

## The Able: A Campaign on Empowering Differently-Abled Individuals towards Achieving Greater Sustainability in Malaysia"

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### Abstract

"The Able" campaign at INTI International University aimed to spotlight the challenges and experiences of individuals with disabilities, promoting an inclusive, empathetic, and accepting environment. Focusing on the individuality rather than the limitations of disabled persons, the initiative sought to educate, empower, and advocate for supportive legislation and awareness about equal opportunities. Utilizing plays, songs, PSAs, and panel debates, it addressed societal misconceptions and stigmas, pushing for a compassionate and inclusive approach in education and society. Panel discussions highlighted the barriers created by inaccessible infrastructure and societal prejudices, emphasizing the need for an inclusive culture. The campaign was grounded in compassion, knowledge, and empowerment, striving to debunk myths about disabilities through engaging activities and educational efforts, fostering community support, and advocating for equitable growth policies. Originating to increase awareness among university staff and students, the initiative emphasized the importance of integrating disabled individuals into all life aspects, supported by the Social Model of Disability. This model identifies societal, environmental, and attitudinal barriers as central to disability, advocating for supportive and diverse environments. Through qualitative methods and expert panel discussions, the campaign demonstrated a significant application of the social model in areas like lifestyle quality, education, inclusivity, and awareness. The positive reception of its media and the insightful panel debates highlighted the need for realistic representation and addressed the continuing challenges faced by students with disabilities, propelling the movement towards a more inclusive society.

**Keywords:** *Differently Able, Quality of Life, Quality Education, Inclusivity, Diversity, Empowerment, Awareness Strategy.*

### Introduction

Malaysia, is a vibrant and diverse country with a complex tapestry of cultures, traditions, and identities (King, 2021). As the country moves forward towards being a developed nation, it is critical to promote inclusivity and address the needs of all citizens, including those with different abilities (Yusof, Chan, Hillaludin, & Ahmad Ramli, 2019). This conceptual paper is based on the running of an event entitled "The ABLE" at INTI International University. It discusses the transformative significance of those who are differently-abled along with awareness campaigns within a private institution of higher learning in Malaysia. The event's forum, examined how such activities would lead to increased sustainability both social and economic.

Malaysia, like many other countries, has made tremendous strides towards recognising the rights and exploring the opportunities available to people with disabilities (Yusof, Chan, Hillaludin, & Ahmad Ramli, 2019). In recent years, there has been an increase in awareness programmes around the country aimed at breaking down prejudice, promoting understanding and creating a more inclusive society. These efforts aim to affect not only public opinion, but also policies, infrastructure and employment prospects (Yusof, Chan, Hillaludin, & Ahmad Ramli, 2019).

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The Able Campaign's inaugural event served as a powerful catalyst in sparking a conversation among university students about the crucial importance of awareness, inclusivity and equality for people with disabilities. As the event progressed, it became clear that cultivating a culture of understanding and support was not only vital, but also an essential component of building a more inclusive society.

The campaign's major goal was to encourage active participation from both staff and students, with the goal of channeling and garnering their collective efforts into various plans aimed at promoting and achieving long-term growth for those differently abled. The predominant aim of the campaign was to influence and increase present efforts to facilitate change on a larger scale by encouraging collaboration from various stakeholders.

Acknowledging the necessity of a comprehensive approach, the initiative aimed to extend its impact beyond the campus, advocating for the adoption of inclusive policies and practices across the community. The objective was not solely to raise awareness, but also to spur tangible actions that enhance the freedom and welfare of individuals with diverse abilities.

The Able Campaign endorsed the vision of a society where individuals of all abilities could engage meaningfully and flourish. It sought to generate a ripple effect by encouraging, enlightening, and involving both individuals and institutions in actively contributing to the pursuit of a more inclusive and fair future.

The inaugural event of the Able Campaign established the foundation for its transformative mission, envisioning a society where diversity is celebrated, barriers are dismantled, and opportunities are accessible to all. Committed to sustainable progress and fostering self-reliance, the campaign aimed to play a pivotal role in shaping a world where diversity is not only tolerated but enthusiastically embraced.

