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Creating opportunities: social entrepreneurship and disability employment

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Abstract: There are few studies on the social entrepreneurship of poor people meant to generate income for themselves and simultaneously to solve the problems of other poor people. This paper presents a significant study of eight cases of social entrepreneurship among people with disabilities in Vietnam. The results demonstrate that having a disability is merely a constrained element of human capital, and entrepreneurial activities are based on exploring and developing other elements beyond the constrained element, such as developing particular skills and capabilities. Moreover, this paper conducts a practical comparative analysis of six additional cases of social entrepreneurship among non-disabled individuals in Japan. The research findings underscore the significant potential of social entrepreneurship, when adopted by any company, to create job opportunities for people with disabilities. Establishing inclusive

work environments or providing support tools mitigates the impact of disabilities as constrained elements and fosters the development of other less affected elements.

Keywords: people with disabilities; social entrepreneurship; job creations; developing contexts; human capital.

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Biographical notes: Chi Nghia Nguyen is currently an Associate Professor at Aomori Chuo Gakuin University. He received his PhD in Management Studies from the Graduate School of Economics and Management at Tohoku University, winning the University President's Prize for research results. With an eye ultimately to answering the question of how management solutions can greatly help alleviate poverty, he puts the focus on how people experiencing poverty can break the vicious circle to escape from poverty through innovative business models. Besides the self-help activities of the poor, he studies ingenuity and creativity in problem-solving in such fields as social change and education.

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1 Introduction

Entrepreneurship has contributed to economic growth and employment; however, there are still few studies on the impact of entrepreneurship on social welfare, such as poverty or income inequality (Neumann, 2021). Though many studies have emphasised the roles of social entrepreneurship practised by multinational companies in addressing the consuming side or the working side of people experiencing poverty, as one critical solution, there is still little discussion of how to place poor people at the centre of the solutions, and little examination of how poor entrepreneurs can contribute to poverty alleviation. However, the literature on social entrepreneurship mainly emphasises

prosocial attitudes (Douglas and Prentice, 2019), motivations for engaging in social entrepreneurship (Braga et al., 2014) or creativity in dealing with job opportunities (Hsieh et al., 2019).

On the other hand, the approach of poor people operating their businesses as minority entrepreneurs and simultaneously employing other poor people in developing contexts has received much attention in dealing with the problems of poor people worldwide (Parker, 2006). With 1.3 billion people (16% of the global population) being people with disabilities (PWDs) (<https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/resources/factsheet-on-persons-with-disabilities.html>), they represent the most significant minority in the world. This article chooses PWDs as the research target with the aim of describing the diverse range of disabilities and the varied ways of problem-solving found within this community, which can provide valuable insights for addressing challenges faced not only by people with disabilities but also by other minority groups.

To address this issue, the article first explores problem-solving models of people with disabilities in social entrepreneurship creating jobs for themselves and helping others in developing contexts, usually operating in highly disadvantaged circumstances. Then the article explores how they have managed to address the disability. On the other hand, established businesses, many of which do not happen to employ many PWDs, are also a pillar of the economy in countries worldwide. Though the activities of social entrepreneurship among people with disabilities occur on a smaller scale, with many constrained by extreme disadvantages, their creativity in dealing with disability issues may have many implications for implementing entrepreneurial activities in wider, non-disabled contexts. Therefore, examining how these businesses can actively participate in creating jobs for poor people with disabilities is an excellent resource, not only for those thusly employed but also for beneficial creative processes within the organisations themselves. In the following section, the paper examines the research results in social entrepreneurship practised by non-disabled people in dealing with disability matters. It also draws lessons that businesses with less-advantaged conditions can similarly apply in creating jobs.

2 Literature review

2.1 *Entrepreneurship approach to poverty alleviation*

According to a systematic literature review of 102 publications performed by Neumann (2021), 95.1% of the studies analysed the impact of entrepreneurship on economic welfare using measures such as GDP, growth, and employment, followed by national competitiveness and innovativeness. Only five studies have examined the impact of entrepreneurship on environmental or social welfare using measures such as poverty or income inequality (Neumann, 2021). The review results emphasised the need for further research on entrepreneurship in emerging and developing countries and the factors possibly influencing its impact, such as sociocultural background and motivations.

