

Learning and Capacity Building for Persons with Disabilities through a Strengths-Based Perspective: Assessment of the ROPES Framework in the 'Tumbuh Mandiri' Farmers Group

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Abstract

Persons with disabilities continue to face various challenges, including dependence on external assistance, limited access to economic resources, non-inclusive policies, and programs that have not fully supported sustainable independence. This study offers an alternative perspective by applying a strengths-based approach, which views persons with disabilities as individuals with potentials, capacities, and resources that can be developed. The analysis employs the ROPES framework (Resources, Options, Possibilities, Exceptions, and Solutions) proposed by Clay Graybeal to identify individual and collective strengths. Using a qualitative descriptive method, this study explores the lived experiences and capacities of persons with disabilities within their social context. The research was conducted among members of the "Tumbuh Mandiri" Disability Farmers Group in Cimahi City, Indonesia. Informants consisted of one group leader and two administrators selected through purposive sampling. The findings indicate that strengths-based and experiential learning processes within the group play a significant role in fostering members' social and economic independence. These results suggest that a strengths-based approach provides an important foundation for designing inclusive, sustainable, and capacity-oriented disability empowerment programs.

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1. INTRODUCTION

People with disabilities in Indonesia often face significant disparities in accessing economic resources and an inclusive social life. This is because the majority of people with disabilities are socially and economically vulnerable, thus having fewer opportunities to access decent and sustainable employment. According to 2024 Statistics Indonesia (BPS) data, there are more than 17.8 million people with disabilities in Indonesia, with one-third having not completed primary education, labor participation at only 23.94 percent, and poverty rates higher than the national average (Coordinating Ministry for Human Development and Culture, 2025). In the first–third quarters of 2024, only 769 people were successfully placed through Disability Service Units (DSUs) across Indonesia. This figure reflects the limited employment opportunities available for people with disabilities, given the significantly larger number of people of working age. Of this total, physical disabilities dominated, accounting for 51.76 percent, or 398 people, followed by 348 people with sensory disabilities. Furthermore, other types of disabilities, such as multiple disabilities, intellectual disabilities, and mental disabilities, were recorded in much smaller numbers, ranging from single digits to dozens of people each. Placement distribution was also uneven.

Large provinces like West Java, Central Java, and East Java recorded the highest numbers, while other regions like Central Kalimantan, Central Sulawesi, and Gorontalo placed only one to several workers. (Ministry of Manpower of the Republic of Indonesia, 2024) This indicates that access for people with disabilities to the job market is still heavily influenced by the type of disability, the region's ability to provide support services, and limited acceptance from employers.

Historically, disability has been understood within a model that extends the medical model, which views health problems, including disability, as individual pathologies. Disability is understood as a characteristic of a person; as residing within the person, and the person is viewed as damaged, diseased, pathological, unusual, or deviant; as outside the norm. Unsurprisingly, such attributions largely lead to segregation, and disability is associated with negative impacts on society and people with disabilities (Wehmeyer, 2020). According to Apsari & Raharjo (2021), Disability is not only related to physical limitations or loss of bodily function, but also arises because the environment and society have not fully provided equal opportunities for people with disabilities to be active and participate in various aspects of life. Disability is not a simple process, considering that disability, like many other identities, is a social construct that has been created and adopted by society. When considering how to define disability, it is helpful to distinguish between impairments (*impairment*) and a person's disability. An impairment is a physiological condition that can cause disability, while a disability is the result of a person living with an impairment when there are physical, attitudinal, communication, social, or other barriers in their environment. Therefore, when access, space, and opportunities are not provided inclusively, people with disabilities are hampered in developing and living life to the fullest. (Slyater & Johnson, 2023).

In the workplace, the challenges faced by people with disabilities are quite diverse. One of these is limited access and infrastructure, where not all work environments, facilities, or technology are designed to be disability-friendly, creating a gap in opportunities. (Mawarningsih & Trustisari, 2024) Fulfilling the right to work for people with disabilities still faces various structural challenges, particularly at the regional level. These challenges include the lack of regional regulations governing the implementation of inclusive employment policies, limited disability services, the absence of a workforce placement mechanism for people with disabilities, the absence of disability-friendly job training facilities, and the lack of sustainable disability data management. These conditions indicate that efforts to fulfill the right to work for people with disabilities require more integrated and sustainable policy interventions. (Farrisqi & Pribadi, 2021)