One significant outcome of such awareness campaigns is the dismantling of societal barriers that have hindered the complete engagement of individuals with diverse abilities. By fostering a more inclusive environment, these initiatives pave the way for enduring and harmonious coexistence, ensuring that every individual can play a meaningful role in the advancement of the nation. This conceptual paper will present insights from The Able on sustainability across various dimensions, encompassing social cohesion, economic productivity, and the overall welfare of individuals with diverse abilities.

### *Problem Statement*

As per the insights gleaned from a panel discussion during the "The Able" campaign on November 29th, 2023, it's evident that individuals with diverse abilities encounter numerous hurdles. Malaysia, in particular, faces significant obstacles **in achieving complete inclusion and empowerment of differently abled individuals**, spanning various disabilities including physical, sensory, intellectual and mental health challenges. Despite efforts to foster inclusivity, several notable concerns persist, hindering the seamless integration of people with disabilities into mainstream society. The ensuing problem statement highlights critical areas of concern.

**Individuals with disabilities often confront challenges stemming from inadequate infrastructure and accessibility in public spaces, transportation, and buildings.** The absence of ramps, lifts, or other necessary adjustments limits their mobility and independence, a deficiency further exacerbated by the lack of such facilities in educational settings. Moreover, there's a **notable scarcity of access to high-quality education and specialized training programs tailored for people with disabilities in Malaysia.** Constrained resources, ineffective teaching methodologies, and inadequate support services impede their educational and skill advancement. Addressing this issue is imperative, requiring heightened attention to ensure the skill development and long-term growth of differently abled individuals, thereby fostering societal progress.

Despite Malaysia's **implementation of policies and legislation aimed at safeguarding the rights of people with disabilities, there remain gaps in their enforcement and execution.** Consequently, essential support and accommodations are inconsistently provided, exacerbating the challenges faced by

this demographic. **Limited access to information and communication outlets poses yet another obstacle for differently abled individuals.** Inadequate provision of sign language interpretation, Braille materials, and accessible digital content hampers their ability to stay informed and actively participate in society.

**Additionally, societal preconceptions, discrimination, and misinformation perpetuate social stigma, often leading to the social isolation of differently abled individuals.** These entrenched biases impede their full participation in community life and hinder their access to equal opportunities across society. Addressing these **multifaceted challenges necessitates a collaborative effort involving government agencies, commercial entities, educational institutions, healthcare professionals and the broader community.** By acknowledging and actively working to eliminate these barriers, Malaysia can cultivate an inclusive environment that upholds the rights and dignity of people with disabilities, enabling them to fully engage in all facets of life. Such recognition is pivotal in fostering Malaysia's societal advancement and nurturing the sustained individual development of its populace.

## Literature Review

### *Underpinning Model – Social Model of Disability*

The researcher believes that the underpinning model in this paper is Social Model of Disability. The Social Model of Disability emphasizes that disability is influenced not just by an individual's handicap, but also by social, environmental, and attitudinal factors. It focuses on breaking down these barriers so that people with disabilities can fully participate and integrate into society. The Social Model of Disability aims to improve the quality of life for people with disabilities by addressing societal barriers and advocating for inclusion, access to resources, and equal opportunity (Donald, 2023). The Social Model of Disability emphasizes inclusiveness and diversity in education. It promotes accessible and inclusive education systems that address the different needs of all students, including those with disabilities. Inclusion is an important concept in the Social Model of Disability. It encourages the creation of environments and institutions that accommodate everyone, regardless of ability, so that no one is excluded or marginalized (Donald, 2023). The Social Model of Disability recognizes and celebrates individual variety, which includes disparities in talents, backgrounds, and experiences. It emphasizes the necessity of embracing variety in society. The Social Model of Disability emphasizes empowerment by fostering self-advocacy, autonomy, and equal involvement in decision-making processes. The Social Model of Disability emphasizes raising awareness of disability issues and fighting myths and prejudices. It promotes raising awareness of the social and environmental challenges that differently abled people encounter, as well as fostering compassion and empathy in society (Donald, 2023).

### *Person with Disabilities*

According to the 2020 United Nations General Assembly Report of the Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, individuals with disabilities in Malaysia face discrimination and barriers that hinder their equal participation in society (UN General Assembly Report, 2020). From a young age, they encounter prejudice and social marginalization, often being viewed as recipients of welfare and charity (Hammad Azizi, 2021). However, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and its Optional Protocol, established in 2006, represent a significant milestone for this community, emphasizing the importance of ensuring equal treatment and eliminating discrimination against individuals with disabilities (UN General Assembly Report, 2020).

