



Strategies of Entrepreneurs with Disabilities in Sustaining and Growing Their Business: Contributions to Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals

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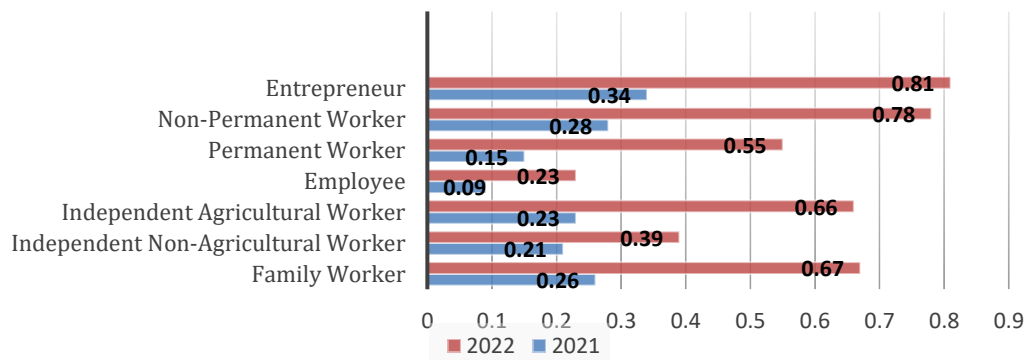
Abstract

Entrepreneurship represents a viable option for persons with disabilities as it offers opportunities to accommodate their needs, build independence, determine their work patterns, avoid discrimination, foster personal development, and contribute positively to the lives of others. Thus, Entrepreneurs with Disabilities (EWDs) play a significant role in realizing the commitments of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly in achieving inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment opportunities, and decent work for all. This study aims to explore the sustainable strategies adopted by “*Kopi Hening*” to maintain business continuity. The research is exploratory in nature and adopts a qualitative approach to obtain an in-depth understanding of the “*Kopi Hening*” phenomenon. Data were collected through data triangulation, which involved interviews, observations, and documentation. The data were analyzed inductively to derive emerging themes, and their validity was ensured through triangulation and member checks to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings. The findings reveal that the strategies include external support, self-development, a sense of ownership, uniqueness, product evaluation, partnership, and effective financial management. Facilitators play a crucial role in supporting the sustainability of EWDs, as it has been noted that EWDs greatly depend on external support. However, this study has limitations, as it is based on a case study and needs more diverse EWD respondents. Future research should expand the number of respondents by involving the government. Additionally, future studies could focus on the role of applied technology in supporting EWDs, particularly deaf individuals, to address communication barriers through technological solutions.

Keywords: *Business Sustainability, Business Strategy, Entrepreneurs with Disabilities, Kopi Hening, SDGs*

INTRODUCTION

The number of persons with disabilities (PWDs) has been increasing globally (Muñoz et al., 2020). In Indonesia, the proportion of persons with disabilities working as entrepreneurs ranks the highest compared to those in other occupations. This number has grown from 2021 to 2022. This trend is illustrated in the following data:



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Figure 1: Disable Workers in Indonesia
(Source: [Databoks, 2023](#))

The data above shows a significant increase in PWDs who own businesses. One contributing factor to this issue is the negative stigma associated with PWDs. In Indonesia, data show a substantial increase in the number of PWDs engaged in entrepreneurial activities. The presence of Entrepreneurs with Disabilities (EWDs) directly contributes to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and Goal 10 (Reduced Inequalities), by promoting inclusive economic growth and reducing disparities ([Bappenas, 2024](#)). EWDs are not only profit-oriented but are also driven by noble motivations such as self-development, social contribution, and serving as role models for the disability community ([Norstedt & Germundsson, 2023](#); [Amran et al., 2024](#)). They have also demonstrated success comparable to non-disabled entrepreneurs through their creativity and unique perspectives ([Roni & Baines, 2012](#); [Jammaers & Zanoni, 2020](#)). However, to survive and contribute to the SDGs, EWDs face considerable challenges and therefore require sustainable strategies and business planning ([Criado-Gomis et al., 2017](#); [Rofe & Marzuki, 2022](#)).

For PWDs, entrepreneurship is a viable option as it offers opportunities to meet their needs and build independence ([Pérez-Macías et al., 2022](#)). EWDs are not merely focused on subsistence and profit-making but are also motivated to foster the growth of the disability community through their businesses. With these motivations, EWDs have evolved into an emerging force that encourages greater participation by PWDs in entrepreneurial activities ([Arman et al., 2024](#)). [Csillag et al. \(2019\)](#) highlight numerous successful entrepreneurs with physical impairments who can serve as role models for other PWDs. Other studies similarly show that PWDs can succeed as entrepreneurs at levels comparable to non-disabled peers ([Roni & Baines, 2012](#)). Consequently, EWDs make meaningful contributions by going beyond conventional business tactics, offering unique perspectives on the entrepreneurial landscape, and using their creativity and innovation to overcome social challenges and stimulate economic growth ([Jammaers & Zanoni, 2020](#); [Othman & Ab Wahid, 2014](#)).

