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Experiential Learning in Entrepreneurship: A Qualitative Study of Student Competency Development through Persons with Disabilities

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Abstract

Collaborations with entrepreneurs with disabilities offer a meaningful learning environment that exposes students to diverse working routines, digital limitations, and social contexts that are rarely encountered in traditional classroom settings. Despite the growing emphasis on experiential learning, limited empirical work examines how students can develop entrepreneurial competencies when the learning process involves collaboration with People with Disabilities (PWD). The existing studies often focus on outcomes of community-based projects but rarely analyze students' reflections to understand how competencies emerge in inclusive and socially complex learning environments. Therefore, current study aims to explore how undergraduate students developed entrepreneurial competencies through a collaborative effort with PWD entrepreneurs as part of an inclusive experiential learning program. The current study employed a qualitative design and consisted of 30 written reflections collected at the end of a semester-long experiential learning assignment. Students worked in groups to support PWD entrepreneurs with digital marketing tasks, utilizing platforms such as TikTok, WhatsApp, and Canva. The deductive coding framework, consisting of 28 entrepreneurial learning competencies, was analyzed using Braun and Clark's thematic approach in ATLAS.ti software. The current study noted that students develop adaptability, empathy, a diverse communication style, and relationship management skills, and learn about the limitations of PWD entrepreneurs. The finding revealed that inclusive experiential learning increases social awareness and entrepreneurial skills in university students. This study also emphasizes the importance of designing learning activities to balance autonomy and encourage researchers to apply current models to other contexts.

Keywords: Collaborative Competency, Entrepreneurs, Entrepreneurship Education, Experiential Learning People with Disabilities.

Introduction

In today's competitive environment, entrepreneurial education encompasses traditional profit-oriented approaches and embraces inclusivity, community well-being, and social values. Social entrepreneurship approaches can be combined with business innovation efforts to address societal issues, and collaboration with people with disabilities (PWD) can provide opportunities to understand social realities (1). Entrepreneurship is considered a vital path to success for individuals with disabilities who face substantial barriers to employment opportunities (2). The people with disabilities is always associated with limited participation in workforce, less skill-building resources, and economic independence (3). Figure 1 shows the total number of PWDs on the Y-axis and their employment status on the X-axis, indicating that only 4209 PWDs formally work in the public sector out of 805509 registered PWDs in Malaysia (4).

The employment ratio of PWDs is very low, whereas entrepreneurship emerges as a vital mechanism for economic participation, empowering people with disabilities by contributing to society and promoting self-employment (5). However, disabled people face unique challenges, such as inadequate practical learning, limited training, and a constrained network in their entrepreneurial journey (6). These challenges highlight the importance of a learning framework

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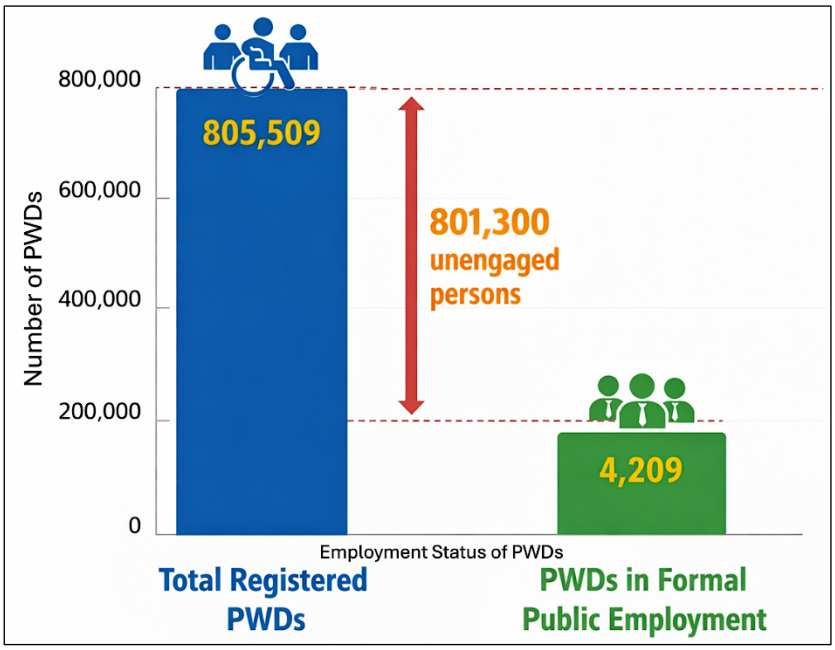

Figure 1: PWDs Involvement Data (4)

in enhancing entrepreneurial readiness and strengthening competencies among people with disabilities. Therefore, entrepreneur education is increasingly important in producing graduates who can effectively address challenges in this uncertain economic world (7). Entrepreneurial education also helps in the development of entrepreneurial competencies, such as knowledge, communication skills, time management, leadership, and attitude, that are necessary to carry out business activities effectively (8). These elements play a crucial role in the student's entrepreneurial journey and help them act more confidently and work efficiently.