In response, Malaysia's National Policy for Persons with Disabilities and the National Plan of Action for Persons with Disabilities laid the groundwork for the enactment of the Persons with Disabilities Act 2008 (PDA) by the government (Hammad Azizi, 2021). Despite estimates from the Association of Women with Disabilities (AWD) suggesting that the actual number of individuals with disabilities in Malaysia is around 4.5 million, only 537,000, or 1.6% of the country's total population, were registered with the welfare department as of 2020 (Hammad Azizi, 2021).

However, there are significant concerns regarding the lack of enforcement and punitive measures against those who violate the rights of individuals with disabilities, despite the existence of the PDA (Hammad Azizi, 2021). Notably, the PDA fails to address provisions related to anti-discrimination and anti-harassment, and lacks mechanisms for redress against the government in cases of rule violations (Hammad Azizi, 2021). Incorporating anti-discrimination measures into legislation is crucial for demonstrating the implementation and upholding of civil rights. Thus, a comparative analysis of laws protecting individuals with disabilities in the Philippines and the United Kingdom is essential for advancing Malaysia's legal framework (Hammad Azizi, 2021).

### *Special Education in Malaysia*

Malaysia, a dynamic Southeast Asian nation comprised of 13 states, is centrally and culturally governed with a focus on governmental intervention to enhance social cohesion and welfare across society (UNDP, 2005). Despite strides in these areas, disability is still predominantly perceived as an anomaly, leading to interactions with differently abled individuals being primarily driven by sympathy. Public facilities are often not designed with the convenience of disabled persons in mind, resulting in their limited integration into society, public transportation, and community settings (Sinnasamy, 2010). Regrettably, they are often regarded as passive recipients of welfare and labeled as "an underclass with no hope of escaping the poverty trap" (Jayasooria, 1997).

Individuals with disabilities encounter obstacles to accessing quality education on equal terms. Despite some progress, significant bureaucratic hurdles remain for entry into the formal schooling system, especially for students with physical or multiple disabilities. Even those who meet admission criteria face considerable challenges in securing placement in mainstream classrooms (Adnan, 2001). Furthermore, the lack of handicap-friendly school infrastructure severely limits physical accessibility, while an emphasis on academic achievement and rigid teaching methods hampers inclusive learning environments (Chong, 2016).

The Able Campaign at INTI International University introduces a fresh approach aimed at enhancing inclusion and fostering multi-agency collaboration in support provision. It also seeks to improve the employability and marketability of children with disabilities, marking a departure from previous initiatives and venturing into new domains with innovative strategies to enhance educational opportunities and prospects for disabled children.

### *Childrens Education Rights*

Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) enshrines the fundamental right to education for all individuals, recognizing its pivotal role in enhancing confidence, securing a promising future, and fostering responsible citizenship (Bhardwaj, 2016). According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2014), children with disabilities are often perceived as burdens on their families, historically marginalized by society, and more susceptible to abuse and exploitation (Othman, 2022).

Children with disabilities encompass those facing developmental challenges such as visual or hearing impairment, autism spectrum disorders, behavioral issues, and learning difficulties (Maciver, 2019). The Malaysian Federal Constitution, under Article 12, guarantees every citizen the right to education. Furthermore, Section 28 of the Persons with Disabilities Act 2008 explicitly safeguards the educational rights of persons with disabilities, ensuring they are not excluded from mainstream education due to their disabilities (Othman, 2022).

Recognizing the paramount importance of education, particularly for children with disabilities, the government has implemented various initiatives to uphold their educational rights. These efforts include the adoption of a 'Zero Reject Policy', the provision of disabled-friendly infrastructure in schools, the expansion of inclusive schooling options, and the recruitment of additional special education teachers (Othman, 2022). However, despite these measures, significant gaps remain in guaranteeing their educational rights.

### *Work Place Diversity*

Workplace diversity encompasses the array of differences among employees within a business, encompassing factors such as race, gender, ethnicity, age, personality, cognitive style, tenure, organizational function, education, and background (Wahab, 2018). Essentially, it pertains to the distinctions existing among individuals. Embracing workplace diversity involves recognizing and appreciating the unique qualities of coworkers and employees, fostering greater tolerance, understanding, and respect for one another. The promotion of workplace diversity aligns with the principles of industrial peace and social justice, which are foundational concepts in industrial law (Wahab, 2018).

