

EFFECTIVENESS ASSESSMENT OF THE ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM (EEP): A CASE STUDY AMONG DISABLED TRAINERS AT CHESHIRE HOME SELANGOR

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ABSTRACT--Disabled groups face many challenges when it comes to securing a job. Besides having to compete with the non-disabled candidates, access to opportunities and preparation are quite limited. Nevertheless, programs on special education and vocational studies have been actively initiated by many parties including the government bodies and private NGOs to help train disabled candidates. This study sets out to explore the effectiveness of an Economic Empowerment Program (EEP) carried out by an NGO called Cheshire Home situated in Selangor from the lens of (N= 14) alumni of this program via face-to-face focus group discussion. The three main objectives of this study is to (1) study the impact of EPP to disabled trainees on employability and personality, (2) explore experiences of the disabled trainees and (3) describe the understanding and perception of the disabled trainees at Cheshire Home Selangor towards EEP. The results revealed four main themes that emerged from the focus group discussion which were impact of EEP on trainees' personality, employability, work experiences and challenges as well as trainees' perception and understanding towards EEP. This study has generally illustrated EEP's effectiveness that was carried out by Cheshire Home Selangor and has been seen to impact positively on the empowerment of disabled trainees.

Keywords-- Disabled People, Economic Empowerment Program, employability, work challenges

I. INTRODUCTION

The disabled (OKU) are among the groups that are always included in the plans of the country's development. The contributions by the OKU groups towards economic generation have not been overlooked. In the working sector, disabled employees are categorized as Latent Workforces, that is external labour which has the potential to work in both private and public sector. Following the awareness on the potential that OKU has in the working sector, programs on OKU development on the national level has been actively initiated along with the declaration of

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the International Year of the Disabled 1980 and the launch of The World Programme of Action Concerning Disabled Persons 1982. The Malaysian government has also established the National Welfare Policy in 1980 in the effort to enhance the well-being and stability of the society including the disabled towards the development of the country. On top of that, the government has also started on an initiative to enact the Disability Act 2008 to meet international demands. This act was enacted in accordance to the local norm which consists of 46 allocations which highlights registration, protection, rehabilitation, development, well-being of the disabled, establishment of the National Council for the disabled and other related matters.

From these developments, more welfare institutions are created to provide service to the disabled. These institutions are managed and sponsored either by the government through the Malaysian Department of Social Welfare (JKM) or non-governmental organizations (NGO) or also individual efforts. Programs on giving awareness on the rights of the disabled, as well as enhancing the quality and well-being of the disabled are actively carried out. Giving equal opportunities to all will help the disabled to be free of physical, social, attitude, economic and cultural challenges which will further encourage full integration of the disabled within the society.

Conceptually, World Health Organisation (WHO) and United Nations (UN) defines disabled as a person who is not capable of self-determination to fully or partially acquire an individual's basic needs and/or is unable to live fully in society due to a physical or mental deficiency which may occur since birth or later. (PBB, 2010; Zinaida Ariffin, 2006). Meanwhile, the Disabled Act (2008) defines persons with disabilities include those who have long term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society (Akta OKU, 2008). Persons with disabilities belong to the society. They also have the same right and equal opportunities to live their life as others do. According to a published bulletin, 10 percent of Malaysian citizens are people with disabilities which is in line with the statistics prepared by the United Nations where they reported a figure around 2.8 million disabled citizens in Malaysia (BPM, 2011). Therefore, this group should be given the attention and not to be left out.

In the context of a developing country like Malaysia, employment opportunities are very selective especially with the inclusion of external labour from outside of Malaysia. These scenario fuels competitiveness especially among persons with disabilities where they also need jobs and benefits just like others. In order to ensure that person with disabilities have a place in the employment market, The Third Service Circular for the Year 2008 has established that at least one percent of the vacancies in the government sector has to be allocated to persons with disabilities (JPA, 2008). The government has also launched the Employment Practice Code for the Disabled in private sectors back in 2001. Through this code, the government may give out incentives like tax exemptions to private companies that employ persons with disabilities (Mohd Hafiz Abd Rahman, 2009).

However, this initiative has still not attracted that many companies in the private and public sector. A study which looked at education, training and career of persons with disabilities in Malaysia found that respondents are mostly unsatisfied with the education and training opportunities that are provided as well as employment and job opportunities available for the disabled (Zinaida Ariffin, 2006). Some of the barriers include the wrong perception

about the disabled by fellow employers resulting in the disabled to depend mostly on government and private aids as well as help from their own family members (HasnahToran et al., 2010).