There is still intense debate among scholars regarding whether addressing the consuming side (Prahalad, 2005; Prahalad and Hammond, 2002) or the working side of poverty (Karnani, 2007, 2009, 2010) is the better solution for alleviating poverty. The former emphasises the importance of tapping into the market for impoverished people with innovative products and services. Prahalad and Hammond (2002) and Prahalad

(2005) argued that multinational companies could tap into a new source of growth by providing innovative solutions to serve 4 billion people with a per capita annual income of \$2,000, at the lowest tier of the economic pyramid, as potential customers. The bottom of the pyramid (BOP) demographic represents an economy of over \$13 trillion in purchasing power parity terms. At the same time, the latter approach stresses the importance of creating income-generating opportunities for low-income people through the development of modern enterprises. Both aspects are crucial, since consumption and employment are integral to the daily lives of low-income people (Nguyen, 2013).

Karnani (2009) stated that most poor people do not possess the skills, vision, creativity, and persistence to become entrepreneurs. However, this problem can be solved by providing for the poor training courses in necessary skills, enabling them to find the right vision, be creative, and develop persistence. The International Labour Organization (2003) identified the root causes of poverty as the lack of support and opportunities for people in poverty to improve their circumstances. Problem-solving research shows that there will be a change only if people experiencing poverty become aware of their problems and work towards solving them (Priestley et al., 1978). A comprehensive study conducted by the World Bank, which analysed the lives of 60,000 individuals in 60 countries, concluded that it is crucial to consider poor people as valuable resources and partners in every effort to reduce poverty (Narayan and Petesch, 2002). On the other hand, some studies argue that entrepreneurship can contribute to job creation by turning the unemployed into entrepreneurs who further employ others (Parker, 2006). A study on women entrepreneurship in developing contexts found out that education and financial support have encouraged women in developing contexts to have entrepreneurial intentions and become independent in entrepreneurship (Hossain et al., 2024). Self-employed individuals in emerging contexts are characterised by their ability to optimise available resources (Dana, 1994). Self-employment among people experiencing poverty not only helps the entrepreneurs themselves overcome poverty (Nguyen, 2013) but also creates job opportunities for other impoverished individuals (Nguyen, 2014).

The article does not intend to deny the role of large enterprises or highlight the absolute role of small businesses run by poor people in dealing with poverty issues surrounding them. However, the article emphasises that rejecting one element in favour of highlighting other factors is one-dimensional and contradictory. To make an analogy, just as each kind of medicine has its particular functions and effectiveness for a particular disease, and doctors will often combine medicines, there is more than one narrow treatment for the 'illness' of poverty. The entrepreneurial approach must be diverse in order to deal with poverty's diversity. *Therefore, placing the poor at the centre of any approach to poverty alleviation is paramount.*

2.2 *The role of people experiencing poverty in the social entrepreneurial approach to dealing with poverty*

2.2.1 *Social entrepreneurship to poverty alleviation*

A global network of around 3,800 fellows in over 94 countries, known as the social entrepreneurs of Ashoka (<https://www.ashoka.org/en-us>), are actively serving as change agents to transform the world through innovative ideas and solutions. They are making significant strides in reducing extreme poverty in developing countries. The impact of social entrepreneurship on poverty alleviation is undeniable in practice. While social

entrepreneurship has been characterised as an innovative and social value-creating activity (Austin et al., 2006), its research focuses on individual or collective actors addressing opportunity spaces created by traditional organisations in their failures to serve the basic needs of large segments of a population (Mair, 2010). The social entrepreneurship approach to global issues focuses on understanding and exploring the unmet needs of impoverished people worldwide by providing them greater access to goods and services. Social entrepreneurship is innovative and socially impactful (Austin et al., 2006). Drawing from the field of entrepreneurship research, which focuses on identifying sources of opportunities, the process of recognising, assessing, and exploiting these opportunities, and the individuals involved in the process (Shane and Venkataraman, 2000), studies on social entrepreneurship often explore the sources of social entrepreneurial opportunities (Hockerts, 2006; Monllor, 2010), how social entrepreneurs identify and assess these opportunities (Monllor, 2010; Robinson, 2006), and other related topics.

Recent studies have highlighted BOP business as an example of a social entrepreneurship approach to improving the lives of low-income people by serving them as potential customers through technological innovations (Mair, 2010; Perrini and Vurro, 2006).