Although numerous studies in the past examined social inclusion and entrepreneurial education of the people with disabilities, but most of the literature on this context conceptualized PWD as beneficiary of entrepreneur intervention (9, 10). The extent studies used quantitative method which offer very less qualitative understanding on how PWD participate in experiential learning process (11, 12). Additionally, there is lack of live experience, and role or PWDs participating in experiential learning process with undergraduate students. The current study addresses this gap and provide qualitative evidence that focus PWDs experience in entrepreneurial education.

Additionally, disabled entrepreneur often neglected and this study can also help them to improve their skills through student interaction. This engagement will increase entrepreneurial knowledge among undergraduate students and develop collaborative problem solving competenc ies that cannot be learned in traditional classrooms. The students can gain deeper insights about social entrepreneurship and inclusive business practice. This study also provide platform to disabled entrepreneur to gain new ideas, reinforce their confidence, and learn innovative perspective from new generation. This mutual learning process contributes to the entrepreneuri al ecosystem, creates mutual respect, and promotes empowerment. This study contributes to the body of knowledge by expanding literature on collaborative competency developm ent, disabled entrepreneurship, and inclusive experiential learning. It also provides practical model to replicate community-based entrepreneurship in higher education programs.

Social Entrepreneurship Education

Social entrepreneurship education is defined as a structured learning and teaching process that trains individuals with the skills, values, and knowledge necessary to develop innovative solutions and identify problems (13). It is generally described as an educational framework that links an entrepreneurial mindset with empathy, community responsiveness, value creation for society, and ethical judgment, which have a long-term impact on society (14). Social entrepreneurs hip education is changing towards cultivating social innovation in the learning process and

empowering students and communities in this environment (15). Social entrepreneurship education also encourages students to develop sense of empathy and emotional awareness in their leadership roles (16).

Social entrepreneurship in the education system is steadily advancing universities and emphasizing experiential learning as a vital aspect of teaching strategy (17). The real-time involvement of students to gain a deeper understanding of social realities and apply entrepreneurial tactics for lasting impact on society (18). Furthermore, social entrepreneur education also helps students understand the problems faced by people with disabilities that hinder their involvement in social and economic life. This exposure assists students in becoming more empowered, issue-sensitive, which helps them to transform their experience into stunning entrepreneurial ideas to improve PWDs' quality of life.

Experiential Learning

Experiential learning is recognized as a significant student-centered approach in entrepreneurship education that offers a comprehensive alternative to conventional lecture-based approaches (19). The experiential learning approach emphasizes on a continuous sequence of concrete experiences, reflective observations, abstract thought, and active experimentation (20). This process enables students to explore entrepreneurship in a more in-depth manner, addressing real-world problems (21). Experiential learning reflects the unpredicta ble nature of business and encourages students to engage in problem-solving (22). The educators have implemented experiential learning in various teaching methods, such as project-based Learning, simulations, and venture creation programs (23-26).

Experiential learning in entrepreneurship educati on can strengthen technical knowledge and train students' mindsets essential to dealing with a changing environment (27). Experiential learning consistently strengthens students' entrepreneurial self-efficacy, fosters creativity, and enhances their ability to apply classroom concepts to real-world challenges (28-30). The experiential learning can be more impactful when engaging people with disabilities (31). This interaction helps students identify PWDs' unmet needs to develop empathy. This learning experience will strengthen students' competencies and inspire them to promote dignity and accessibility for PWDs.

Collaborative Competency

Collaborative learning is defined as group interaction where people work together on same problem, construct knowledge, and complete task through dialogues (32). It develops engagement habits among people to contribute, and develop critical thinking (33). Collaborative competence in students enables them to work together through a combination of social, cognitive, and behavioral skills. It also strengthens teamwork and builds clearer communication among students in entrepreneur learning (34). Therefore, student group project activities, business simulations, and collaboration with industry can enhance skills in conveying ideas, conducting effective negotiations, and resolving problems harmoniously, which are crucial in entrepreneurial education (35).

Furthermore, interpersonal skills are the source of building successful collaboration in a group (36). Similarly, thinking skills and social interaction often occur together when students work in teams, helping them make collective decisions (37). In this regard, strengthening entrepreneurship education needs to consider relational capabilities to align with the needs of forthcoming business environment (38). Therefore, collaborative learning with PWDS becomes more meaningful and promotes empathy, mutual support, and inclusion. The student will have the opportunity to work closely with people with disabilities, which will enhance their experience in this inclusive academic environment. It also reduces stigmatizat ion, increases social awareness, cultivates an inclusive culture, and enhances their understanding of working with PWDs (39).