Besides that, society's perception and prejudice attitude may also influence the disabled to be treated as second class citizens (MohdShairillIsaruddin et al., 2018; Sarkees& Scott, 1986) however not all citizens have negative perception on the disabled (NoordeyanaTambi et al., 2017). Previous studies have shown that 50 to 70 percent of the disabled only receive minimum wage or are unemployed (Heward, 2000). This may be due to prejudice towards the capabilities of the disabled to work and insufficient skills needed to compete in the work market. In terms of their career development, studies have reported persons with disabilities to have limited work skills, low income, low opportunities of employment or none at all (Curnow, 1989). In fact, even disabled students leave school without skills to secure a job. This may be why they are unable to be independent. The disabled often perceive that without any education, training or any social or work services as well as enough experience, they won't be able to get any work experiences (Zaharah Wahid et al., 2013).

In Malaysia, program on special education and vocational studies are carried out to train the disabled before they enter the working world. Nevertheless, there are still a large amount of disabled people that does not have access to equal opportunities to employment even though they have received training either from the government or private training centres. Besides the effort from the Department of Welfare and Department of Special Education, there are efforts from NGOs like Cheshire Home where they have a program called the Economic Empowerment Programme (EEP).

EEP has been introduced by Cheshire Home Selangor since 2007 which trains people with learning difficulties from the age of 18 to 24 years old. With the motto "*Reduce Poverty and Enhance Work and Employment Prospects*", those who participate in this program are empowered through specific training skills so that they become more independent and ready to enter the working world. Recruitment to this program is done twice a year where the participants will live at Cheshire Home Selangor for five months. EEP consists of five core modules which are personal development, communication skills, personal health, skills development and on-the-job training. Cheshire Home Selangor also provides job coaches for the duration of two weeks to a month followed by occasional visits as well as employer consultations.

Therefore, the study focuses on the effectiveness of the program among disabled trainees at Cheshire Home Selangor. Assessments on its effectiveness are crucial to identify gaps or limitations so that it can be improved to give optimal impact to the disabled trainees. It has been suggested that training assessments should be carried out at the reaction stage in order to gain basic information to ensure improvement can be made in the earlier stages (Winfrey, 2002). There are three main objectives of this study which are to (1) study the impact of EEP to disabled trainees on employability and personality, (2) explore experiences of the disabled trainees and (3) describe the understanding and perception of the disabled trainees at Cheshire Home Selangor towards EEP.

II. METHOD

The study adopts a qualitative design in which semi-structured interviews were used within focus groups. Semi-structured interview is an interview method that combined flexibility of open interview and the organization of a structured interviews. Therefore, the questions were determined before the interview took place but the answers were left open and researchers were able to build questions following their answers. During the focus group, group ethics were briefed to ensure that the study followed qualitative procedures including confidentiality, letting know that the sessions were recorded for study purposes, respondents' readiness to share their honest experiences and the result of the study will be used to give impact to the general public.

The study took place at Cheshire Home Selangor which is located at Batu 7 ½, Jalan Ipoh Selayang, 68100 Batu Caves, Selangor. Around 14 alumni from of the EEP program participated voluntarily in the study that took place at Cheshire Home Selangor. Respondents included eight males and six females between the age 20 to 34 years old. Majority were from the Malay ethnicity, three were Chinese and one respondent was Indian. All the respondents had learning disabilities who graduated successfully from the EEP program and were recruited via purposive sampling method according to the study criteria. This was to maintain the representativeness of the study and that the validity of the interview based on their experiences.

Researchers in the study had received permission from Cheshire Home Selangor to carry out the interviews with their alumni on the dates that were mutually agreed on. The interview took place using the interview protocol that was developed to answer the research objectives. These semi-structured interviews were carried out in two sessions where each session involved seven respondents. Each session lasted for about 30 minutes. The interviews were then transcribed for analysis to take place. Content analysis were used to systematically code issues that arise and was grouped into specific themes. The information was grouped into different categories and was analysed using content analysis. Themes and important events were looked closely to study respondents' feedback on EEP and to answer the research objectives. Results of the analysis were interpreted according to the themes that were developed. This process continued on until data saturation as achieved which is when no new categories can be created. Finally, the results were reported narratively to illustrate texts that were taken from the original data.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondents Demographic Background

From the total number of respondents (N=14), six (43%) of them were female and eight (57%) were male respondents. Ten (72%) of them were Malay, three (21%) were Chinese and one (7%) was an Indian respondent. Table 1 presents more information of the respondents in this study including demographic background such as gender, marital status, ethnicity and age.