There are many studies on the motivations of social entrepreneurs; however, the literature on social entrepreneurship mainly emphasises prosocial attitudes, neglecting research on innovation and profit elements (Douglas and Prentice, 2019). For example, the motivations for engaging in social entrepreneurship in Portugal are related to a personal passion for this field, a selfless goal of promoting the well-being of others, past experiences, education, anticipations, and beliefs in the potential for creating social impact (Braga et al., 2014). Social entrepreneurs in East Africa showed intense personal experiences linked to past events and a high achievement orientation towards improving livelihoods and creating impact through service (Wanyoike and Maseno, 2021). A study of social entrepreneurs in Egypt showed that personal inspiration and informal social networks are two sources of motivation for social entrepreneurs in emerging countries. Social entrepreneurs there are motivated by awareness of social problems and challenges, inspiration, previous personal experiences, and their social networks (Ghalwash et al., 2017).

The study on social enterprises in the Lebanese context showed that academic accomplishment, training, and financial support affect social entrepreneur capacities (Kallab and Salloum, 2019), which were found to impact on job creation (Kozaily and Azoury, 2023). For the social enterprises of people with low incomes, there is also the self-reliance of people experiencing poverty themselves. *Therefore, it is essential to study how to place people experiencing poverty at the centre of social entrepreneurship and discuss how it deals with the constraints of human capital.*

2.2.2 Social entrepreneurship among people experiencing poverty

Yunus (2007) described two types of social business. The first refers to companies owned by investors seeking social benefits rather than financial rewards. The second type refers to profit-maximising companies that belong to low-income groups and distribute profits to low-income people. Type 1, with seven principles developed by Yunus (2007), has led to an increase in companies aiming to provide essential goods to people experiencing poverty. Type 2 has gained popularity due to the success of Grameen Bank, a prominent

social business with 94% of the shares owned by over eight million poor people. While the Grameen Bank is widely regarded as a leader and research target in social business, few studies still exist on medium, small, and micro social businesses in type 2. While placing the poor at the centre of any approach to poverty alleviation, even in social entrepreneurship, is essential, the approaches that poor people use in social entrepreneurship still receive little research attention. However, their approaches carry great potential (Nguyen, 2014).

Statistically, among each six people, one has a disability. There are 1.3 billion people (16% of the current global population) dealing with disabilities, constituting the most significant minority in the world. The article chooses to study the approach of PWDs in social entrepreneurship not only because they are the largest minority population but also because the diversity of disabilities and the rich and diverse ways of solving problems used by PWDs carry many implications for problem-solving among other minorities and among the general population.

The entry of persons with disabilities into entrepreneurship reflects a significant trend in providing alternative job opportunities. PWDs utilise their unique experiences to develop creative and innovative solutions to institutional barriers, environmental constraints, developmental constraints, social and attitudinal constraints, and challenges in their personal circumstances (Hsieh et al., 2019). Studies show that PWDs often have smaller and less diverse social networks, creating barriers for disabled social entrepreneurs to start and promote businesses (Caldwell et al., 2020). Studies on these social entrepreneurs with disabilities show that many of them pursue social entrepreneurship to reintegrate into society (Jacocks and Bell, 2020); entrepreneurial individuals with disabilities create inclusive work models to provide job opportunities for others with disabilities, such as allowing employees to work from home to remove transportation barriers and providing improved physical access to employment within a company (Hsieh et al., 2019). Therefore, encouraging PWDs to pursue entrepreneurship can create employment opportunities not only for the disabled entrepreneurs themselves but also for other people with disabilities (Harris et al., 2014). To support entrepreneurs with disabilities, increased governmental and societal support is essential to boost their motivation and confidence, and to help change societal attitudes toward them (Salamzadeh et al., 2022).

Existing studies on the social entrepreneurship of PWDs discuss the tasks involved in their entrepreneurship and what is necessary to support them. Optimising available resources is a defining characteristic of self-employed individuals in emerging contexts (Dana, 1994). *Therefore, studying not only entrepreneurship among PWDs but also how dealing with disabilities in emerging contexts further develops the scope of potential approaches.*

Looking at problem-solving models of people with disabilities, this article will now explore how such people can start businesses and help others, with wider implications that businesses can apply in job creation. Solutions found among PWDs are not confined to a specific model, and thus we take a comprehensive view. The lessons from these diverse models can be universally applied, making them particularly relevant for creating jobs for people with disabilities in developing countries. Because it does not have to be a model for people with disabilities but needs to bring the general purpose of creating jobs for people with disabilities, even a regular business can approach solving the employment problem for people with disabilities. Models of people with disabilities often include people limited in their resources but having the strength to deal with the problems

effectively based on a deep understanding of the problems. Meanwhile, while ordinary businesses may not clearly understand the problems of people with disabilities, still they have the advantages of scale and many resources, so it is essential to refer to employment models of businesses. Job creation pathways among PWDs in social entrepreneurship can also be applied by a range of businesses, thereby providing jobs for PWDs more effectively.