The limitations often lead PWDs to lack self-confidence ([Jacocks & Bell, 2020](#)). Given these challenges, entrepreneurship is a viable option for PWDs, providing opportunities to accommodate their needs while fostering independence. According to [Pérez-Macías et al. \(2022\)](#), entrepreneurship enables PWDs to adapt their work environment to their unique circumstances. Research has also shown that PWDs are capable of entrepreneurship, although the varying types of disabilities may influence their motivations for pursuing entrepreneurial activities ([Dhar & Farzana, 2017](#)). Previous studies have highlighted that PWDs generally have distinct motivations for starting their businesses. These include economic reasons, the desire for independence and control over work patterns, avoiding discrimination, self-development, and contributing positively to the lives of others ([Norstedt & Germundsson, 2023](#)). Motivated by such goals, EWDs have emerged as an active force encouraging PWDs to engage in entrepreneurial activities ([Amran et al., 2024](#)).

The presence of EWDs represents a pathway toward fulfilling the SDGs' commitments to achieve economic growth and decent work. SDG Goal 8 aims to promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full employment, and decent work for all. Goal 10 aims to reduce inequalities by empowering and promoting the social, economic, and political inclusion of all individuals, regardless of age, gender, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, or socioeconomic status SDG ([Bappenas, 2024](#)). The SDGs also emphasize the importance of ensuring that no group is left behind, including persons with disabilities, in inclusive and sustainable national development processes ([Leonardo, 2021](#)). Advancing inclusive economies through EWDs illustrates progress toward the

2030 Agenda, which explicitly advocates for peaceful societies, sustainable development, and the reduction of inequalities (Pérez-Macías et al., 2022).

Entrepreneurship is closely linked to sustainability, as it is increasingly recognized not only as a means of generating profit but also as a process of solving environmental and social issues (Criado-Gomis et al., 2017). EWDs are thus required to adapt to change and sustain their enterprises to remain relevant globally. However, research on disability-related entrepreneurship remains underexplored (Williams & Patterson, 2018). Previous studies have examined factors enabling PWDs to sustain their ventures (Rofe & Marzuki, 2022), challenges encountered (Bahry et al., 2023), factors influencing entrepreneurial intentions among PWDs entering the labor market (Pasin & Karatekin, 2024), and strategies for achieving profitability (Howard, 2017). Although the role of EWDs is crucial, studies on disability entrepreneurship often remain general in scope. Research on disability in the context of entrepreneurship remains limited. This study aims to fill this research gap. The critical gap identified is the lack of in-depth studies focusing on the sustainability strategies explicitly applied by EWDs to maintain their businesses, particularly through case studies involving EWDs with specific communication barriers (such as Deaf entrepreneurs) in Indonesia, which remain underexplored. To ensure long-term business continuity, this study seeks to go beyond the early initiation phase of business development, which has rarely been examined.

To address this gap, the present research focuses on *Kopi Hening*, a Food and Beverage business located in Salatiga, Central Java, Indonesia. *Kopi Hening* is a coffee shop operated by Deaf entrepreneurs who are also members of the *Sahabat Tuli Salatiga* Community. The existence of *Kopi Hening* provides a platform for the Deaf community to enhance their skills and awareness of financial independence. The selection of *Kopi Hening* as a research case is relevant because it represents one of the few examples of EWDs that have successfully sustained operations since 2022, despite inherent communication barriers, making it an ideal case for exploring their survival strategies.

Despite these communication challenges, *Kopi Hening* has managed to sustain its business for nearly 4 years, suggesting the presence of unique sustainability strategies that ensure its continued success. This study seeks to explore these strategies in depth to understand how *Kopi Hening* achieves business sustainability. Theoretically, this study contributes to expanding the literature on sustainable entrepreneurship by presenting strategic models used by EWDs to maintain business continuity amid dynamic, competitive business environments. Practically, the findings are expected to provide tactical insights for other EWDs and stakeholders in designing entrepreneurship support programs that promote long-term sustainability.

