter of economic policy but also a step towards a more equitable society.

Another compelling motivation is the concept of a shared fate. Social entrepreneurs often see their mission as intrinsically linked to the well-being of their communities. For instance, EM, which presents the identity of the disabled group in the Karangpatihan region of East Java, and JA from GOLD Malaysia, which highlights the identity of the autoimmune survivor group. These social entrepreneurs exhibit a profound capacity for empathy and a dedication to social justice. They recognise that economic and social inclusion benefits not just individuals with disabilities but society as a whole. This interconnected perspective drives their dedication to creating long-term solutions for social empowerment.

The findings of this study suggest that the Indonesian case, with its diverse religious and cultural influences, plays a crucial role in shaping entrepreneurial motivations. The emphasis on social harmony, mutual support, and collective well-being is embedded in the entrepreneurial mindset, making social enterprises highly responsive to community needs. Furthermore, the role of community engagement cannot be overstated. Social entrepreneurs rely on networks of volunteers, local leaders, and institutional partners to support their initiatives. Strengthening these collaborative efforts can enhance the sustainability and scalability of disability-led enterprises. Addressing systemic barriers such as digital illiteracy and limited market access requires targeted policy interventions (Csillag et al., 2019; Hidegh et al., 2023). Governments, academic institutions, and industry stakeholders should work together to provide training, technological support, and financial incentives to foster inclusive entrepreneurship. Similarly, for the Malaysian case, the entrepreneurial orientation is driven by personal motivation through learned experience dealing with these groups of disabled individuals. Recognising the needs to ensure that the individuals will be able to care for themselves in the future has speared the urgency of establishing GOLD. Their existence has been supported largely by the community who have the same aspiration about providing best care for the disabled individuals. In short, the social entrepreneurs rely on networks of volunteers, local leaders, and institutional partners to support their initiatives too. Community engagement sessions help to enhance awareness among the community about the needs of disabled individuals and could be a platform for collaborative work between the industry and other stakeholders in mitigating the societal problem (Ibrahim et al., 2024).

This study underscores the significance of proactivity and strong networking in shaping the behaviour of individuals with disabilities. These attributes play a crucial role in fostering resilience and reinforcing self-efficacy. Social entrepreneurs provide both physical and emotional support, which motivates disabled individuals to strive for greater success despite adversity (Ghalwash et al., 2017; Tihic et al., 2021). One of the defining characteristics of social entrepreneurs is their ability to mobilise people with disabilities to explore their full potential. Despite the limitations they may face, social entrepreneurs inspire confidence and encourage participation in meaningful economic and social activities. Their determination and commitment to addressing societal challenges reflect their ability to harness resources, engage communities, and drive inclusive innovation.

Social entrepreneurs exhibit a unique ability to inspire and engage others by articulating a compelling vision. Their persuasive communication skills, effective storytelling, and capacity to forge strategic partnerships enable them to build robust networks. Through these efforts, they cultivate collaboration among diverse stakeholders, ensuring collective action towards inclusive economic development. The role of social entrepreneurs extends beyond business activities; they are also catalysts for broader societal transformation. Their work encompasses advocacy for disability rights, skill development initiatives, and the promotion of inclusive employment policies. These roles ensure that people with disabilities are empowered to participate fully in society and achieve financial independence.

Acting as advocates, social entrepreneurs challenge societal norms and push for the integration of individuals with disabilities into mainstream economic and social sectors. They actively promote policies that enhance accessibility, employment opportunities, and economic inclusion, ensuring a more equitable society. In addition to advocacy, social entrepreneurs serve as skill developers and trainers. They provide individuals with disabilities access to training programmes that equip them with practical and technical skills. These initiatives not only improve employability but also enable entrepreneurship, fostering financial independence and long-term sustainability.

Community-building is another critical role undertaken by social entrepreneurs. By establishing support networks and facilitating collaborations, they create an ecosystem where individuals with disabilities can thrive (Brieger et al., 2021; Nguyen et al., 2024). These networks provide emotional, professional, and financial support, helping disabled entrepreneurs navigate challenges more effectively. Beyond these roles, social entrepreneurs act as champions of empowerment. Through mentorship and motivational leadership, they inspire individuals with disabilities to recognise their potential and actively participate in economic activities. This role is essential in dismantling barriers and instilling a sense of confidence and agency among people with disabilities. The study also highlights how social entrepreneurs leverage their influence to drive systemic change. By engaging policymakers, businesses, and academic institutions, they contribute to the creation of policies and frameworks that support disability-inclusive economic participation.

Our findings align with the Social Role Valorisation (SRV) theory, which suggests that an individual's value is shaped by personal and social characteristics as well as the roles they fulfil (Blakely & Dziadosz, 2015). The study highlights how social entrepreneurs experience personal growth and societal recognition by embracing their role in empowering people with disabilities (Maritz & Laferriere, 2016). This

reinforces the idea that engaging in socially driven initiatives provides benefits not only for the target beneficiaries but also for the entrepreneurs themselves. The results indicate that social entrepreneurs initiate their movements within intermediate-level social structures, such as neighbourhoods and communities, before expanding their influence to broader societal systems. Through their leadership, they create pathways for systemic change, gradually integrating disability inclusion into wider service frameworks. This progression showcases the transformative power of community-based entrepreneurship in achieving social impact.