In addition, people with disabilities also often face discrimination and social stigma, such as the assumption that they are less capable, a work environment that does not adapt to their needs, and employers' low understanding of disability issues. The stigma surrounding people with disabilities arises because society consistently adheres to the concept of "normalism," where disability is seen as an abnormality, often leading to the assumption that people with disabilities are an abnormal group and objects worthy of pity, charity, and inability to be independent (Mustika et al., 2022). This misperception often positions people with disabilities as passive and dependent, rather than individuals with potential, desires, and the will to fight (Widyastutik, 2021). In a social context rife with stigma and discrimination, the formation of a disability identity is crucial for supporting the psychological and social well-being of people with disabilities. Disability identity is not solely about labeling oneself as a person with a disability, but also concerns how individuals interpret their life experiences and their relationships with the disability community and

culture. This identity develops through interactions and social relationships with other people with disabilities, which enable the sharing of experiences, empowerment, and role learning. Connecting with a supportive community can provide a space for people with disabilities to build a sense of belonging, increase self-esteem, and renegotiate their social position in society (Slayter & Johnson, 2023).

An inclusive physical and social environment plays a crucial role in supporting people with disabilities to function optimally in society without experiencing isolation from their surrounding community (Apsari & Raharjo, 2021). Inclusivity is not only about providing access but also encompasses creating space, opportunities, and respect for the participation of each individual. This understanding demands a shift in perspective on disability, from its initial understanding as an individual problem requiring medical treatment to an understanding that disability is a social issue closely related to societal attitudes, perceptions, and responses (Apsari & Jatnika, 2021). Historically, the medical model has dominated understanding of disability, viewing it as a condition inherent in the individual that must be corrected or cured, thus positioning people with disabilities as objects of professional intervention. In contrast, according to Slayter & Johnson (2023), a social model of disability asserts that disability is formed through social, physical, and discriminatory barriers created by society, thus making inaccessible and exclusive environments the primary factors limiting the participation of people with disabilities. While the social model does not fully capture the diversity of lived experiences and identities of people with disabilities, it still makes an important contribution in highlighting the role of social structures in creating inequities and encouraging efforts to eliminate barriers, whether in the form of policies, physical environments, or social attitudes, as a step towards a more inclusive and equitable society.

In social work practice, individuals with physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory disabilities who experience barriers to social and economic participation are often positioned as social problems requiring intervention, but the approach used is not always free from pathological perspectives. The social work profession, in some practices, still starts from the assumption that people with disabilities become "clients" because of their inherent deficiencies or problems. Therefore, the language and framework of interventions used tend to associate disability with inability, failure, or dependency (Saleebey, 1997). This perspective not only influences how social workers view people with disabilities but also shapes how individuals define themselves and utilize their resources, potentially even reinforcing social stigma that further marginalizes them. Therefore, in designing services and support, social workers need to prioritize a dialogic and participatory approach by actively involving people with disabilities at every stage of the intervention.

The shift from a problem-focused approach (*problem-based approach*) towards a strengths-focused approach (*strength-based approach*) is the latest intervention framework for social workers that places the potential, abilities, and resources of individuals and communities as the primary basis for the empowerment process. Strengths-based perspective (*strength-based perspective*) offers a set of principles that emphasize the importance of identifying, recognizing, and utilizing the strengths and resources of individuals and their environments (Graybeal, 2001). Thus, interventions are not solely oriented toward solving problems, but toward utilizing the strengths revealed through the assessment process. This change in focus can directly impact the form of care. *Treatment* is because individuals are believed to function better when they are encouraged to recognize and utilize their internal strengths and available external support (Ishartono & Raharjo,

2016). This perspective can be a first step in promoting independence and increasing the empowerment of individuals with disabilities in various aspects of life.

A *strengths-based perspective* has strong relevance in portraying the experiences and development of individuals and groups of people with disabilities, particularly in the context of interventions and empowerment efforts. Although often positioned as a vulnerable group, people with disabilities actually have the capacity to manage their own life challenges, albeit with varying degrees of ability. Rather than highlighting physical or mental limitations, this approach focuses on the abilities, life experiences, and social capital possessed by individuals. These strengths then become the foundation for the growth of solidarity, productivity, and self-confidence within the group. Therefore, this study uses a strengths-based assessment framework with the ROPES (ROPEs) analytical framework. *Resources, Options, Possibilities, Exceptions, Solutions*), which was initiated by Graybeal (2001) as a tool to help identify potential opportunities, future hopes, and strategies that can strengthen the social functioning of people with disabilities.