Based on the aforementioned background and research gaps, the following research questions: How does *Kopi Hening*, a business managed by Deaf entrepreneurs, implement sustainable operational strategies to maintain its business continuity? What roles do facilitators play in ensuring the sustainability of *Kopi Hening's* business operations?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Entrepreneurs with Disabilities (EWDs)

The limited employment opportunities for People with Disabilities (PWDs) compel them to seek alternative options. PWDs who run businesses are often referred to as Entrepreneurs with Disabilities (EWDs) (Renko et al., 2016). EWDs represent one of the key practices of social entrepreneurship theory, which emphasizes sustainable social and economic growth, focusing on creating long-term social impact and transformation (Martínez-León et al., 2019). According to social entrepreneurship theory, EWDs significantly contribute to mitigating social, environmental, and humanitarian issues while facing challenges that distinguish them from other types of

businesses (Leite, 2020). EWDs are individuals with the potential to address social problems. These individuals are willing to take risks and strive to create positive change in society through their initiatives (Hayes, 2021). An EWD is a viable pathway for survival and self-actualization. However, establishing a business is not an easy endeavour, even for individuals without disabilities, as entrepreneurship inherently involves demanding tasks. The journey of an EWD is both unique and challenging, given the numerous barriers they encounter, including physical limitations, social stigma, discrimination, regulations, restricted access to funding, and limited resources (Bahry et al., 2023). To overcome these barriers, EWDs require various forms of support, including motivational encouragement, empowerment, training, work experience, external assistance, and access to financial resources. At the same time, they must also enhance their performance, competencies, leadership, creativity, self-esteem, and psychological resilience related to business planning, decision-making, and entrepreneurial skills (Berglund, 2023).

Possess qualities such as high energy, open-mindedness, and a strong vision and mission. They also need to be analytical, creative, intelligent, adaptable, and capable of problem-solving. Leadership emerges as a critical factor for EWDs, alongside other supporting elements such as knowledge development, environmental conditions, strong motivation, networking, and financial support (Rofe & Marzuki, 2022). Business sustainability for EWDs can be fostered through (1) mastering business fundamentals, (2) developing the EWD ecosystem, (3) enhancing collaborative efforts, (4) engaging with NGOs and government agencies, (5) embracing digital and technological transformation, (6) exploring new ventures and business approaches, (7) education and training, and (8) advancing personal development. Hence, both internal strength and external support are crucial for EWDs (Amran et al., 2024). Choosing to become an EWD not only empowers individuals but also raises awareness of the importance of inclusion and diversity. Their presence fosters work environments that accommodate their needs and abilities, thereby promoting social inclusion and sustainable social entrepreneurship (Martínez-León et al., 2019).

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), established by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) through the UN General Assembly with 193 member states, rest on the principle of “Leave No One Behind.” The SDGs comprise 17 goals and 169 targets, emphasizing balance and sustainability in economic, social, and environmental dimensions (Wignyo, 2022). These global and national goals provide a framework for sustainable development planning and programming, aiming to eradicate poverty, foster prosperity, protect the planet by 2030, and ensure peace and well-being for all (Parmentola et al., 2022).

Particularly, SDG Goal 8 on decent work and economic growth seeks to promote inclusive and sustainable economic development, full and productive employment, and decent work for all. Specifically, indicator 8.5 targets the achievement of full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including young people and persons with disabilities, with equal pay for work of equal value by 2030. Similarly, Goal 10 on reduced inequalities aims to empower and promote the social, economic, and political inclusion of all individuals, irrespective of age, gender, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, or economic status (Bappenas, 2024). One of the key stakeholders with a moral responsibility to support the SDGs is the business sector, given its broad and integrated role within the SDG agenda (Leonardo, 2021). EWDs, in particular, can foster their social integration and enhance self-esteem for PWDs. Promoting economic inclusion of PWDs signals progress toward the 2030 Agenda and several SDGs that explicitly advocate reducing inequalities and creating peaceful, sustainable societies (Pérez-Macías et al., 2022).

Parmentola et al. (2022) found that EWDs provide a viable pathway for PWDs, as entrepreneurship allows them to accommodate their needs and develop independence. However,

awareness of this option remains limited. For instance, in Spain, compared to countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia, only 11.2% of PWDs are entrepreneurs. This highlights the importance of promoting EWDs as they contribute to achieving SDG targets.

Business Sustainability

Sustainable business represents the ability of enterprises to achieve business objectives and enhance long-term value through strategies that integrate economic, social, and environmental dimensions. The concept of sustainability is closely tied to the SDGs, which bridge economics and sociology. Economics focuses on profitability, growth, and efficiency, while sociology emphasizes equitable resource distribution and poverty reduction (Kaushik & Dangwal, 2024). Several factors influence business sustainability, including organizational culture, learning, commitment, and resource efficiency. Sustainable business strategies can also address global challenges. A sustainable business not only ensures environmental safety but must also maintain quality to remain competitive in the marketplace (Agustina, 2022; Xiaoyan & Nuvriasari, 2023). Sustainability in business is no longer a novel idea; it is increasingly recognized as vital, not only for generating profit but also for addressing environmental and social challenges. Businesses, therefore, must contribute to sustainability that benefits society (Muñoz et al., 2020).