An exemplary case is EM, whose role as a village head grants him authority and policy-making capabilities to drive disability inclusion initiatives. By leveraging his position, he has successfully mobilised organisations within his area to participate in programmes that enhance the visibility and capabilities of people with disabilities. This demonstrates the importance of leadership and governance in fostering social entrepreneurship (Parker Harris et al., 2014). Drawing from the action implications strategy, the findings suggest that social entrepreneurs improve the societal image of people with disabilities by increasing their visibility and promoting their competencies. Through public awareness campaigns, media engagement, and community-based initiatives, they challenge societal perceptions and advocate for greater inclusivity.

One of the primary strategies employed by social entrepreneurs involves conducting targeted exposure initiatives to highlight the skills and contributions of disabled individuals. This not only enhances public understanding but also helps reshape attitudes towards disability. By fostering positive representations, they contribute to reducing stigma and creating a more supportive environment. Furthermore, the study suggests that social entrepreneurs play a crucial role in enhancing the competencies of people with disabilities. Through training programmes, vocational workshops, and skill-building initiatives, they provide the necessary tools to foster economic independence. These efforts ensure that people with disabilities are equipped to participate in the workforce and entrepreneurial activities effectively (Redko, 2024).

The SRV framework serves as a structured guide for social entrepreneurs, outlining specific roles and actions that can lead to meaningful social change. It offers a systematic approach to identifying opportunities for disability empowerment, ensuring that social initiatives are impactful and sustainable. By adopting the SRV perspective, social entrepreneurs can systematically address the barriers faced by people with disabilities. They can focus on improving societal perceptions, advocating for policy reforms, and fostering inclusive economic opportunities. These efforts collectively contribute to a more equitable society where disabled individuals are valued for their skills and contributions. The study also underscores the significance of cross-sector collaborations in driving SRV-based initiatives. Partnerships with government agencies, educational institutions, and private enterprises can enhance resource availability and scalability, allowing for a more comprehensive approach to disability inclusion.

6. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that social entrepreneurship plays a crucial role in empowering people with disabilities through inclusive innovation and digital entrepreneurship. By creating economic opportunities and fostering social integration, these enterprises help disabled individuals gain financial independence and societal recognition. However, several key barriers hinder the full potential of these initiatives, necessitating targeted interventions. One of the primary challenges faced by disability-led enterprises is digital illiteracy. Many entrepreneurs and workers with disabilities lack the necessary skills to effectively engage in digital marketing and e-commerce. Addressing this gap through tailored training programs can significantly enhance their ability to promote and sell products online, thereby expanding market access.

Market access constraints remain a persistent issue, particularly for enterprises operating in rural settings. Limited infrastructure, logistical challenges, and restricted exposure to larger consumer bases hinder their ability to scale operations. Developing strategic partnerships with larger distributors and integrating inclusive supply chain models can help overcome these barriers. Institutional support for disability-led enterprises is often inadequate, limiting their sustainability and growth. A stronger engagement between universities, social enterprises, and policymakers can provide necessary resources, mentorship, and funding opportunities. Cross-sector collaborations can bridge gaps in knowledge, infrastructure, and financial backing.

The development of more accessible e-commerce platforms is crucial in supporting disability-led enterprises. Many existing digital platforms lack features that cater to disabled entrepreneurs, creating additional hurdles in online business operations. Ensuring website accessibility, adaptive user interfaces, and integrated support services can create a more inclusive digital marketplace. Training programs on digital marketing specifically designed for people with disabilities should be implemented at a larger scale. These programs should focus on practical applications such as social media engagement, search engine optimization, and customer relationship management, enabling entrepreneurs to compete more effectively in the digital economy. Stronger engagement between universities and social enterprises can drive research-driven solutions to improve the sustainability of disability-focused entrepreneurship. Academic institutions can play a critical role in knowledge dissemination, developing innovative business models, and providing incubation support for emerging enterprises. Policymakers must prioritise the integration of disability-focused enterprises into mainstream economic development plans. By implementing tax incentives, grants, and subsidies for businesses that employ or are led by disabled individuals, governments can create a more supportive entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Future research should explore how technology-driven solutions, such as artificial intelligence and blockchain, can enhance the effectiveness of disability-led enterprises. Examining the potential of smart contracts for transparent transactions or AI-driven marketing strategies could provide new avenues for growth and efficiency. Future research should explore the intersection of identity formation and social role valorisation in various cultural contexts to better understand how social entrepreneurship influences self-perception and societal acceptance of disabled entrepreneurs. Additionally, comparative studies between developed and developing economies could offer valuable insights into best practices for fostering inclusive entrepreneurship ecosystems. In conclusion, while social entrepreneurship serves as a powerful tool for disability empowerment, addressing digital illiteracy, market access constraints, and institutional support limitations is essential. Through strategic policy interventions, cross-sector collaborations, and technological advancements, disability-led enterprises can achieve long-term sustainability and greater societal impact.

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