Table 1:Demographic background of the study respondents

Respondent	Gender	Ethnicity	Age (Years)	Marital Status
R1	Female	Chinese	34	Single
R2	Female	Chinese	21	Single
R3	Male	Malay	24	Single
R4	Male	Malay	24	Single
R5	Female	Malay	26	Single
R6	Female	Malay	26	Single
R7	Male	Malay	24	Single
R8	Male	Malay	20	Single
R9	Male	Chinese	20	Single
R10	Male	Malay	22	Single
R11	Female	India	21	Single
R12	Female	Malay	21	Single
R13	Male	Malay	23	Single
R14	Male	Malay	24	Single

Overall, the results found four main themes which are (1) impact of EEP towards trainees' personality, (2) employability, (3) work experience and challenges and (4) understanding as well as trainees' perception towards EEP.

Impact of EEP towards Trainees' Personality

EEP was found to give an impact towards personality empowerment of the disabled trainees in the study. The study found that trainees reported being more independent, confident and brave in socialising. The respondents generally gave positive feedback. Even though they did not have the same ability like others, but they remained determined to better themselves and did not want their disabilities to become the barrier of their life success. Just like how Respondent 6 stated,

"I want to grow mature, I want to learn to be independent...emm, when we are working, we have to take care of ourselves..." [06: Malay female respondent aged 26 years old]

Meanwhile Respondent 11 stated,

"If I get a job... I have money and I won't have to trouble my parents." [11: Indian female respondent aged 21 years old]

Respondent 13 added,

"It helps me quite a lot. Firstly, in terms of my personality... In terms of my behaviour..."[13: Malay male respondent aged 23 years old]

Results show that the trainees had the ambition to prove that disability cannot break down their motivation and that they will work harder to prove that they have the ability to live just like other normal people do. At the same time, they would not have to trouble their family members especially their parents.

Besides that, they often receive prejudice attitude from the society which causes to lower their self-esteem. But, EEP helps them to control their self-esteem gradually and they become more confident and braver. For an example, Respondent 1 states that,

“I have learned to face people. Before this, it was hard for me, I was scared of people...When I look at other people's face, I become scared, panic...Now I still do feel it, but not much like before.” [13: Chinese female respondent aged 34 years old]

Respondent 10 also added,

“...I am not that shy anymore...” [10: Malay male respondent aged 22 years old]

EEP program is seen to instil confidence and bravery within the disabled trainees. The implementation of EEP has helped trainees to socialize. Their ability to socialize are part of soft skills as well as technical skills that were acquired through the five months program. The study found that EEP is able to instil the spirit of togetherness within the trainees. Social support among the trainees were developed and used as a platform for them to enhance interpersonal and communication skills. For an example, Respondent 2 perceived that having more friends with the same condition (disabled) has influences their well-being and quality of life,

“After I finish work, during my holiday I will come here... I will always come here when I'm on leave, I will come and talk to my friends...I am a lot happy... Even though I have completed the EEP Program, I have friends... I can come here...I have good friends.” [02: Chinese female respondent aged 21].

Based on the previous text, it was shown that support from peers can help develop trainees' personality in living a normal life, which in turns leads to respondents socialising with society. This honest friendship has made their social life more meaningful.

However, it is upsetting when society highlights their disabilities more than their potentials. Just like normal citizens, the disabled are not exempted to having ambitions of their own. Based on the interview, EEP was able to instil goals and visions within the disabled trainees. Various visions were shares, either a simple one or a complex vision. There were a few with small and medium scale visions such as giving their parents money to buy a new handphone or getting driving licenses,

“I want to give money to my parents... They can buy a new handphone...” [02: Chinese female respondent aged 21]

“I want to get a driving licence...” [07: Malay male respondent aged 24]

“I will get a license to ride a motorcycle...” [05: Malay female respondent aged 26]

Even better when two trainers reported to have bigger vision just like any other normal people. Respondent 3 stated that he wanted to buy his own car,

“I want to buy myself a car...Axia...” [03: Malay male respondent aged 24]

Meanwhile Respondent 1 planned to invest in buying assets due to his physical challenges.