EWDs represent one form of such contribution. They embody a tangible effort toward social, economic, and environmental sustainability, while also advancing disability empowerment. Previous studies emphasize that all businesses, regardless of size, must prioritize sustainability and integrate strategies that address social, economic, and environmental concerns (Muñoz et al., 2020). According to Pérez-Macías et al. (2022) EWDs demonstrate resilience, an essential element of sustainable business, which is directly aligned with SDG 8 “Decent Work and Economic Growth” and SDG 10 “Reduced Inequalities”.

METHODOLOGY

This study is exploratory in nature and employs a qualitative case study approach to comprehensively explore experiences and gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of EWDs, particularly regarding the strategies and challenges they face, as well as to examine the specific link between EWDs and their contributions to the SDGs. The research is grounded in phenomena directly observed through fieldwork, enabling an in-depth, contextualized investigation. Therefore, this study utilizes primary data collected through data triangulation involving three main sources: interviews, observations, and documentation. Data triangulation was conducted to minimize bias and ensure the credibility of the data. Data triangulation is a data collection technique used to integrate various types of data and sources that have been obtained (Sugiyono, 2015). The data collection technique was combined with an in-depth, discovery-oriented interview to obtain detailed information and to deeply explore the respondents’ viewpoints, experiences, feelings, and perspectives on a particular topic (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2017). Subsequently, the observation technique was used to document behaviors, situations, and natural conditions as they occurred in the field, thereby reinforcing or contrasting the information obtained from the interviews. Meanwhile, documents were utilized as supporting evidence to complement the results of the interviews and observations.

The sampling technique applied in this research was purposive sampling, based on the following criteria: (1) the business has been operating for at least 2 years since approximately two-thirds of small businesses can survive and continue for at least 2 years, and around 50% manage to sustain their operations for up to 5 years (Gandy, 2015), (2) the owner is a person with a disability, and (3) There is external support sustaining the EWDs. Participants meeting these criteria became informants in this research, consisting of 4 business managers, PWDs, 3 facilitators from the

Regional Library Office who organized coffee-brewing training programs for vulnerable groups and subsequently became volunteers assisting in establishing businesses run by PWDs. In addition, the facilitators acted as intermediaries connecting the researchers with the PWDs. Furthermore, 5 customers were included as external participants who directly interacted with the business, providing complementary perspectives to enrich the information in this study.

The first data collection technique employed in this study was the formulation of interview questions based on the research objectives and the variables related to sustainability strategies to be explored from the respondents, developed from theories of social entrepreneurship, sustainable business, and business strategy. In each interview session, respondents were informed about the study's purpose, the use of the collected data, and their rights as participants, thereby ensuring informed consent was obtained before the interview. Each interview session lasted approximately 50 to 60 minutes.

During the interviews, the researcher encountered difficulties since direct communication with the primary informants, who were PWDs with hearing impairments, was not possible as the researcher could not use sign language. Consequently, interviews were facilitated by a translator and conducted in written form through WhatsApp messages. Using WhatsApp as an interview medium served as an alternative platform that allowed PWDs to provide written responses, facilitating ease and comfort in two-way communication. Interviews were repeated twice for each informant.

Natural observation was conducted from July to November 2024, with one to two weekly sessions to observe the informants' conditions and behaviors in their natural settings, thereby enhancing validity. Natural observation was conducted without manipulating the subjects' behavior, thereby maintaining authenticity (Baskoro, 2009). Documentation was applied in this study by analyzing the financial report documents provided by. Document analysis, as suggested by Sugiyono (2015), is a data collection technique in which subject-related documents are reviewed to strengthen the research. Financial reports were used as indicators of business sustainability from an economic perspective. Furthermore, Bahry et al. (2023) emphasized that EWDs have limited access to funding, requiring them to manage their finances effectively. Thus, financial documents were analyzed to assess their financial management capabilities (Rizky & Firmansyah, 2024).

Thematic analysis was employed as the data analysis technique. This method effectively dissects qualitative data in detail to identify underlying patterns in a phenomenon and interpret it from the researcher's perspective (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). The process consisted of three stages: understanding the data, coding, and identifying themes, which enabled a deeper exploration of the phenomenon. However, in this study, data analysis was conducted manually. The stages of manual analysis followed the approach of Rofiah (2022), beginning with repeated listening to and reading of interview transcripts, performing simple coding, categorizing the data, and subsequently analyzing it to derive the meaning of the sentences. The data analysis technique employed was inductive. According to Sugiyono (2015), inductive analysis is based on field data, which are analyzed and interpreted to identify patterns of relationships with relevant theories before concluding. To ensure data validity, triangulation was used to verify information consistency and strengthen the findings. In addition, member checks were conducted by returning the interpreted findings to the informants for verification, allowing for corrections if any inaccuracies were identified (Candela, 2019).