For individuals with disabilities (PWD), the concept of workplace diversity can facilitate their increased economic and social integration within society. Employers stand to gain from a diverse workforce, comprising individuals with diverse perspectives, backgrounds, abilities, and disabilities. Approximately 10% of the population in many countries is disabled, yet Ismail and Hamid note that only 20.7% of people with disabilities are employed and receive Workers with Disability Allowance (Bantuan Elaun Pekerja Cacat) (Ismail, 2012). Furthermore, employed individuals with disabilities often grapple with emotional and psychological challenges, highlighting their underrepresentation in the job market (Rosli, 2015).

This campaign seeks to examine Malaysian regulations aimed at promoting workplace or university diversity, particularly for individuals with disabilities, to ensure their full inclusion in society.

### *The Importance of Strategies*

Advocacy for the rights of people with disabilities (PWDs) in the Asia Pacific region is overseen by UNESCAP, where Malaysia and ASEAN countries committed to the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, spanning from 1993 to 2002 (Abd Samad, 2019). Following the adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and its Optional Protocol in 2006, Malaysia pledged to promote and protect the rights of PWDs by enacting the Persons with Disabilities Act 2008, formulating policies, implementing appropriate measures, and addressing initial concerns to ratify the treaty into the country's domestic legal framework (Tah, 2016).

In accordance with the UNCRPD, Malaysia is currently in a phase of heightened public awareness regarding the equal rights of PWDs across all domains. Over the past three decades, there has been an improvement in public perception of PWDs' rights to access public facilities, transportation, and services. However, the process of raising awareness has been slow, resulting in stagnation in implementation for 20 years after the establishment of Malaysian Standards in 1990 (Abd Samad, 2019). Malaysia's focus on infrastructure development, economic growth, and educational reforms post-independence in 1957 led to the creation of the Malaysian Standards in 1990, indicating the government's initial efforts to address the needs of PWDs, particularly in the built environment, in the late 1980s (Asiah, 2014).

The Persons with Disabilities Act of 2008 exhibits shortcomings in areas where its non-remedial nature renders it unenforceable in certain circumstances due to Malaysia's reservations concerning specific articles of the UNCRPD in the optional protocol. These gaps include the absence of a comprehensive monitoring system to address violations against PWDs and a lack of provisions explicitly prohibiting discrimination (Abdullah, 2017).

### *Neurodiversity awareness: Is Malaysia there yet?*

Advancements in neurobiology and enhancements in clinical practices have opened up new avenues for ensuring that dyslexic students receive an inclusive education. However, educators may not fully grasp the implications of these advancements, resulting in less inclusive and sometimes improper instruction. In many impoverished nations, there is widespread concern about the quality of education provided to

individuals with disabilities, impacting the formulation of policies and decisions regarding them, as well as societal beliefs and attitudes towards them (Abd Rahman, 2019).

One significant challenge hindering the successful implementation of inclusive education is the failure to differentiate between general learning difficulties (LD) and specific learning difficulties (SpLD). In Malaysia, educators often use the terms "learning disabilities" and "dyslexia" interchangeably, despite the Ministry of Education's preference for the term "specific learning difficulties" when addressing the issues faced by dyslexic students (Abd Rahman, 2019). Understanding the current beliefs of mainstream primary school teachers in Malaysia regarding dyslexia, as well as their understanding of its identification and intervention, is crucial. This is because teachers' comprehension of how to support students with dyslexia, including what, why, and how, directly impacts their ability to effectively assist these students (Abd Rahman, 2019).

### *Disability and the Media*

There is a scarcity of local disability studies examining the relationship between the disabled community and the media due to prevailing ignorance and assumptions regarding the community's specialization. Journalists often face uncertainty in determining which stories to cover due to institutional constraints, individual perceptions of health disparities, or broader patterns of communication inequality in the ownership and control of traditional media outlets (Niederdeppe, 2013). To capture the attention of mass media, journalists tend to focus only on "important and major events" typically associated with the activities of dominant social economies and ethnic groups (Anuar, 1994). The apparent "disappearance" of the disabled community is a result of society's reluctance to acknowledge their existence (Anuar, 1994). The scholarly discourse on whether disability arises from social exclusion and the extent of its prevalence in Malaysia was initiated by Islam (Teng, 2020). While research on the hypothesis that social exclusion leads to disabilities is lacking, global studies suggest that social exclusion stems from disabilities, resulting in fewer rights and neglected needs for people with disabilities (Teng, 2020).