Research question How can PWD entrepreneurs create job opportunities for themselves and help others?

3 Methods and data

Resources offer various services and contributions, which may be subjective and depend on entrepreneurs' perceptions and experiences (Penrose, 1959). Previous studies have shown how dynamic capability mechanisms of sensing, seizing, and transformational capabilities (Teece et al., 1997) can enable organisations to deal with dynamic environmental changes. This insight offers a sense of optimism and a forward-thinking perspective on organisational resilience (Koranteng, 2023). However, only 31.7% of the over 8 million people with disabilities in Vietnam were employed as of 2018 since many companies have regarded PWDs as individuals having low productivity (Ivanov, 2021). However, the previous study on massage therapy centres operated by visually impaired entrepreneurs and employees in Vietnam showed that PWDs had evaluated their human capital in different ways compared with normal companies (Nguyen, in press).

The authors first studied eight cases of people with disabilities in Vietnam based on semi-constructed interviews. These cases were selected intentionally based on both criteria:

- 1 the entrepreneur is a person with disabilities
- 2 the entrepreneurship creates jobs for not only the entrepreneur but also other people.

The authors examined how they managed to deal with their disabilities in their entrepreneurship as a means of creating jobs for themselves. These are also considered social entrepreneurship cases, since they help others and benefit the community. Then the authors examined specific instances of problem-solving in their social entrepreneurship.

The article then explores other examples of social entrepreneurship in Japan by non-disabled people in support facilities (cases 9, 10, 11, 12) and in other companies (cases 13, 14) in solving disability issues and creating jobs for people with disabilities. The selection criterion is: this facility or enterprise helps people with disabilities with job opportunities. The article aims to discover the similarity in creating job opportunities for people with disabilities in both developing and developed contexts, and how these solutions can also be widely applied in established, non-entrepreneurial businesses.

- Cases 1, 2, 3, and 4: the four entrepreneurs are visually impaired people who opened massage therapy centres and employed an average of ten visually impaired masseurs and masseuses. The average income of a masseur/masseuse can reach 200–250 USD monthly, higher than other work for visually impaired people, such as making chopsticks, brooms, or other handicrafts (about 15–25 USD income per month).

- Case 5: the entrepreneur had lost his left hand in an accident when he was young, but opened a child welfare centre to support orphans and children with disabilities. Using his expertise, skill in music, and his personal network, he runs a preparatory school for university entrance exams and actively participates in musical performances, in order to raise funds to operate the centre.
- Case 6: in her sixth month, polio fever affected the entrepreneur's walking ability. Her eyes gradually worsened, manual dexterity deteriorated over time, and she could not work using both hands but could move only some of her fingers. The entrepreneur practiced handicrafts since childhood and has made handicrafts to make both ends meet. She opened a coffee shop, an internet salon, and a flower shop, which, in turn, were based on her health situation over time. She learned to make chiffon flowers at home, sold the flowers and shared her techniques with about a hundred people, including students, people with disabilities in the locality, and some with less prosperous lives. She opened a small cafeteria at home to earn funds for her volunteer programs, organised music nights for people with disabilities, and supported dialysis patients close to the hospital (Nguyen, 2021).
- Case 7: the entrepreneur was a physically disabled person who was initially unable to find a job that suited his abilities and aptitudes, just like many other physically disabled people. He was also unable to enjoy the convenience of using public transportation. However, he later learned mechanical skills on his own, and with daily efforts he gradually modified a regular two-wheeled bike to create for the disabled a three-wheeled bike with a reverse gear, which could be ridden easily. Understanding the similar concerns of other disabled people, he founded a company that utilises the three-wheeled bike modification technology to meet needs on a larger scale and, at the same time, he created employment opportunities for disabled people. The company actively accepted disabled people as employees and provided them with education and employable skills (Nguyen, 2021).
- Case 8: the disabled entrepreneur founded an enterprise for people with disabilities. The employees worked in a production unit which the founder structured as the *health-knowledge-technique* model. The health element implies that PWDs are sufficiently healthy for some particular job functions if not others. While specific techniques or complicated production processes might be out of one worker's range, they fit another's. The knowledge element implies that PWDs can take notes to develop and perform new production tasks, though they may not be healthy. The technique element implies that PWDs can perform certain well-defined tasks well, though they may not be in good health or may usually find it hard to envision new tasks. Each team can have three, four, or five persons if it clears the condition of having health-knowledge-technique elements in their production unit, so that each member can use his or her vital element to complement the constrained elements of the other members in the unit. Each team could work for three, seven, or even ten hours, depending on the balance of their health conditions (Nguyen, 2021).