Overall, the qualitative methodology in this study aims to ensure alignment with the lived realities of EWDs, who strive for independence, confidence, equality, and business development despite facing tangible barriers. The findings of this methodology, grounded in real-life phenomena and natural observations, provide insights into the strategies employed by EWDs to sustain their businesses, thereby contributing to a broader understanding of their role in achieving the SDGs.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents findings and discussions on strategies employed by Entrepreneurs with Disabilities (EWDs) to sustain their businesses, as their presence contributes to the achievement of the SDGs. To survive and contribute to the SDGs, EWDs require sustainable strategies and business plans. Their success is supported by various factors, including knowledge, a motivating environment, networks, and financial assistance (Criado-Gomis et al., 2017; Rofe & Marzuki, 2022). These challenges and strategies enable EWDs to sustain and continue their entrepreneurial

Table 1. Respondent Profiles

Name	Position	Initial
Wulan	Kopi Hening	A
Hilmy		B
Rizky		C
Wanda		D
Aji	Facilitators	E
Sakti		F
Siti		G
Rama	Customer	H
Ayu		I
Arga		J
Dewa		K
Kana		L

Kopi Hening

Kopi Hening is a start-up business founded by PWDs in Salatiga, Central Java, Indonesia. It originated from the National Library program National Inclusion Transformation for Vulnerable Communities, which provided training opportunities for people with disabilities. The Sahabat Tuli Salatiga community (Friends of the Deaf) was one of the groups that participated in this program, receiving training in coffee preparation. Among 25 participants, only four showed the determination to deepen their knowledge of coffee and tea-based beverage preparation. Since the program concluded after the training stage, these four individuals continued their learning independently.

They later initiated a beverage business named, a name chosen to reflect their identity as deaf entrepreneurs. Initially, they were supported by three volunteers from the Salatiga Regional Library, who served as mentors and advisors began operating in 2021 by selling at events and bazaars in Salatiga, which helped them attract customers. By 2022, a café in the courtyard of the Salatiga Regional Library, which remain operational. Although they experienced ups and downs, particularly due to their physical limitations, their persistence has allowed them to sustain their business and even plan for expansion in the coming year.

Support from Others

Entrepreneurship requires substantial resources, yet persons with disabilities face inherent limitations, especially in communication with others. These challenges necessitate external support, including social, networking, and personal (Bahry et al., 2023). Previous findings confirm that both internal and external support are vital for the success of EWDs (Amran et al., 2024).

The limitations faced by *Kopi Hening's management* have led them to adopt a realistic perspective, recognizing that external support remains essential. The management sought assistance from facilitators to serve as mentors and advisors. The support provided by the facilitators extended beyond business-related aspects; they also offered psychological encouragement to enhance EWDs' confidence, provided motivation, participated in decision-making, and acted as intermediaries in establishing and maintaining *Kopi Hening's* business relationships. Facilitators serve as mentors and advisors, providing guidance, motivation, and assistance with external communication. Their support has proven crucial in administrative tasks, promotion, and participation in events, such as registering for culinary bazaars and obtaining business permits.

Support from external parties can enhance EWDs' capacity to develop their businesses further. Thus, facilitator support plays a crucial role in fostering business sustainability by empowering and developing EWDs.

"One of the major challenges in starting this business is communication, as we face limitations in establishing interactions with various parties. For instance, in carrying out promotional activities or participating in events, interaction with others is required, while our mobility remains restricted. Although these tasks may appear simple, for us they represent significant challenges." – A

"Our team here requires facilitators to provide guidance, deliver motivation, assist in decision-making, and help us communicate with external stakeholders. For example, when participating in an event, I assist in the registration process, communicate with the organizing committee, and ensure that all requirements are fulfilled." – E

Based on interviews conducted with the business managers, many activities could not be carried out independently due to existing limitations. Thus, the presence of facilitators was perceived as highly valuable, particularly during the business's start-up phase. For example, facilitators assisted in registering for culinary bazaars, obtaining permits to operate within the Regional Library area, and handling other administrative matters. Therefore, facilitator support plays a crucial role in sustaining.

Consequently, EWDs still require external assistance and support, indicating that complete independence has not yet been fully achieved. This finding is consistent with Hsu (2016), who argues that the inherent limitations of EWDs result in reduced autonomy caused by challenges originating within the individual.

Self-Development

Persons with disabilities in Indonesia are often underestimated due to physical limitations that restrict their participation in specific jobs and activities (Hariyaty et al., 2023). And Hammel et al. (2015) identified barriers such as limited education, employment opportunities, and access. Therefore, self-development is crucial for enhancing well-being, confidence, and emotional health. Entrepreneurship can serve as an avenue for empowerment and self-development (Pérez-Macías

et al., 2022). Contributing factors include education, mentoring, training, financial support, and empowerment programs (Lusfina et al., 2024).