Methodology

Research Design

The current study focused on interconnected topics, (a) inclusive entrepreneurial education, (b) experiential learning process among final year students, (c) role of PWDs as experiential partners. This research used appropriate study design, selection of the participants, data collection and data analysis. Further, this study employed a qualitative design to investigate how undergradua te students developed their entrepreneurial learning competencies while collaborating with entrepreneurs with disabilities. This study model

focused on past study findings who emphasized the understanding of participants experiences within their natural leaning setting (40). The six-step thematic procedure were used to analyze current study data (41). A deductive coding frame shaped the initial organization of the data, guided by existing studies on entrepreneurial competencies and experiential learning. Although the analysis began with predetermined codes, we remained open to the way students described their learning experiences in their own words. The 28 entrepreneurial learning competencies were coded using a numbered structure to support analytic consistency (for example, 2.1 Teamwork and Cooperation; 4.3 Time Management). These identifiers were maintained throughout the coding and reporting process to ensure clear traceability between the coding scheme, the ATLAS.ti outputs, and the thematic findings presented in the results section.

Participants and Sampling

The purposive sampling was used to select students who enrolled in an entrepreneurship course at a Malaysian public-sector university. In this program, 30 students studying in their final year projects participated in experiential entrepreneurship activities with PWDs. The student involvement was part of their course, and all participants provided written consent allowing their reflections to be used for research purposes. This ensured that every participant had direct engagement in group collaboration and with PWD entrepreneurs. The PWDs were also selected through purposive sampling, and individuals were selected who aligned with the experiential learning objectives. The inclusion criteria were based on identification of disability, showing interest in skill-based learning, and being willing to engage with students. PWDs who were unwilling to engage were excluded from the study.

Data Collection

The current study's data are based on students' reflections submitted at the end of the semester. The experiential learning reflections used to validate the learning process in higher education (42, 43). The researcher collects 30 reflections that describe students' real interactions, decision-making processes, and difficulties faced during projects. Additionally, reflexive and situational approach were used by the researchers throughout the study, specially while engaging with PWDs. The reflexivity was continuously maintained which shows researcher positive roles, power imbalance and assumptions during data collection. The interaction with PWDs were conduct in a respectful manner, which make data collection easy and comfortable for PWDs. This technique helped the participant to represent confidently while maintaining their ethical sensitivity.

Trustworthiness and Rigor

The current study addressed dependability and credibility of qualitative findings by establishing qualitative research standards. The credibility if this study was improved via data triangulation and collected insights from PWDs and students' groups to validate themes perspective. The dependability in this study was supported via systematic and transparent documentation of data and analysis, enabling traceability and consistency of research process. Confirmability was addressed by clarify the participant narrative and reflexive practice were used to reduce researcher bias. These strategies help to strengthen, trustworthiness and rigor of current study findings.

Digital Marketing Assignment as Experiential Learning Context

The experiential learning course module focused on digital marketing, involving entrepreneurs from OKU. The students were divided into groups and assigned to promote products through TikTok, Canva, and WhatsApp. This task encompassed recording promotional videos, visual marketing, drafting captions, and setting up TikTok shops. The students were required to communicate with PWD entrepreneurs directly to learn about their digital literacy limitations. This project was adapted from extent study based on experiential learning model to provide practical learning and experimental strategies which effect overall outcomes (20).

Results

The current study used a coding framework comprising 28 entrepreneurial learning competencies adapted from existing literature on experiential entrepreneurial education. These competencies divided into four dimensions, collaborative competencies, business and management competencies, interpersonal and relationship competencies, and opportunity and problem-solving competencies. The dataset consisted of 30 written reflections, and each

reflection was based on student collaboration with PWD entrepreneurs. The current study employee ATLAS.ti software to organize coding and a deductive thematic approach based on a predetermined competency framework were used to analysis the data. This study identified 174 coded segments which shows extensive learning outcomes and experience. Many competencies, such as time management, communication skills, teamwork and collaboration, task management, and digital communication challenges, are shown to occur more frequently. The frequency of the competencies advocates core learning outcomes of the students during experiential project. Table 1 shows dimensions that identified experiential learning competencies.