4 Analysis and discussion

4.1 *Disadvantaged human capital, and creativity in dealing with disability issues*

4.1.1 *Disadvantaged human capital*

The cases of the massage therapy centres opened by visually impaired entrepreneurs in Vietnam are typical cases of PWDs running businesses to generate income for themselves. These centres usually take in other visually impaired people. Some of them were born disabled; others became disabled as a result of disease. They tried to get over the difficulties by themselves. They want to give themselves and those who are like them chances to find jobs and to earn money based on their abilities. With high solidarity, they opened many businesses for disabled people together. The four entrepreneurs explained their motivations as below.

“The main reason we opened this business was not profit but sentiment. I can do this job alone, earn money alone, but I want to do it with the other guys because I want to share and get over every difficulty with them.”

“My purpose is to give the local blind a job... I want to help the blind and solve their job problem through my experiences.”

“ First, I studied and gathered knowledge and experience in this area; later, I thought about how to help the disabled by opening a business for the blind .”

“I am proud to have earned my own money to help my family. It helped me to forget unfortunate things...I opened this company to help other blind people to find stable jobs and earn money through their abilities, as a main reason.”

These stated motivations explain to an extent why entrepreneurs with disabilities choose to run businesses and help others. However, it is necessary to dig deeper. Resources have many services or contributions, and resource services may depend on entrepreneurs' subjective perceptions and personal experiences (Penrose, 1959). How entrepreneurs decide upon a specific service or contribution is still vaguely defined.

Studies of human capital (e.g., Kraaijenbrink, 2011; Ployhart and Moliterno, 2011) focus on the elements that make up labour resources, which include knowledge, skills, experience, personality, hobbies, and other personal factors. These are elements comprising multi-level labour resources. Existing studies on resource-based theories put the focus on the elements that create value and serve as a source of competitive advantage, enabling companies to initiate and promote strategies efficiently and effectively (Barney, 1991), but without sufficiently considering all of the constituent resources of human capital (Kraaijenbrink, 2011). For example, skills and knowledge (Kraaijenbrink, 2011) are not considered sources of competitive advantage (Barney and Wright, 1998). Research on entrepreneurial activity that considers the relationship between human capital resources and the success of business activities has similar limitations (Marvel et al., 2016).

Based on human capital theories, it can be said that people with disabilities also have elements comprising their labour resources, including knowledge, skills, experience, and other personal factors. However, disability constrains some of these elements compared with abled people. Existing studies put the analysis unit on how entrepreneurs with disabilities allocate resources to open and run their businesses and create job

opportunities for others with disabilities. However, this analysis unit setting may neglect the dynamism of dealing with the constrained elements caused by disability. Therefore, this research focuses on more detailed analysis units, such as the elements compromising the labour of people with disabilities. We define the constrained element as A_1 , meaning a PWD's disability.

One of the reasons why only 31.7% of the over 8 million people with disabilities in Vietnam were employed as of 2018 is the prejudice held by many companies regarding the perceived low productivity to be expected of people with disabilities. These companies do not fully understand the capabilities PWDs may offer them (Ivanov, 2021). They misunderstand people with disabilities when they regard certain constrained elements as representing the person entirely, without realising that the constraint is merely one element among many unconstrained elements.

4.1.2 Exploring and strengthening other unconstrained elements

In cases of massage treatment delivered by abled people, vision works as an element A_1 to help locate the customers' acupuncture points, the places upon the body that need to be identified so that other elements can perform the massage treatment, such as hands (element A_2) to perform the deep muscle treatment, memory (element A_3) to memorise massage skills, and concentration (element A_4) to focus on the action of the treatment. However, in cases 1, 2, 3, and 4 about massage treatment delivered by visually impaired people, their very weak vision or blindness becomes the constrained element A_1 . Yet these workers have been trained and have practised strengthening other elements to complement the reduced productivity of A_1 so that the combination of these elements results in normal (and, quite often, better than normal) performance.