Norazit notes a persistent and notable shift in the portrayal of persons with disabilities in the media. Previously depicted as objects of sympathy and concern, they are now portrayed highlighting their rights and talents (Norazit, 2010). The media often categorizes individuals with disabilities as "objects of sympathy/care," alongside children and the elderly, portraying them as unfortunate and marginalized. Terms such as "less than perfect" are frequently juxtaposed with "perfect," perpetuating stereotypes of individuals with disabilities as charity recipients or courageous fighters against odds, furthering bias associated with the term "disabled" (Norazit, 2010). These misrepresentations in media have contributed to societal prejudice against individuals with disabilities. This study aims to explore the portrayal of disability in Malaysian popular culture, assess mainstream media through the lens of the disabled community, and identify factors contributing to the marginalization and inaccurate depiction of the disabled community in Malaysian popular media (Teng, 2020).

### *Significance of the Paper*

The "Able" Campaign holds significant importance as it strives not only to raise awareness about differently-abled individuals but also to nurture inclusivity and empathy within the broader community. Employing a diverse array of strategies, the campaign aims to engage and educate people on the challenges faced by those with varying abilities. These strategies encompass panel discussions, social media engagement, musical compositions, and theatrical presentations, reflecting a comprehensive approach rooted in the Strategic Communication Model and Social Model of Disability.

Furthermore, the campaign underscores the necessity of social model of disability across the core subfields equal opportunities, empowerment and self-advocacy, inclusive learning environment, social impact and even strategic in creating awareness for the differently able. It also highlights the importance of strategic communicators' involvement in a myriad of other subfields such as public diplomacy, political communication, issues management, environmental and scientific communication, and social movements.

Among the strategies emphasized to effectively raise awareness are panel discussions and social media outreach. Panel discussions provide a platform for professionals, advocates, and community members to share their insights and experiences, fostering constructive dialogue capable of reshaping perceptions and attitudes (Baldo, 2023). Meanwhile, leveraging the power of social media as a communication tool serves to amplify the campaign's message, reaching a broader audience and encouraging active participation in challenging cultural stereotypes (Rehman, 2022).

Incorporating songs and theatrical performances into the campaign enriches it with creative and emotional dimensions, effectively capturing the experiences and aspirations of individuals with diverse abilities. These artistic expressions serve not only as tools for advocacy but also as vehicles for evoking empathy, enabling the audience to empathize with the challenges and triumphs of the differently abled community (Mather, 2013). Examining the role of performances in enhancing awareness and understanding of individuals with differing abilities represents another strategic avenue for analysis.

Empowering students to spearhead campaign coordination showcases the committee and university's belief in the transformative potential of youth voices. The aim is to actively engage students in advocating for tolerance and understanding, foreseeing lasting effects on societal perceptions and behaviors. Led by students, this initiative seeks to ignite a ripple effect, motivating both peers and the wider community to contribute to the establishment of a more compassionate and accepting society.

Beyond merely raising awareness, the initiative harbors a grander vision for societal change in Malaysia. It endeavors to reshape attitudes towards inclusivity by dismantling barriers that hinder the full participation of differently abled individuals in various aspects of life. The university perceives such transformation as not only beneficial to those directly affected but also as a significant contribution to the nation's long-term progress.

Promoting inclusion aligns with the principles of sustainable development, ensuring that no segment of society is marginalized. Acknowledging the unique talents and perspectives of differently abled individuals allows society to harness a rich diversity, fostering creativity and advancement. The university's commitment to this cause underscores its comprehensive understanding of sustainable development, stressing the importance of social inclusion alongside economic and environmental considerations.

Ultimately, "The Able" Campaign serves as a catalyst for societal transformation, aspiring to cultivate a more inclusive and empathetic society. By amalgamating deliberate strategies with active student involvement, the campaign aims to imprint a lasting impact on Malaysian society, contributing to a future that is both sustainable and equitable for all.