Table 1: Dimensions Identified Entrepreneurial Learning Competencies

Dimension	Identified Competencies
Business and Management Competency	Time Management, Task Management, Organizational Skills
Collaborative Competency	Communication Skills, Teamwork and Cooperation, Digital Communication
Opportunity and Problem-solving Competency	Creativity, Opportunity Recognition
Interpersonal and Relationship Competency	Leadership, Trust Building, Relationship Management

This result shows students participation in experiential learning project and development of entrepreneurial learning competencies. These competencies identified using thematic analysis showing in Table 2 where every competency dimension from student reflections explained with quotation. This helps to explain how different entrepreneurial learning aspect emerged with student engagement with collaborative activities.

Table 2: Dimensions and Observed Behavioral Indicators

Dimension	Competency (Code)	Observed Behavioral Indicators	Respondent(s)
Business and Management Competency	4.3 Time Management	Schedule coordination; pressure to meet deadlines; managing project pacing	R4, R10, R13
	4.1 Task Management	Unequal task distribution; last-minute execution; difficulty delegating tasks	R6, R16, R5, R14, R27
	4.4 Organisational Skills	Logistical challenges; accessibility of project sites; resource planning needs	R25, R28, R9, R12, R14
Collaborative Competency	2.1 Teamwork & Cooperation	Difficulty collaborating; uneven commitment; team-based tension	R16, R19, R23
	2.5 Communication Skills	Miscommunication; unclear instructions; listening issues	R12, R14
	2.6 Digital Communication	Tech unfamiliarity; device accessibility issues; app usage limitations	R14, R15, R20, R13
Opportunity and Problem-solving Competency	3.2 Creativity	Limited ideas; difficulty producing engaging content; reliance on predefined templates	R8, R18, R21
	3.4 Opportunity Recognition	Struggle to identify customer needs; unclear USP; weak product–market fit understanding	R7, R11, R22
Interpersonal and Relationship Competency	1.3 Leadership	Emotional frustration; inconsistent guidance; difficulty maintaining group focus	R16, R31, R3
	1.5 Trust Building	Hesitation working with unfamiliar peers; slow rapport building; uneven confidence	R4, R7, R17
	1.6 Relationship Management	Slow responses from partners; mismatched expectations; communication gaps	R12, R19, R25

Business and Management

Time management is seen as the most important competency in student reflections. Number of students explain how they coordinate with team, balance academic work, and participate in activities with PWD entrepreneurs. The analysis is divided into two scopes in this section: first, the challenges that students faced within the team, and secondly, the challenges that arise during collaboration. It was reported that the student faced challenges in scheduling meetings with team members due to their workload. One student stated that, 'The main challenges was to find suitable time for meeting as each member have different class schedule' (R17-S1). Another stated that 'It was also challenge in to manage our time when travelling together to the entrepreneur house (R25-S1). It is also reported that time

management among students was very poor due to several reasons, such as assignments (R28-S1), team members arriving late (R12-S1), and completing tasks on time (R33-S1). Additionally, many students report that they faced difficulties adjusting their schedules to meet with OKU entrepreneurs, as business hours often clash with their class timings. Many students stated that 'Schedules between the students and entrepreneurs were not aligned' (R6-S2, R13-S2, R23-S2). One respondent commented on the short time duration of the project (R12-S2), and another stated that they felt difficulties due to a tight class schedule (R13-S2). Time management is crucial for responding to real-world situations, and students are expected to manage their time effectively to coordinate with team members and entrepreneurs.

Many students face difficulties in task management in their team members. The students also face challenges in assigning duties equally among different team members. As one student stated that 'it was tough for us to arrange duties so that all tasks could be completed as planned' (RS14-S1). Another student mentioned, 'There was a challenge in dividing work' (RS14-S1). This shows that students realized the importance of teamwork that needed. Many students mentioned that poor or late responses disrupt project progress, and some struggle to prioritize their work (R23-S1). Additionally, many students mentioned that it was very difficult to execute a joint task with a PWD entrepreneur due to their busy schedules (R6-S2, R8-S2). This highlighted that students should be more cooperative and adaptable working with an entrepreneur.

Organizational skills emerge as a vital and challenging issue among students while arranging activities on different locations. The student fails to cooperate properly and faces logistics issues as different students use different means of transportation. For instance, two students stated that not all students have their own vehicle to visit entrepreneurs (R28-S1; R9-S1). Some student also faces issued to reach out entrepreneurs due to lack of guidance from other team members 'There was lack of business information, which turned the discussion harder' (R14-S2). This may help students plan efficiently and adopt problem-solving strategies in real business situations.