“I will save up, and buy a house...Then I will rent it out to people for long-term investment. Yes, I plan to buy a house and rent it out.” [01: Chinese female respondent aged 34]

This study has shown that most EEP alumni had future plans which benefitted them and they were able to plan out a comprehensive financial plan as a step to prepare for their future. They are seen to have the awareness in appreciating their income from their own hard work and they were able to think forward just like others do.

To summarise, EEP has brought a positive impact on the disabled trainees especially on their personality enhancement which includes aspect of learning how to become independent, develop confidence and bravery, ability to socialise and to instil visions within themselves. In other words, EEP has helped the respondents to increase employability skills so that they are equal to others competing in the working world. The respondents did not only depend on technical skills to promote themselves to potential employers, but they come together with soft skills that was applied in the EEP modules. This has shown EEP to have a positive impact on disabled trainees’ personality at Cheshire Home Selangor.

Impact of EEP towards Employability

Securing a job among the disabled has always been difficult especially when they have to compete with those who are non-disabled. However, with training and opportunities that were provided through EEP, the trainees have the potential to compete successfully. Among the industries are retail, services, manufacturing (factory operators) or working with families. Majority of the respondents worked in private companies with impressive reputation of their own. For an example, Respondent 4 partially owns a laundry business with his friends whereas Respondent 7 works with his brother as an assistant to a lorry driver. Generally, the average income of the respondents’ range between RM300 to RM2150. The range of their tenure was between three months to five years. Full details of the respondents’ occupation are as follows:

Table 2: Respondent’s occupation information

Respondent	Occupation Information
R1	Worked at UNIQLO KL SOGO for three (3) months and a half with monthly income RM2050.
R2	Worked at Krispy Kreme Avenue K for three (3) months with monthly income of RM500.
R3	Worked at UNIQLO Berjaya Times Square for eight (8) months with monthly income of RM2150.
R4	Worked at OKU DobiSdnBhd Mid Valley Megamall for five (5) months with income based on sales (RM400 was the most).
R5	Worked at Kumpulan Jebco (M) SdnBhd for five (5) years with monthly income of RM900.

R6	Worked at MYDIN Rawang for three (3) years with monthly income of RM900.
R7	Worked with brother as lorry conductor for two (2) years with monthly income of RM1200.
R8	Worked at UNIQLO Cheras for five (5) months with monthly income of RM2000.
R9	About to work with housekeeping at Hotel KLCC in the near future.
R10	Worked at a store in Selayang with monthly income of RM300.
R11	Worked at MYDIN Masjid India however quit a year ago due to health problems.
R12	Worked at MYDIN Rawang for a year and four months with monthly income of RM700.
R13	Worked at MYDIN Rawang for a year and four months.
R14	Worked at MYDIN Rawang for a year and four months.

Therefore, it can be said that EEP is effective in the aspect of employability as all respondents have secured a job either in the private sector (local and multinational), on their own or with families. Only one respondent (Respondent 11) was out of a job due to health reasons due to recovery from a backbone operation. Through EEP, respondents were able to express their self-potential when employed by various organisations. Results of study have shown that employers with optimistic attitudes that employs person with disabilities. In relation to that, EEP at Cheshire Home Selangor have given positive outcomes in terms of their employability.

Impact of EEP towards Work Experience and Challenges

For the third theme, which is work experiences and challenges, the study found two sub-themes which are acceptance from employers or colleagues and acceptance by their customers or clients. For the first subtheme, both parties (employers and colleagues) gave impact on their work experiences. Employers play an important role in providing opportunities for the disabled to reveal the skills learned and to for them apply them in the working world. But, when employers have negative perceptions, they find it hard to apply their skills at work due to their concern of getting scold or doubted by their employers. For an example, Respondent 2 stated,

“I always get scolding.... always... but I just ignored it...” [02: Chinese female respondent aged 21]

Employers fierce attitude makes the trainees fearful of them just like what Respondent 1 stated,

“I am very scared with the team leader, very scared... Scared of him... because he is fierce,”. She added “His face, when I look at it[him] I becomescared... Man... Like the other dayhe called “Oi!”, while pointing his finger at my face” [01: Chinese female respondent aged 34].