## Materials and Methods

Using expert sampling, a qualitative methodology, specifically a panel discussion, was employed to collect data from four experts in the field of learning disabilities. The findings indicate a high social model disability is presence on differently able especially on quality of lifestyle, quality of education, inclusivity, diversity, and the different awareness strategies.

*Panel Discussions:* There were four panelist in the panel discussion. The four of them were experts, stakeholders, and individuals with disabilities to gather insights, perspectives, and experiences related to the challenges they face and the most effective strategies for raising awareness.

*Development of Songs:* Collaborate with students who had musicians and lyricists skills to create songs that convey messages of inclusivity, empowerment, and understanding.

*Development of a Theatre Play:* Work with students who has the ability to be playwrights, actors, to develop a theatre play that portrays the realities, struggles, and triumphs of differently abled individuals.

*Video Content:* Produce videos that highlight the daily lives, accomplishments, and aspirations of differently abled individuals. Measure the reach, engagement, and impact of these videos through metrics such as views, likes, shares, and comments in social medias.

*Visual Publicity:* Create visually appealing posters, and social media campaigns to disseminate information and messages about disability awareness. Track the effectiveness of these visual materials through metrics such as impressions, clicks, and conversions.

## Results

Objectives	Results	Theory
Raising Awareness: Through engaging activities and insightful presentations, the aim was to debunk myths surrounding differently able children and promote understanding about their unique needs	This report presents four primary methods used throughout the campaign. 1. Provide visual and video presentations on social media. In three weeks, the visuals and video containing awareness content and song awareness content received over 10,000 views. 2. The debut of a play in front of 250 staff and students from public and private higher education institutions received positive reviews. The presentation of a song created by the organizing committee's received positive reviews from staff and students from different private higher education during the launch. 4. Panel discussed the need for increased awareness campaigns and activities for those differently able.	The social model of disability is present here. In order to prevent marginalization, the model emphasizes fostering inclusive environments, encouraging acceptance of social diversity, and empowering people through equitable participation in decision-making and self-advocacy. The feedback from the campaign demonstrates the need of strategic communicators' involvement in a wide range of other subfields, including issues management and social movements.
Fostering Inclusivity: By organizing interactive songs and play, we hope to nurture an environment where differently able children feel welcomed, appreciated, and included in every aspect of society	The songs and performances during the event, as well as those shared on social media, drew a lot of attention. The Malaysian Association of OKU, the International Youth Council of Malaysia, and the Institute of Public Relations Malaysia all wish to see more tactics organized by The Able and other Higher Education Institution to raise awareness about the differently able.	The Social Model of Disability is demonstrated here by including important factors such as developing empathy, debunking myths, and improving disability awareness. These also demonstrate that the campaign emphasizes the importance of strategic communication across the major subfields listed in Botan's "Strategic Communication Theory," including public relations and marketing communication.
Encouraging Support: 'The Able' campaign seeks to inspire communities to provide emotional, educational, and financial support to differently able children and their families.	From the panel discussion a few matters have been brought up to raise more support for the differently able.  <b>Panel 1</b> - Despite facing significant challenges associated with Tourette's syndrome, Panel 1 found solace and support within a global network at the ages of 19 and 20, fostering empathy and understanding. His journey, marked by both triumphs and setbacks, has been driven by a desire to raise awareness and promote empathy for those living with Tourette's syndrome.	The panel discussion answers and conclusion indicate that in order to reduce barriers to full social participation, the Social Model of Disability might emphasize how societal, environmental, and attitudinal variables influence differently able. To prevent marginalization, the concept focuses on creating



Throughout his school years, Panel 1 endured intense bullying from peers and adults, exacerbating his Tourette's symptoms. Transitioning from culinary studies to mass communication in college proved to be a pivotal decision, enabling him to forge meaningful relationships with supportive teachers and friends.

In 2015, Panel 1 launched his YouTube channel, focusing predominantly on Tourette's syndrome. A defining moment came when he was invited to discuss Tourette's syndrome on Malaysia TV3, propelling his channel to newfound popularity and earning acclaim from around the globe.

**Panel 2** - Celebrating 35 years as Director of the International Youth Centre (IYC), Panel 2 is deeply committed to addressing issues related to the empowerment of individuals with disabilities. His dedication stems from a pivotal experience during his tenure at Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), where he collaborated with a lecturer who integrated sustainability and inclusivity into their work. This initiative led to a notable increase in the enrollment of students with disabilities at the university.