Collaborative Competencies

Communication is a fundamental skill essential for a successful entrepreneur. It is stated that students mostly use online platforms to communicate with each other, which often causes confusion for them. Some stated that 'online interaction is less clear than face to face session' (R9-S1, R29-S1), while others found it challenging to understand team members' opinions (R12-S1) and experienced confusion (R15-S1). It is also seen that some students face a confidence problem when working with team members, as one mentioned that 'it was hard to work together due to low-self teem' (R23-S1). Students encounter numerous communication challenges during collaborations with entrepreneurs. Some students shared that face-to-face discussions required more time due to dialect differences. As one shared, "Oral communication takes more time due to dialect differences" (R13). Time limitations also restricted meaningful interactions. Some students mentioned that they had limited opportunities for meaningful conversations due to short meeting times; there was also a lack of opportunities for in-depth discussion (R8). Others mentioned that the technology terms used on online platforms were not easily learned, which made sharing sessions about digital content with the entrepreneur more demanding. One respondent reflected, "Digital terms were difficult for entrepreneurs to follow because of communication differences" (R6). These comments show that participants were expected to use simple explanations when communicating in such situations.

Some students had difficulty working together in the early stages of task implementation. Participant mention: "At the beginning of the project, I found it very difficult to collaborate with the other members of my group" (R4-S1). One respondent also added: "A few teammates in the group did not show active cooperation when working on the given tasks." (R5-S1; R19-S1). Some groups experienced difficulties in mutual understanding and alignment of work expectations. As mentioned by one participant, "The misunderstanding between members created difficulties in handling the assignment." (R25-S1). Apart from that, slow feedback and lack of input from team members slowed team progress. A student mentioned; "There were issues with team

effort within the groups and late updates made the task tough to complete." (R30-S1)

Participants in the project frequently experienced problems with online tools that caused difficulties for them to collaborate and communicate with entrepreneurs. One student noted, "A few team members are not comfortable in using digital platforms" (R17-S1). A few students highlighted that some members were less interested in using online collaboration tools when completing the assignments. "It was difficult to complete the task when other members were reluctant to use Google Docs and Google Drive during the assignment." (R14-S1). Additionally, some entrepreneurs face difficulties in using digital tools like Tiktok and Canva (R4-S2) and some did not have stay able internet connection (R10-S2).

Opportunity and Problem-solving Competency

The current study found that students face difficulties in creating content for digital promotion and struggle to shape ideas into media material. Some students shared their challenges in creating group content (R8-S1), and others face challenges in making TikTok videos for promotional content (R25-S1). This suggests that students should put more effort into creating creative content. It was more difficult for students to promote new products compared to old ones, suggesting that they were uncertain about their initiatives. This study also found that many students were not ready to contribute to the creative skill task (R26-S10); therefore, students require additional effort and practice to apply these skills in this project. Moreover, students reported that many entrepreneurs struggled to understand how social media works. One student shared that 'There were OKU entrepreneurs who found it difficult to understand the idea of social media' (R19-S2). This shows that students should simplify ideas and clearly explain the method to entrepreneurs. Overall, students utilize creativity and explain ideas to entrepreneurs, adjusting their approach accordingly.

Opportunity recognition is very important in entrepreneurship and students nicely grab this opportunity when find chance to promote their products. Some students found this part challenging because they needed to reach the public and encourage interest in what they were selling. Within the groups several students said that attracting customers was not easy. One of them shared "The challenge was getting customers to buy the product" (R6-S1). Another student said "Convincing customers was not easy" (R18-S1). These comments showed that they were unsure about how to approach buyers or how to build trust in a short time. These reflections showed that recognizing an opportunity was more than spotting a potential audience. It required the students to shape the right message and to understand what customers needed and to push through their own hesitation. They learned through trial and error and they changed their plans when things did not work. They began to realize that any chance to grow an opportunity depended on how they connected with their customers.

Interpersonal and Relationship Competency

Leadership in this study referred to the way students guided their teams and how they motivated each other while completing their tasks. Some students shared that leadership issues appeared in their groups and this affected the flow of their work and the decisions they made together. One student said that "the assistant leader was easily angered and often raised their voice" (R16-S1). This showed that emotional reactions from a leader could make the group uncomfortable and weaken their teamwork. Another student explained that they found it "hard to divide tasks because I lacked leadership skills" (R23-S1). This showed that a lack of experience made even small decisions feel heavier and the group moved slower because of it. This showed that leadership is not only give direction but a leadership also need a calm behavior to arrange his work. This also help students to understand that proper guidance, and team support are important pillars of leadership.

This study helps students understand each other and build trust among them, as this concept was new to them. Students from diverse backgrounds join the groups, bringing limited knowledge, which makes the project challenging at the outset. Many students mentioned that they feel difficulties in understanding and building trust in each other (R4-S1; R7-S1). This also revealed that trust among teammates is shaped with efforts and students should focus on how other group members work respect their way of working and support them. It

is also observed that when trust is established among teammates, they work more efficiently and smoothly.