The trainees agree that the fierce attitude of their employer can demotivate them. Besides that, being treated unfairly such as favouritism may also demotivate them. For an example, Respondent 13 stated that,

“There are three bosses there...aaa only two are okay... [13: Malay male respondent aged 23].

Respondent 12 who were working at the same organisation also added,

“Too proud...If we say something, he does not look at us, but if other people say something, they can joke around. If us, we can't joke around...aaa other people can become his friends. But us, we cannot be his friends.” [12: Malay female respondent aged 21].

Respondent 11 also shared her experience,

“...but the owner there is a bit different. He does not like disabled people working at Masjid India,” [11: Indian female respondent aged 21]

Besides having to face a fierce employer, some trainees also had the experience of being manipulated by their employers. Respondent 6 who now work at a local retail organisation revealed that he was once not paid by his previous employer.

“I worked for about 3 weeks...and they did not want to pay me... then they throw me out of work,” [06: Malay female respondent aged 26]

This has shown that there are still employers that are irresponsible and takes advantage of the people's disabilities in order for their own gain. Nevertheless, not all employers treats disabled employees negatively. There are employers that are understanding especially if their disabled employees are being bullied, like what Respondent 10 shared,

“Boss scolded him/her (the perpetrator) ... and then everyday my boss takes care of me...take care...” [10: Malay male respondent aged 22]

This shows that employers that treat their disabled employees well may motivate them and make them feel appreciated by their organisation. Besides that, there are also colleagues that give impact towards the disabled trainees. Undeniably, there are still colleagues that discriminate disabled co-workers. For an example, Respondent 6 shared that she was not satisfied that her colleague argued that disabled employees were not supposed to be paid the same due to their work output that is lesser than normal people,

“There is this normal friend of mine...always finding fault. And then she always like to complain... Sometimes my supervisor say that he is angry with this friend of mine. Sometimes I get bullied at work. Like me, every day I am bullied. It's like she is not happy... that my pay is higher than hers... So she is not satisfied,” [06: Malay female respondent aged 26]

Respondent 10 also shared his experience of being bullied by his colleague at work,

“He bullies... they give...pour it..nuts.. pour the nuts,”[10: Malay male respondent aged 22]

However, not all their colleagues had negative attitudes towards the respondents. There were colleagues that supported and helped them at work. For an example, Respondent 2 stated,

“Senior Dian is the oldest colleague, she teaches me.” [02: Chinese female respondent aged 21].

Respondent 11 added that she had positive experience of being treated nicely by her colleagues,

“Colleagues are all okay...Nepal is the most okay... Nepal was the bestHe helps me, I also help him.” [11: Indian female respondent aged 21]

Next, is to unfold the second subtheme which is acceptance by their customers or clients. Their job mostly involves them being at the front line dealing with customers. Therefore, when we asked questions on their customers, there were mixed feedback. Respondent 4 that worked in a laundry shop shared his experience,

“Customers’ behaviours. Send today expect it to be ready by today. They can’t. So I do get scolding from customers. Sometimes customers scold me terribly, lipstick stain was not able to be removed, so they get angry... Lipstick, eyeliner.” [04: Malay male respondent aged 24].

Their experiences show that the slogan “The customer is always right” and “The customer is king” acts like a “green light” for customers to treat them negatively. This study has briefly illustrated that most respondents in the study are still facing issues of being accepted by their employers, colleagues and customers. Stigma against disabled people are still there among society which leaves a negative impact onto disabled people especially in developing their self-concept and personality. Therefore, employers, colleagues and customers should behave realistically to understand the disabilities that they have and not arbitrarily getting angry, manipulate or bully them. In fact, they need more guidance and support to help them get use to their job scope, culture and their customers.

Moreover, transportation is also an important factor for disabled people. Without a conducive transportation system, it is quite impossible for disabled people to get to work(Aizan Sofia Amin & Jamiah Manap, 2015). However, the respondents in the study did not express that much of a problem when it comes to transportation except for one respondent (Respondent 2), where he had to quit her job due to the distance of her workplace from her home.

“Before this I’ve worked in Chicken Rice Shop, but it didn’t last... only for two months... not suitable, for transport.” [02: Chinese female respondent aged 21].