Based on interviews with facilitators, EWDs differ from non-EWDs in terms of comprehension capacity. EWDs tend to be slower in understanding new concepts. However, the managers have demonstrated that this slower comprehension does not necessarily become an obstacle, provided that EWDs consciously possess the intrinsic willingness to learn. serves as a concrete example: during training sessions, they were often considered slower than other participants. However, through persistence, they achieved excellent outcomes. They thoroughly understood the composition required to prepare a cup of coffee in various variants and successfully applied this knowledge in practice at

“There are indeed differences between EWDs and non-EWDs, one of which lies in comprehension. EWDs generally take longer to grasp new concepts compared to non-EWDs, which means we require additional time to provide direction on new concepts and skills.” – F.

“A slower comprehension capacity does not mean inability; the key is intrinsic motivation and willingness to learn. For example, one of the managers was considered slower than other participants during training, requiring repeated explanations in several sessions. However, due to perseverance, the outcomes achieved were excellent. Their ability to prepare coffee recipes was on par with other participants.” – G.

The presence of intrinsic motivation, determination, and a desire for self-improvement demonstrates that individuals with disabilities can overcome their limitations, showcasing their potential and resilience. Becoming an EWD is evidence that physical impairments should not be a reason to stop progressing; instead, self-development must be pursued for entrepreneurial success. This finding aligns with (Norstedt & Germundsson, 2023); Amran et al. (2024), who argue that EWDs are not solely profit-oriented but are also driven by noble motivations, such as personal development, social contribution, and serving as role models for the disability community. Furthermore, the willingness to pursue self-development enables them to enhance social participation, build self-confidence, confront challenges, and improve overall well-being (Hidegh et al., 2023).

Sense of Ownership

The theory of sense of belonging emphasizes strong organizational commitment, cultural identity, and accountability. A sense of ownership contributes to organizational performance, motivation, productivity, loyalty, job satisfaction, and leadership (Mumcu, 2024; Kennedy & Jain-Link, 2021). For individuals with disabilities, entrepreneurship represents a sense of pride and responsibility. Managers expressed that they dedicate themselves fully to the business, viewing it as part of their identity. This strong sense of ownership motivates them to work responsibly, provide quality products and services, and sustain their business over the long term.

For persons with disabilities, owning a business is a source of pride. This was emphasized by the managers who stated that they dedicate themselves fully to running the enterprise. For them, it is a start-up that must be continuously pursued and sustained. A sense of ownership fosters commitment, encouraging them to work to the fullest capacity, with responsibility, and to deliver the best possible products and services. Since the business is considered an integral part of their identity, they are motivated to ensure its continuity and further development.

“is not merely a business but has become part of myself. This sense of ownership motivates me to work to the maximum and with full responsibility. In addition, I strive to provide the best products and services because I hope this business will continue to survive and grow.” – B.

The size of the business is not the determining factor. For persons with disabilities, the very act of owning a business is already an achievement and is expected to strengthen their self-confidence. This finding aligns with the concept of belonging in business, which involves becoming an integral part of an organization, demonstrating a strong commitment, and voluntarily contributing to its growth and sustainability (Mumcu, 2024).

Uniqueness

The existence of disabilities inherently demonstrates unique differences. The natural physical and mental distinctions between EWDs and non-disabled entrepreneurs mark a uniqueness that is apparent from the outset, with congenital disabilities further underscoring differences in potential entrepreneurial success (Ortiz & Olaz, 2021). Uniqueness thus becomes an essential strategy for enhancing business performance. According to Kotler (2012), uniqueness is a critical dimension that differentiates offerings, products, individuals, distribution, and brand image. This is highly relevant for EWDs, where uniqueness extends not only to their products but also to their very presence and the manner in which they provide services.

Having a “different” physical condition represents a unique characteristic, and for EWDs, this uniqueness holds significant added value. The very presence of it has introduced a distinctive element into the culinary scene of Salatiga. Being an EWD is a source of pride not only for oneself but also for others and for the broader community. According to interviews with customers, beyond its unique brand image, the business processes themselves are highly distinctive. Ordering is facilitated through written instructions and sign language; writing tools are provided as a medium of communication, as all employees are deaf. The products offered are equally as enjoyable as those from non-EWD businesses. The ability of persons with disabilities to craft high-quality beverages is an added value in itself. The business processes go beyond the mere act of selling products; instead, they provide customers with a meaningful and engaging experience.