When blind massage therapists use their hands (element A_2) to touch parts of their clients' bodies, such as the arms or legs, they will visualise shapes in their minds to generate total images of their clients' features (for example, whether the clients are tall or short, fat or thin, muscular or not) and memorise these features and particular acupuncture points (A_3). Acknowledging that few available jobs are as good as theirs, they strive to enhance their massage techniques and strengthen their concentration (A_4) to provide an optimal experience for each client. These elements, such as sense of touch (A_2), power of concentration (A_4), and memory of techniques and individual clients (A_3), are honed not only to compensate for the limited functionality of their eyes but also to improve the overall productivity and effectiveness of their service (Nguyen, in press).

The disabled entrepreneur in case 5 makes good use of his expertise, skills in music, and of his personal social networks as contributing elements, to compensate for the constrained A_1 and to allocate necessary resources to operate his welfare centre. When asked, "Are you worried about anything?" he smiled and replied, "No. I have skills and my network".

The female entrepreneur in case 6 was among the most highly disadvantaged of the subjects under study, since she could move only a few of her fingers. However, she practised handicrafts and improved her sense of art as her unconstrained elements, to open handicrafts shops to earn her income and to help others. She mentioned, "I never think of myself as being disabled, though I know I am physically a person with disabilities".

The entrepreneur in case 7 acquired the skill to mechanically modify (unconstrained element A_2) two-wheeled bikes into three-wheeled bikes with a reverse gear, to be ridden

freely by disabled people, despite not being able to move the lower parts of his body (constrained element A_1).

In 2014, one of the authors carried out a survey on “community life-support for people with mental disabilities in Aomori Prefecture – with a focus on employment and housing support” and sent questionnaires to all of the disability support facilities (over 60) in Aomori Prefecture in Japan, based on prefectural government website data (Ishioka and Nguyen, 2015). The study received 26 valid questionnaire responses about employment issues. There were 14 facilities (53.8%) actively implementing employment support, while the other 12 cared for people with disabilities but did not pursue employment searches for them. The contents of these 14 programs were wide-ranging, including tours of companies, cooperation with vocational training schools, and the use of Hello Work – an employment service centre. The results of our surveys showed that the monthly income for the mentally disabled at these institutions was 50,000 yen at the maximum and 2,000 yen at the minimum. Based on the responses, the authors visited four of these facilities to conduct semi-constructed interviews for further understanding (cases 9, 10, 11, and 12 in a developed context) how they have managed to deal with the disability issues and create job (Ishioka and Nguyen, 2015). These four facilities assist the disabled in leading independent daily lives according to their disabilities and abilities. Based on information provided by the high schools from which the disabled users had graduated, they exposed them to a range of possible types of employment, to evaluate actual or potential skillsets.

“People with disabilities bear the label that they cannot work as well as the non-handicapped. However, we do not think that people with disabilities are inferior to others. We believe that they are not inferior but different. There are some tasks that they can do and some that they cannot”, said a staff member.

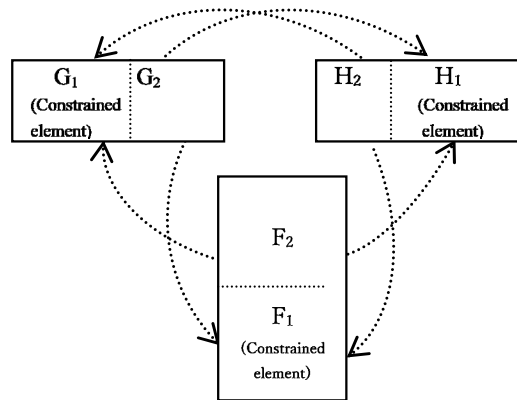
Each facility explores ways to support people with disabilities. They gather information on the strengths and weaknesses of individuals from school teachers for disabled children while they are still in attendance. Drawing from their diverse occupational experiences, the facilities assess and identify the strengths and weaknesses of the individuals who come to them. Subsequently, they tailor suitable tasks and collaborate with companies to focus solely on the tasks that disabled individuals may excel at, thus enabling them to begin working with these employers through job design. For instance, a person with mental disabilities who has excellent eyesight can use this strength to detect and discard vegetables with small parts damaged by insects, while working at a grocery store. Similarly, an individual with dexterous hands can excel in peeling vegetables, providing an advantage for the store.