Besides that, this study also found that 7 respondents(50%) relied on public transportation such as LRT, KTM commuter, monorail and bus to get to work. For an example, Respondent 8 stated that he commutes to work via public bus. The rest (43%) gets help from their family members to get to work (e.g. Respondent 5 gets to work with his brother) and only

Based on the feedback given by the respondents, it can be assumed that transportation is not an issue to become a serious barrier for the respondents when they entered the working world. In fact some use public transportation as they find it easier, comfortable and economical. Providing comfortable means of transportation for the disabled is one of the initiatives taken by the government. Besides, the respondents in the study did not have disabilities that limits their movements, but instead they had learning disabilities which causes their intelligence to not be at par with their biological age. They might feel difficult at the beginning, but as they become used to it, they will find it becoming easier.

Trainees’ Perception and Understanding towards EEP

This study also looks the respondents’ perception and understanding of the EEP program.

The program's objective was to empower disabled trainees by going through specific trainings to help them become more independent and ready to compete in the working world. This was done via five main modules within the EEP. Study shows that respondents acquired skills through two components which are literacy skills and technical skills. Literacy skills focuses on basic aspects of 3M that is reading (*membaca*), writing (*menulis*) and calculating (*mengira*). For an example, Respondent 10 stated,

"I learned aaa writing... umm learned colours.." [10: Malay male respondent aged 22].

Respondent 6 also added,

"First, I learned how to write, BM, Mathematics...Then after 3 months erm, I learned bakery and ICT." [06: Malay female respondent aged 26].

Meanwhile, technical skills were more focused on aspects of developing vocational skills and on-the- job trainings. The respondents shared that they were given trainings including laundry work, housekeeping, and learning methods to pack bread. For an example, Respondent 3 stated,

"I started learning and there was a lot of work...sometimes laundry... sometime at Dorsett there is a lot to do... I help here and there... but my favourite was working at Hotel Dorsett," [03: Malay male respondent aged 24].

Respondent 1 added,

"Bakery lah... I now know how to pack things..." [01: Chinese female respondent aged 34].

Respondent 2 also added,

"I learned bakery." [02: Chinese female respondent aged 21].

Therefore, it can be assumed that respondents understand what is EPP but they did have difficulties in explaining it in depth. Challenges in terms of IQ influences their answers during the interview. Nevertheless, all respondents generally agree that EEP has given a positive impact on them which led them to become more independent and they had positive perception towards the EEP executed by Cheshire Home Selangor.

IV. OVERALL DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study has generally illustrated EEP's effectiveness that was carried out by Cheshire Home Selangor. The program is seen to impact positively on the empowerment of disabled trainees' personality and employability. Social support from various parties are required to avoid from negative perceptions and discrimination towards them. The general society as well as employers, colleagues and customers especially have to give opportunities and rights to the disabled for their well-being.

There are few limitations in this study. Firstly, these results are not to be generalise other context such as special needs education, or at any private or public institutions given that the sample of study were recruited from one location which is Cheshire Home Selangor. Secondly, the study had a limited sample size involving 14 respondents where ratio of gender, age and ethnicity was not equal. Thirdly, interview content due to IQ limitations where respondents' feedback was mostly on the surface and weren't able to explain more critically and some found it hard

to express in a complete sentence which may influence the results of the study. Finally, the data analysis fully depended on their respondents from the focus group interview which may introduce bias.

There are few suggestions that can help future research in the field to expand this research. These includes getting a larger sample size with a fair ratio of demographic factors such as gender, age group and ethnicity. Besides that, future research may also include interviews with employers that employs disabled people to get a perspective from the organisations point of view on the effectiveness of programs like EEP. Finally, researchers in this field should have knowledge on choosing the right research design that would help achieve the research objectives.

As a whole, this research achieved its objectives to assess the effectiveness of the Economic Empowerment Program carried out by Cheshire Home Selangor. Results of this study are acquired based on current situations while the study was carried out and hopefully it could serve as a guide for future researchers. Research on assessing program effectiveness especially involving disabled people should be expanded (Hammad Mohd Saidi et al., 2018). This is aligned with the government's effort on increasing awareness of Malaysian citizens on the equal rights of disabled people towards the development of the country. Therefore, it is hoped that all parties give more serious attention and are aware of the condition faced by disabled citizens in trying to live a normal life just like others. Programs like EEP or other means of technology (Hazlina Falina Rosli et al., 2016) can help empower disabled citizen, in this case with learning disabilities to gain employability and to be able to compete healthily in the current working world.

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