“It is different from other coffee shops, as it is managed by persons with disabilities (deaf individuals). This uniqueness made me curious to try it. A different physical condition should not be considered a limitation, but rather a uniqueness that continues to be developed into added value.” – H

“The presence of this has brought a new dimension to the culinary landscape of Salatiga and is something to be proud of. For instance, the ordering system here is quite different from that of other coffee shops. Customers are engaged through sign language accompanied by written explanations, and writing tools are provided for written communication. This created an interaction that I do not usually experience, making it an interesting and memorable encounter.” – I

“Buying coffee is not just about purchasing a drink; the unique experience I gained as a customer gave me a special sense of satisfaction. I not only enjoyed the beverage but also learned how to communicate using sign language, which provided me with deeper meaning.” – J.

“Drinking coffee is not only about the product but also about the customer experience. There is a social value in this different form of interaction, and indirectly, we feel that we are supporting our friends. It feels like we are receiving more than just a cup of coffee.” – K.

“The experience provided is significant. It is not unique in terms of brand image, but also carries a deeper message that persons with disabilities are capable of creating and delivering services to others.” – L.

From the outset, EWDs inherently possess uniqueness. Limitations are not merely obstacles; instead, they reveal another dimension of uniqueness expressed naturally. This uniqueness is one of the reasons why it attracts customers and simultaneously functions as an indirect promotional strategy. According to [Kotler \(2012\)](#), uniqueness is a critical dimension that differentiates offerings, product attributes, individuals, distribution, and brand image.

Product Evaluation

As [Kotler \(2012\)](#) explains, products are offerings that are consumed based on consumer needs, emphasizing the importance of quality, packaging, and attributes to ensure durability in the market. However, Product Life Cycle (PLC) theory asserts that products have limited market lifespans, progressing through the stages of introduction, growth, maturity, and decline ([Ryan, 1996](#)). PLC trends can be observed through sales volumes and profitability, serving as input for strategic decisions on marketing, pricing, product replacement, or discontinuation ([Kenneth, 2021](#)).

“From the beginning until now, our team has frequently conducted product evaluations. Through this process, we can identify which products are popular and which are rarely ordered.” – C.

“Evaluations are based on purchase frequency. In the past, our menu was more varied; however, when an item was rarely ordered, it would be removed. Perishable ingredients that could not be stored long would otherwise go to waste.” – D

“Currently, we are more focused on menu items that can be prepared quickly, making it easier for the team to serve while ensuring better control over ingredients. This improves operational efficiency and ensures customers receive quality products.” – C

Product evaluation is an integral part of the principle of effectiveness and efficiency, thereby supporting the achievement of the intended business objectives.

Partnership

EWDs' limitations pose significant challenges, requiring external support, including social networks and personal assistance ([Bahry et al., 2023](#)). Internal and external support are crucial for their success ([Amran et al., 2024](#)). Community partnerships provide collective empowerment, collaboration, and sustainable opportunities. Partnerships also enhance competitiveness, add value, and encourage cross-community growth ([Freudenreich et al., 2020](#)). Such collaborations shape sustainable strategies by attracting new customers and stakeholders ([Pucci et al., 2020](#)). Empowerment thus requires cooperation with multiple parties, including government,

communities, families, local environments, and EWDs themselves (Lusfina et al., 2024).

Ordóñez-Ponce et al. (2021) demonstrated in a study of 71 businesses that sustainable partnerships mutually support members while enhancing resources and organizational capacity. Partnerships, therefore, function as globally relevant strategies that not only promote sustainability but also create new business opportunities.

As with support, collaboration is essential for the sustainability of Entrepreneurs with Disabilities (EWDs), particularly in the case of. Given their limitations, collaboration is considered a significant source of assistance in various aspects, including expanding networks, broadening market access, securing support, and facilitating other operational advantages. In addition to being part of the *Sahabat Tuli Salatiga* community, it has also established a partnership with *Risha Bakery* in Salatiga. The bakery products are offered as accompaniments to coffee. Looking ahead, aims to develop collaborations with other stakeholders further to foster mutual support.

“Collaboration is necessary for the sustainability of this business, despite the limitations we face. We also require assistance from various parties.” – F.

“Collaboration helps us expand networks, broaden market opportunities, and gain support. For example, we have partnered with *Risha Bakery*, whose bread products are also served here. This allows customers not only to enjoy coffee but also bread as a complementary item.” – G.

“We want to establish partnerships with various stakeholders to create broader opportunities for collaboration, so that we can grow together with our partners.” – D.

Collaboration ultimately benefits both parties. When EWDs engage in partnerships, it generates positive societal perceptions that persons with disabilities are trustworthy and socially recognized. Collaboration is closely linked to sustainability, as it is regarded not only as a process for generating profit but also as a means of addressing social and environmental challenges (Criado-Gomis et al., 2017).