4.1.3 The combination of internal constrained elements and external unconstrained elements

In case 8, though employee G has good health (unconstrained element G_2), he/she is not good at technique or usually finds it hard to perform complicated production processes (constrained element G_1 : knowledge). Strengthening the unconstrained element G_2 alone may not improve his/her overall productivity much, but the constrained element G_1 can be ameliorated by combining with other disabled employees who do not share that particular constraint. To state it in another way, the constrained element G_1 can be

negated by the unconstrained elements of other people with disabilities when they work as a team in a production unit.

Figure 1 The combination of internal constrained elements and external unconstrained elements



Note: To substitute for or to complement the constrained elements

Source: Nguyen (2019, p.46)

Facilities in cases 9 through 12 were described assisting people with disabilities with job creation by helping them to work in a production unit. This setup ensures that other members' unconstrained abilities can complement each individual's constrained abilities. For example, various tasks such as making dough, moulding, and baking are involved in making bread. A mentally capable person who has difficulty seeing and hearing can handle tasks like rolling the dough while another worker puts the baked bread into boxes and yet another worker fastens the boxes with rubber bands. Additionally, some workers pack the bread onto trays, and another one prepares large bags full of the product for shipping.

In the work of garbage separation, people with disabilities work in small groups to perform tasks such as crushing empty cans and arranging cardboard boxes. One person brings the bags of aluminium and steel from the storage place, another worker separates the materials, one puts them into the crushing machine, and another operates that machine. In agricultural activities, blind individuals ask sighted people to help transport them, and those who are good at detailed work handle tasks such as harvesting crops with scissors, with some assistance from staff if needed.

Furthermore, one facility under study cooperates with a building maintenance company to assist with weeding, collecting grass cut by a machine, and loading it onto a truck at managed properties. Each person's skills and abilities are considered, as those with dexterous hands but slow working speed are given a specific space to work, while individuals with physical strength can move about and clean every corner efficiently.

4.1.4 Matching the combination of elements with work activities for better outcomes

It is not just in massage work for the visually impaired that the elements of hands, memory, and concentration are explored and improved further, but in other activities for visually impaired people as well, such as making bamboo toothpicks or selling lottery

tickets. Combining these factors in different production activities and environments will bring different values that customers are willing to pay for. As a result, income varies accordingly.

For example, there is a social need for bamboo toothpicks and a desire to buy lottery tickets sold by blind people. Still, it is not rewarded as much as massage service, since it promotes the high values of health recovery and relaxation. Therefore, the price paid for bamboo toothpicks made by blind people is not high, nor is the income of blind people selling lottery tickets. That does not even take into consideration some environmental conditions that affect the effectiveness of the combination of labour factors for blind people, such as occurrences of rain or holes in the road that might cause blind people to fall and trip. Sometimes they may come across unscrupulous lottery buyers who change old tickets for new tickets to deceive the unsighted sellers, or who pay with dishonest amounts. These external conditions cause further constraints to the combination of the elements of visually impaired people.

This does not merely mean choosing an available activity or environment whenever possible. It also means actively seeking to create a suitable activity or environment, or building support in terms of tools or working conditions, so that constrained elements do not cause as much constraint for the PWDs and they can make the best use of their unconstrained elements.

Nihon Rikagaku Industry Co., Ltd. (<https://rikagaku.co.jp/>) (case 13) was established in 1937 by a typical entrepreneur and has 93 employees (as of December 2023), of which 67 are intellectually disabled (25 of them severely). The company has two factories in Japan, one in Kanagawa Prefecture and one in Hokkaido. It mainly manufactures blackboard chalk used in schools, and its domestic market share in chalk is over 30%. Since most of the production line is run by employees with intellectual disabilities, the process is tailored to each individual's level of understanding. Careful consideration has been given to the work environment design, including thoughtful consideration of the inner aspects of people with disabilities and the use of visually easy-to-understand displays. For example, hourglasses are provided so that people who cannot properly read a clock can still measure the passage of time. In addition, plastic moulds are provided, and some of the work can be done by feeling rather than reading numbers. This inspection tool places any chalk suspected of being defective during production into the mould groove. If the chalk is bent more than permissible or is thicker than standard, it will not fit into the groove. If the chalk fits into the groove and stops in the middle (not falling to the bottom), it is determined not to be defective.