USM admitted its first student with cerebral palsy in 2003, prompting significant policy changes and facility enhancements. The establishment of a support team called Kelab Penyayang facilitated the renovation of facilities and the installation of ramps to improve accessibility. Despite financial challenges, the steadfast commitment of the vice-chancellor to prioritize diversity underscored the importance of such initiatives.

Panel 2's leadership of the Malaysian Youth Council led to the inception of the Sokongan Orang Kurang Upaya (SOKU) program, which was a challenging yet successful endeavor. He emphasizes the need to foster an environment that nurtures dedicated initiatives.

As a panel member for the Honda Dreams Scholarship, Panel 2 stressed the importance of acknowledging disabilities in evaluations. This realization occurred during a boot camp where a participant faced constraints due to a physical impairment, prompting a paradigm shift in evaluating participants based on their inclusivity level.

Panel 2 advocates for going above and beyond to assist others, particularly individuals with disabilities, as it has the potential to positively transform lives. Since joining IYC in 2015, he has secured RM12 billion from the Ministry of Youth and Sports Malaysia to develop facilities, demonstrating his commitment to establishing an inclusive environment.

**Panel 3** - Panel 3 emphasized that individuals with disabilities face exclusion from society due to attitudinal and physical barriers that hinder their meaningful participation in communities. He identified two primary challenges: negative stereotypes held by able-bodied individuals, which diminish the self-esteem of people with disabilities, and

inclusive environments, increasing acceptance of social diversity, and empowering people through equitable decision-making and self-advocacy. The Social Model of Disability also includes important factors such as developing empathy, dispelling myths, and increasing disability awareness. The reaction from the panel discussion also illustrates the importance of strategic communicators participating in a variety of other subfields, such as problem management and social movements.

	<p>inadequate environments, such as buildings inaccessible to wheelchairs.</p> <p>Panel 3 recounted his undergraduate experiences, highlighting efforts to advocate for the disability community and engage in advocacy on behalf of individuals with diverse disabilities. He emphasized the necessity of creating platforms and opportunities for individuals with disabilities to showcase their talents, citing his volunteer involvement with Sukarelawan Orang Kurang Upaya (SOKU).</p> <p>Despite encountering opposition, Panel 3 established the Malaysia Disability Youth Council in 2021 to provide a platform for disabled individuals. He stressed the importance of empowering people with disabilities through skill development, fostering positive attitudes, and promoting societal inclusion. The council's objectives include amplifying the voices of marginalized individuals, integrating disabled individuals into project management, raising awareness, and cultivating skills such as entrepreneurship in collaboration with various authorities.</p> <p><b>Panel 4</b> - Panel 4 enthusiastically shared her recent pursuits, focusing on her dedicated commitment to self-education in the field of equitable and inclusive pedagogy. After a decade of social work dedicated to addressing urban poverty, homelessness, and English proficiency, her current interests lie in the intricate theoretical aspects of language, particularly its role in societal categorization and labeling. She underscored the significance of language in shaping attitudes and advocated for the adoption of terms such as "different abilities" instead of "disability," envisioning a positive societal shift.</p> <p>While Panel 4 did not present a specific project during her discussion, her passion as an educator and academic activist was evident, showcasing her dedication to dismantling language barriers that hinder the progress of marginalized individuals. In response to inquiries about the media's role in addressing these issues, she recognized the powerful influence of the media in shaping public perceptions. However, she expressed legitimate concerns about the limited impact of mainstream media, noting the prevalence of tokenism. She stressed the importance of authentic representation, going beyond mere inclusion, to accurately depict the diverse experiences, challenges, and joys of marginalized populations.</p>	
<p>Advocacy: Together, we will work towards advocating for policies that protect the rights and dignity of differently able children, ensuring they have equal opportunities to thrive.</p>	<p>From the answers of the panel discussion a few advocacy should be looked at.</p> <p><b>Panel 1</b> - In essence, this is not a lofty request; it is an invitation to embrace individuals like Panel 1. Recognizing their humanity, it is essential to extend to them the same love and understanding afforded to all. They are not monsters but fellow human beings deserving of empathy and compassion.</p>	

**Panel 2** - Recognizing the vital role universities play in raising awareness, Panel 2 underscores the importance of cultivating empathy, mutual understanding, and unwavering support for Malaysia's 33 million people, ensuring equitable treatment for individuals with disabilities in our society. Sustained support is crucial for dismantling barriers and fostering genuine inclusivity.