Financial Management

Beyond physical and social barriers, EWDs face challenges of discrimination, regulatory constraints, and limited access to financing (Bahry et al., 2023). Financial obstacles often manifest as difficulties in funding their businesses due to limited access to credit and banks’ reluctance to lend (Muñoz et al., 2020). EWDs encounter negative perceptions and rejection from financial institutions due to assumed repayment risks (Saxena & Pandya, 2018). However, financial management is critical at all business scales, as efficient allocation of financial resources supports sustainability and development (Howard & Ulferts, 2020).

has been able to sustain its operations in part through systematic and well-organized financial record-keeping. Financial bookkeeping is considered crucial since obtaining capital is not an easy process; therefore, revenue generated must be adequately accounted for to support future business development.

“Financial bookkeeping is essential to record transactions in an orderly and systematic manner. This is related to the accountability of income in connection with the capital provided to.” – E

Maintaining disciplined financial records is a crucial step in effective financial management. The study fully recognizes that obtaining external funding is not easy for them, making financial management an essential element for advancing the business. This aligns with (Howard & Ulferts, 2020), who emphasize that financial management enables sustainable business development, as financial resources can be allocated to support sustainable practices and initiatives.

As an additional finding from the interviews, it was revealed that the role of the Government in supporting the SDGs, which are global and national in scope, has not been fully realized. Based on the interviews, government programs have stopped mainly at the training stage, with no further follow-up or development after the training sessions. Thus, the sustainability efforts undertaken by EWDs are primarily the result of self-initiated actions.

“The role of the Government has not been fully accomplished, considering that the SDGs are a national program. Government initiatives have stopped at training only, without any follow-up, so the sustainability efforts are entirely our own initiative.” – F.

The positive impact for EWDs is that they have discovered improved versions of themselves. They now perceive themselves as more useful, more independent, and more confident than before, feeling empowered despite their limitations.

“We feel that the presence of has also helped us become better versions of ourselves. We feel increasingly confident, useful, and independent.” – B.

Becoming an EWD has demonstrably generated positive impacts, both for the individuals themselves and for society as a whole. This finding aligns with the needs (Pérez-Macías et al., 2022), who argue that entrepreneurship is a strategic choice for PWDs to build independence and meet their needs. The persistence of EWDs has evolved into a driving force that encourages greater participation of PWDs in entrepreneurial activities (Amran et al., 2024). Moreover, the willingness to become EWDs enables them to engage socially, enhance self-confidence, confront challenges with courage, and ultimately improve their overall well-being (Hidegh et al., 2023).

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that EWDs, particularly deaf individuals in Salatiga who manage, have successfully demonstrated business sustainability through various strategies and supporting factors. Seven key strategies were identified in sustaining 's business: external support, self-development, a sense of ownership, uniqueness as a differentiation strategy, continuous product evaluation, strategic partnerships, and disciplined financial management. These findings address the research question regarding the strategies adopted by EWDs to sustain their businesses, while also highlighting their concrete contribution to the achievement of SDG Goals 8 and 10 through inclusive entrepreneurial practices.

Theoretically, this research expands the literature on inclusive entrepreneurship by integrating social entrepreneurship theory and the concept of business sustainability within the context of EWDs in developing countries. The findings confirm that the sustainability model for EWDs requires a hybrid approach that combines internal resources (self-confidence, sense of ownership) and external support (facilitators, partnerships), distinguishing it from conventional entrepreneurship models that rely more heavily on complete independence. The finding of “uniqueness as a natural differentiation strategy” offers a new perspective within competitive advantage theory for entrepreneurs with physical limitations. The practical implications of this study call for follow-up actions from multiple stakeholders. Policy-makers need to develop long-

term mentoring programs that extend beyond initial training. NGOs and business development agencies must design support models that accommodate the communication limitations of EWDs. Additionally, the development of assistive technologies is required to address operational barriers. The strategic framework derived from this study can serve as a replication guide for other EWDs and as a foundation for developing a sustainable, inclusive entrepreneurship ecosystem.

The primary factor contributing to business sustainability is the self-confidence of PWDs, as it drives continuous learning and growth. In addition, strategies for survival and growth include external support, self-development, a sense of ownership, uniqueness, product evaluation, partnerships, and sound financial management.

The establishment of represents one pathway toward achieving SDG objectives of inclusive and sustainable economic growth, social inclusion, and decent work opportunities for all, including persons with disabilities. Through entrepreneurship, individuals with disabilities can rediscover their identity, enhance their self-confidence, moreover prove their ability to contribute meaningfully to society.

LIMITATION & FURTHER RESEARCH

The researcher acknowledges the limitations of this study, which is based on a case study approach, meaning that the respondents still need to be representative of the broader spectrum of EWDs. Future research could expand the number of EWD respondents and include stakeholders involved in the success of SDGs, such as government officials, to gain insights from various perspectives. Furthermore, future studies could explore the application of technology support for EWDs, particularly for those with hearing disabilities, to address communication barriers that they face, facilitating more significant interaction and inclusion.

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