Relationship Management

In the current study context, relationship management refers to the cooperation between students and various team members who have differing thoughts and communication styles. The level of cooperation between team members was not steady, and some students mentioned that 'The level of cooperation between entrepreneurs and students is less than satisfactory' (R6-S1). This showed that students require ongoing effort to work with diverse individuals. Many students also shared that they need to change their approach and adopt more flexible methods when dealing with PWD entrepreneurs (R16-S2) and modify their behavior more sensitively. It revealed that relationship management reflection was more about organizing group tasks and involved the ability to adjust in difficult situations.

Discussion

The current study's findings contribute to the entrepreneurship literature and challenge the conventional conception that links persons with disabilities to entrepreneurial initiatives as beneficiaries. The results demonstrate that PWDs actively engaged with experiential partners, formed an entrepreneurial learning process, and enumerated inclusivity as co-creation. Additionally, the interaction among students and PWDs allineate with experiential learning theory, where information is raised through reflections, social interaction, and direct engagement. The findings also propose that different entrepreneurial competencies, such as adaptability, empathy, ethical awareness, and problem-solving, are complex to develop in classrooms and require interactive activities. The interaction with PWDs fortified students' ability to co-create value and expand their entrepreneurial competencies. The current study highlights how experiential learning with PWDs functions as an important factor in entrepreneurial education transformation.

Therefore, this study examines experiential learning competencies used by undergraduates during collaboration with PWD entrepreneurs. This study utilized 28 entrepreneurial learning competencies to focus on how student engagement contributes to professional development. The current study focuses on two main prospects: first, the challenges that emerged during students' collaboration with PWD entrepreneurs, and second, the challenges experienced within student groups. These two aspects provide a holistic understanding of the student learning process and factors affecting students' competency.

Business and Management Competency

Time management is considered a crucial competency among entrepreneurs that significantly influences an individual's effectiveness. The effective use of time can have a positive impact on business development and help balance responsibilities. Therefore, this study context involves students' capability to complete academic activities, collaborate with people with disabilities, and carry out group tasks. This study identifies that students experienced problems in group activities during discussion sessions, and it also noted that students submitted their assignments late, which ultimately delayed meetings with entrepreneurs. These issues make it difficult to complete task and disrupt activities among entrepreneurs and students. Early planning by students does not guarantee that their activities run efficiently, as the community-based engagement program requires students to be more flexible when dealing with various parties. Unlike students' fixed lecture schedules throughout the semester, collaboration with entrepreneurs requires students to communicate and negotiate with entrepreneurs constantly throughout the program. Therefore, experiential learning can expose students to managing limited time when dealing with various stakeholders to complete assigned tasks (39). Overall, the experience helped students not only develop personal discipline but also understand time as a shared resource in team and community settings.

Many students experienced difficulties in distributing responsibilities among group members. Their main challenge was to ensure that the task was fair and thorough, so that each member would be satisfied with their assigned role. Apart from that, they also face difficulties ensuring that each group member is actively involved so the leader can submit the activities report according to the set deadline. It was also noted that most students tend to complete their

tasks at the last minute and submit their reports very late, which negatively impacts the overall project progress. The research noted that many students are often confused about their responsibilities, which aligns with previous studies (44). Additionally, students find it challenging to execute their tasks while collaborating with entrepreneurs, as entrepreneurs are always busy with their daily operations. It was also difficult for students to schedule appointments with entrepreneurs, that aligns with past study, which states that time limitations play a significant role in community-based entrepreneurial learning (45).

Collaborative Competencies

Communication skills refers to the capability of a person to deliver information clearly and appropriately according to the situation (46). Communication competency has fundamental role in entrepreneur education to carry out daily task and manage external partners. In this study, student reflection showed that they face numerous communication challenges while communicating with team members (online) and with entrepreneur. One student reflected: "I find it difficult to understand the ideas conveyed by my friends clearly during discussions." (R12). Students also face communication challenges because they lack the self-confidence to express their opinions during group discussions. Another respondent supported this: "I have difficulty communicating in groups because I lack self-confidence" (R23). This feedback indicates that communication issues are not only related to technology or platforms but also involve self-confidence and collaboration within the group when carrying out tasks which is related to the past study findings (8). Our research focuses on one university setting, the patterns reflect broader concerns in inclusive entrepreneurship training. In short communication did not happen on its own and the students had to learn how to share their ideas in a clear way and understand different speaking styles and handle group expectations. These skills grew slowly through trial, errors and learning pattern that based on real situations guide reflection and personal growth.