Hirosaki Dry Cleaning (<https://hirosakidry.co.jp/>) (case 14) in Japan is a similar example. It was established in 1948 and has 12 people with intellectual disabilities and one with a physical disability (as of June 2023) working among non-disabled employees. In addition to cleaning clothes, they clean hotel sheets, towels, and large mats used at store entrances. The tasks vary, but because they are routine work that does not change daily, disabled people can continue working without difficulty. In terms of worker allocation, with the cooperation of the Tsugaru City Disability Employment and Lifestyle Support Center, the characteristics and personalities of disabled people are identified, and factory staff are consulted on the suitability and needed capabilities of each task, after which tasks are assigned and support from a job coach is provided. Also, by having disabled and non-disabled staff work together, the work situation of each individual is well understood, and employees are encouraged and instructed repeatedly by speaking to

each other. This also helps to build mutual trust and ease anxiety and tension. Furthermore, for disabled employees whose motivation or ability to work is not improving or is showing signs of decline, efforts are made to enable them to continue working by changing their responsibilities or trying other work processes.

5 Conclusions

5.1 Conclusions

Minority entrepreneurs in developing contexts have a great passion for solving the problems of other poor people. Their businesses tend to be small but firm in dealing with problems, since the entrepreneurs used to be poor themselves. Analysing and understanding their human capital, methods of solving disability problems in these cases are often very creative, diverse, and particularly suitable for the people and the place. The detailed consideration is as below.

- a person with disabilities has many elements comprising his/her labour resources, including knowledge, skills, experience, and other personal factors
- a PWD's disability (for example, a hearing impairment or a visual impairment) is a constrained element as A_1 in a particular context
- explore and strengthen other unconstrained elements
- combine the internal constrained element with external unconstrained elements supplied by other people (with disabilities)
- match the combination of elements with work activities for better outcomes.

5.2 Theoretical and managerial implications

Capturing people with disabilities as a potential resource consisting of many elements helps entrepreneurs attribute resource constraint to the constraint of a particular element of the overall resource. Exploring and strengthening other unconstrained elements and combining the internal constrained element with external unconstrained elements supplied by other people overcomes the constrained element and creates new resources for the organisations' activities. This contributes to the theoretical fundamentals of creating resources and dealing with resource constraints.

Even in highly disadvantaged conditions, entrepreneurs can effectively evolve job creation for people with disabilities; similar methods can also be applied in other and less adverse contexts. Upon comparing models for easing employment problems for people with disabilities in developed countries such as Japan (cases 9 to 14), the research finds that problem-solving is effective and varied. They have a similar approach to dealing with the disadvantaged human capital of PWDs in the sense of exhibiting a common willingness to consider all elements of a worker or work candidate, both constrained and unconstrained. This approach can be applied in a wide array of businesses to create jobs that are not only charitable on the human level but also become valuable workforce resources for practical business activities. The limited perceptions of the past are being transcended by newer, multi-dimensional models. In this way, it can be expected that

employment issues for people with disabilities will be addressed more effectively and on a larger scale.

5.3 Implications for social entrepreneurship in other contexts

There are many research values implied for entrepreneurship research when we consider entrepreneurs with disabilities, which constitutes a social minority, living in highly disadvantaged circumstances in developing contexts. Even people with disabilities facing severe constraints can deal with disability issues, as discussed in cases 1 to 8 above. Established companies with more abundant resources can also carry out social entrepreneurial activities to create jobs for PWDs. Cases 9 to 14 in Japan, described above, show that this is possible. Working environments that consider employees' constrained and unconstrained elements, providing support for constrained elements while strengthening unconstrained elements, can create settings conducive for individuals with disabilities to thrive. Further examples of employer flexibility include adjusting working hours and break times to accommodate the health concerns of people with disabilities, providing special working tools and suitable tasks, and creating teamwork models that involve several people with disabilities. In this way, job creation becomes more possible through social entrepreneurial activities in other different contexts.

5.4 Limitations

It is necessary to test the propositions mentioned above on job creation for people with disabilities in other organisations to see whether organisations failing to recruit PWDs did not follow these theoretical and practical implications, and whether success cases have shared the similar approach. These are also future research tasks.

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Ethical statement

This research was exempted from ethics review by the Ethics Committee of Aomori Chuo Gakuin University, the first author's affiliation, based on the principles of the Ethics Committee. The discussed information cannot easily be matched with other information to identify a specific individual. In addition, there is no foreseeable risk of harm or discomfort to anyone.

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