**Panel 3** - Panel 3 advocated for inclusive enrollment in higher education, highlighting the importance of recognizing abilities beyond technical and vocational training. He urged universities and the Ministry of Higher Education to endorse adapted module skills certification to enhance job opportunities and improve the lives of individuals with disabilities. In his view, universities should be inclusive of all demographics, not solely the intellectually abled, underscoring the significance of tailored support structures and teaching methodologies for individuals with impairments.

**Panel 4** - During the interview, Panel 4 shared a poignant anecdote from her teaching career, recounting an encounter with a student who, despite initially forming friendships, ultimately dropped out of a program at the University of Wollongong Malaysia because she felt like a burden to her peers. This real-life scenario served as a poignant illustration of the challenges faced by individuals with diverse abilities, highlighting the urgent need for a more inclusive and supportive educational environment.

### *Limitations*

The paper and event on "The Able: A Campaign on Empowering Differently-Abled Individuals Towards Achieving Greater Sustainability in Malaysia" hopes to bring more light for the differently able. However like any paper and event there are limitations. Thus the limitations of the paper and event are being discussed. Firstly the paper concentrated on the launch event of the campaign. Concentrating only on this does not give full accessibility to more participants that may require additional effort and resources. There may still be existing cultural or social stigma surrounding disabilities in Malaysia, which could hinder the effectiveness of the campaign. Overcoming these attitudes and promoting inclusivity may still require further targeted messaging and education. One of the main factors and will still be a factor of limitation in the studies of differently able is the financial resources and technological infrastructure. It may be difficult for to adopt sustainable practices without adequate support. This is especially when one has to consider rural areas campaigning. Rural areas in Malaysia may face different challenges compared to urban areas. The campaign has to now consider the unique needs of different geographic regions to ensure inclusivity.

### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

In summary, the panel discussion organized by The Able Campaign served as a significant platform for fostering dialogue and research on inclusivity, education, and the media's role in shaping societal perspectives. The insights shared during the forum served as a potent reminder of the urgent need for authentic representation, as well as the ongoing challenges faced by individuals with diverse abilities in educational environments. The gathering served as a compelling call to action for sustained efforts toward building a more inclusive society. Key takeaways from the forum include:

Persistence of societal mistreatment toward individuals with disabilities in recent years.

The essential importance of treating individuals with disabilities with the same love and understanding afforded to everyone else, recognizing their humanity and deserving of empathy and compassion.

Recognition of the vital role universities play in fostering awareness, with Panel 2 emphasizing the need to cultivate empathy, mutual understanding, and unwavering support for all Malaysians, ensuring equitable treatment for individuals with disabilities within the community.

Emphasis on the necessity of implementing tools aligned with the Persons with Disabilities Act. As the sole legislation that recognizes the rights of persons with disabilities, the Act should therefore be strengthened with amendments and regulations to implement and enforce measures to address disability discrimination, education as well as residential provisions,

Acknowledgment of the social exclusion faced by individuals with disabilities due to attitudinal and physical barriers hindering their meaningful participation in communities.

Identification of two primary challenges: negative stereotypes perpetuated by able-bodied individuals, leading to feelings of inferiority among people with disabilities, and inadequate infrastructures such as inaccessible buildings for wheelchair users.

Advocacy for the transformative power of language in shaping attitudes, advocating for the adoption of terms such as "different abilities" over "disability" to foster positive societal perspectives.

Legitimate concerns regarding the limited impact of mainstream media, citing the prevalence of tokenism.

Emphasis on the importance of genuine representation, extending beyond mere inclusion, to accurately depict the diverse experiences, challenges, and joys of marginalized populations.

It is also concluded that the tactics such as videography, songs and plays that were published via social media and during The Able campaign launch was very successful as it garnered a lot of good feedback from the audience. There were about 10000 views gained from the social media. There were 250 participants during the event that were cheering on the play and sang along the new song developed for the event. This shows that strategies and tactics of such allows more attraction to the knowledge of differently able.

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