Teamwork and skill collaboration are essential for the students to develop experiential leaning. These skills encourage students to work more closely and support each other when carrying out joint tasks. Some students revealed difficulties establishing strong collaborations while carrying out activities with group members. One respondent shared;" I have a hard time getting along with group members" (R1). This difficulty occurred as many students had limited experience in group activities before participating in this project. Another student added; "Some group members are less cooperative in completing assignments" (R19). This response reveals that an imbalance in task distribution and a lack of contributions among group members lead to dissatisfaction and disrupt the effective implementation of group tasks. The current study findings are similar with past study, who advocate that undergraduate students may have lower experiential learning collaboration (47). Additionally, student face challenges to split task with entrepreneurs and students put efforts in cooperation with entrepreneurs.

This study observed that numerous students faced difficulty with digital tools within group tasks, as many members were not accustomed to them. The students reported that they are not familiar with Google Docs, which makes it difficult to share files (R14-S1), and some expressed a lack of interest in digital platforms (R17-S1). This indicates that digital skills among students vary when working in a team, which impacts collaboration with entrepreneurs. Students also face trouble from entrepreneurs as they do not respond to WhatsApp or email (R5-S2), which makes collaboration very slow. The students also report that many entrepreneurs do not have smartphones, or some are unable to use them. The current study also found that students change their communication style as they notice entrepreneurs understand simple instructions. This aligns with extent study, who also found that entrepreneurs need to learn communication sensitivity when interacting with individuals of different communication skills levels (48) and extension of experiential learning, where participants learn from real-world problems (20).

Opportunity and Problem-solving Competency

This study found that many students has lack of skills to promote products as some mentioned that they feel hard to found any idea to promote product (R14). Students also face challenges when several entrepreneurs have not yet been exposed to the basics of digital marketing such as using

images and videos effectively for promotional purposes. For example, one noted, "It is difficult to carry out activities when entrepreneurs lack an understanding of digital marketing" (R19). The constraints entrepreneurs face requires students to adapt their approach to discussing ideas so that the entrepreneur can more easily understand them. This aligns with the principle of collaborative learning which requires students to always be flexible in carrying out activities.

Other research also points in the same direction and illustrate that creativity shifts with its environment and their work shows that limits like time and tools or how well a partner understands the task can either slow down ideas or spark new ones (49). The creative ability grows through reflection in a range of settings and our findings match this view as the students gained a clearer sense of how to be creative in real and restricted situations (39). They began to see creativity as more than coming up with ideas and they used it as a way to solve problems, share messages and adjust their approach which are important values in entrepreneurship especially in social work where clarity and inclusion matter.

Students often struggled in understanding consumer needs when promoting entrepreneurs' products. Student reflections revealed that identifying opportunities in the marketing context for products developed by entrepreneurs is challenging for students who do not have a foundation in marketing knowledge. One student stated, “It is very challenging to attract customers to buy products,” R6. Several participants revealed that they lacked confidence in explaining the value proposition of the promoted product to convince customers to purchase. For example, another student said, "I don't know how to convince customers" R18. This finding matches with the past study, who found that many undergraduate students struggled to recognize business opportunities because they did not have enough knowledge to guide their judgement (50). In our setting the students also faced this gap and the chance to work with real entrepreneurs gave them a clearer sense of how business tasks feel in practice and how learning happens through action. The data showed that opportunity recognition needed training and guided experience and it was not just about seeing a need but finding a way to match that need with a product that made sense to buyers. The challenge grew when the work involved inclusive entrepreneurship because many products were handmade or small scale or traditional and the students had to learn how to reshape simple items into meaningful offers through digital stories. This point is also seen in the past study, who mentioned that students often lack the thinking tools needed to spot business opportunities and they explained that real contact with entrepreneurs helps to build this skill (50).

Interpersonal and Relationship Competency

Several reflections indicate that leadership is one of the skills that needs improvement among participating students, particularly when communicating with group members. One respondent shared, “The assistant group leader is temperamental and often angry” (R16). This situation illustrates that leaders who fail to control their emotions during communication can create discomfort among group members. These reflections align with the extent study findings, who noted that many students were unsure about guiding their groups with confidence (51). Furthermore, leadership became more complex due to the social interaction required with PWD entrepreneurs. The students had to guide their peers while also handling communication with the entrepreneurs, which created extra pressure. They had to balance the goals of the assignment with the needs of their community partners and many of them were not ready to handle this kind of social complexity. The inclusive leadership needs social awareness and adaptability, especially when a task involves people with different abilities (52). In short, leadership was not the primary aim of the assignment, but the situation presented the students with a real test of their early leadership habits. These findings suggest that future programs may benefit from structured reflection and simple coaching, allowing students to develop leadership skills in a more intentional manner.

Trust building in this study emerged gradually as students learned to understand one another while working in newly formed groups. Many of them entered the project without a strong familiarity with their teammates, which created a sense of unease in the early stages. In the current study, some students report that everyone should understand and trust other group members (R4-

S1), which suggests that every group member should work hard to earn trust. Additionally, many students stated that it was difficult to build understanding among team members (R7-S1), indicating that most of the challenges stem from student hesitation. This also found that trust building among teammates is an adjustment process where people read, learn, and respond (53). Many students have experienced positive changes in their communication and behavior, creating a safer space to share ideas. Although the word 'trust' was not used in the reflection, it was tested through different scenarios, such as collaboration requiring business information, marketing ideas, and shared planning. The current study's findings indicate that trust plays a crucial role in the learning process, requiring patience and clear communication.

This study explored the relationship management in task relationships between students and PWD entrepreneurs. It is found that students tried to deal with their team members' communication style and temperament to strengthen the task relationship. Some students stated that the cooperation among students and entrepreneurs was not satisfactory (R6-S1), which shows that collaboration was not always as expected. This experience was different from class rooms where things are more predictable and controlled. Numerous students stated that they face issue while interacting with entrepreneurs due to their physical limitation (R16-S1). It also seen that students realized relationship management is not as easy as dividing task but you have to pay attention support them and work with them to create strong relationship. This study also found that the quality of relationship within students' team or relationship with PWD can influence their commitment towards project.

Practical and Policy Recommendation

The current study purpose recommendations based on findings of the study to enhance entrepenuial education. First, entrepreneurial programs should add structural experiential learning mechanisms which ensure mutual learning, decrease power unevenness, and increase continuous interaction. Secondly, higher education institutes should propose entrepreneurial education program specifically for PWDs as experiential partner. This can achieve via sustained collaboration, and co-created projects between PWDs and students. Lastly, facilitators and educators should receive trainings, targeting reflexive and inclusive educational practice for ethical engagement with PWDs. The relevant authorities and universities should work together and make policies to do partnership with PWDs and provide resources for meaningful participation.

Conclusion

The current study examines how university students utilize experiential learning through PWD entrepreneurs and how this approach can contribute to their entrepreneurial competencies. This study also explores entrepreneurial competency factors vital for experiential learning. Furthermore, the current study determined that experiential learning provides a better transforma tive learning approach for working PWD entrepreneurs. This study also challenges the stereotypical perception of PWD entrepreneurs and increases student self-reflection, appreciation of diversity, and adaptability through experiential learning. The student can gain valuable insights and develop practical skills, such as problem-solving abilities and empathy, by interacting with entrepreneurs. The learning interaction between students and entrepreneurs creates a better understanding, resilience, and social value crea-tion, which is an important factor in entrepreneur ship education. The integration and inclusion of experiential learning in undergraduate programs will enhance students' professional and entrepreneurial skills. It also promotes sustainable educational practices that contribute to broader social impact and higher education. This study also concludes that task management, communication skills, teamwork, creativity, opportunity recognition, trust, and relationship management are key factors in the development of entrepreneurial competencies. Future studies can explore these factors in a broader range to understand the impact of disability-inclusive experiential learning. Additionally, future studies can also examine experiential learning with PWD entrepreneurs in different cultural or institutional contexts to increase the generalizability of this study.

Limitation and Future Directions

The current study has several limitations, despite its contribution to theory and the literature. This

study focused only on students from the final-year projects and PWDs engaged in entrepreneurial education. Future studies can use a broader range of educational levels and disability types to provide more insights into inclusive entrepreneurial education. The current study is qualitative in nature and uses a specific context, which limits its generalizability. Future studies can use a mixed-methods approach to examine findings across different cultural and educational contexts. Additionally, future studies can use a longitudinal approach to examine the long-term impact of entrepreneurial intentions, learning outcomes, and social inclusion of PWDs.

Abbreviations

ATLAS.ti: Archive of technology for the logic of analysis, PWDs: People with disabilities, R: Reflection, S: Saturation.

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Author Contributions

Norhilmi Muhammad: Conceptualization, methodology, data collection, writing, editing, Abdul Rauf: writing – review, editing, Fakhrul Anwar Zainol: Project administration, funding acquisition, review, editing, Fazida Karim: Investigation, resources, review, editing, Nur Izzati Ab Ghani, Husna Ab Ghani: review, editing.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Data Availability

Data will be made available upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

Declaration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) Assistance

The authors declare that no artificial intelligence (AI) tools were used in the preparation of this manuscript.

Ethical Approval

This study was part of an educational experiential learning activity in entrepreneurship and involved non-clinical, minimal-risk research, formal ethical committee approval was not required.

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