Strengths-based perspective (*strength-based perspective*) has been widely used in vulnerable groups to empower more humane communities. One relevant study is the research of Ishartono et al. (2017) on the portrait of the poor in Hegarmanah Village, Jatinangor, which uses a descriptive qualitative approach to explore the strengths of poor individuals who are participants in the Family Hope Program (PKH). Through in-depth interviews with PKH participants and community leaders, the study shows that although they live in limitations, these individuals can take advantage of existing opportunities. By using the ROPES analytical framework, this study confirms that viewing poverty from a strength's perspective produces a more comprehensive understanding of the capacity, potential, and resilience of poor individuals, and contributes to the discourse on poverty alleviation that not only highlights problems, but also highlights the capabilities and opportunities possessed by vulnerable groups.

Effendi et al. (2020) also used a strengths-based perspective in their research on former schizophrenics. The study confirmed that former patients possess various potentials that can be mapped through five aspects of ROPES, ranging from personal resources and family support to strategies for coping with residual symptoms. Family and community support are a key foundation for maintaining functioning and reducing the risk of relapse, which many studies have recorded as remaining at 60-80 percent post-rehabilitation. This research demonstrates that the persistent social stigma against former schizophrenics is a major obstacle to their reintegration into society, necessitating a shift in perspective that emphasizes abilities and contributions, rather than limitations.

A strengths-based perspective has been effectively applied in social work practice, particularly to the elderly who are poor and neglected. One study conducted by Syamsuddin et al. (2018) at the Minaula Kendari Social Home for the Elderly (PSTW) highlighted the role of social workers in improving the social functioning of the elderly through psychosocial interventions that focused on the elderly's potential, abilities, and resources. The results of this study showed that the application of a strengths perspective can help the elderly restore their social roles and provide benefits not only for the individual but also for the surrounding community. The elderly are involved in various meaningful activities, such as cultural preservation, knowledge transfer, spiritual roles, and instilling moral values in the younger generation.

Until now, research on people with disabilities has focused more on what are considered deficiencies, obstacles, or vulnerabilities. Studies that examine the strengths or abilities of people with disabilities are still very rare. In fact, the approach *strength-based*

perspective can help social workers and policymakers understand how people with disabilities adapt, survive, and build relationships, including how they can increase their participation in society. Therefore, this study aims to provide a different perspective by viewing people with disabilities through a strengths-based perspective.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This study aimed to describe the realities of the strengths and potentials of farmers with disabilities who are members of the 'Tumbuh Mandiri' Farmers Group (Poktan Tuman) in Cimahi City. While it is rare to find communities with disabilities who have the initiative to work in agriculture, the researcher explored the potential, strengths, and hopes that have enabled farmers with disabilities to persist in Poktan Tuman. A qualitative approach was chosen because it yielded descriptive data in the form of written and spoken words that capture the experiences, actions, and dynamics of the research subjects. Through descriptive methods, this study attempts to describe the actual situation related to the strengths of people with disabilities who are members of Poktan Tuman. A qualitative approach with descriptive methods allows researchers to capture events as they are and interpret them comprehensively (Rustamana et al., 2024).

Data collection was conducted using two main techniques. First, in-depth interviews were conducted to obtain structured information while still exploring detailed personal experiences. The audio interviews were then transcribed into text and systematically analyzed, resulting in themes aligned with the research objectives. Second, participant observation, in which researchers were directly involved in the group's daily activities, enabled them to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the social context of individuals with disabilities. This involvement enriched the data obtained, as each observed behavior and situation could be interpreted within a broader context (Septiana et al., 2024).

The participants in this study were individuals who served as leaders and administrators of the Tuman Farmers' Group (Poktan Tuman) and as heads of the Cimahi City PPDI (Indonesian Food and Agriculture Organization) branch. All participants were individuals with physical disabilities. The Tuman Farmers' Group administrators were selected as informants because they possess the strength, capacity, and capability to build and manage an institution that aims to empower people with disabilities.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Research Results

Overview of the 'Tumbuh Mandiri' Farmers Group (Poktan Tuman)

The 'Tumbuh Mandiri' Farmers Group, commonly known as 'Poktan Tuman', is a community for people with disabilities in Cimahi City. It was formed to empower its members through productive and sustainable agricultural activities. Poktan Tuman arose from the need for people with disabilities to improve their economic conditions while also creating empowerment opportunities for those who struggle to access formal sector employment. This group was initially a disability organization consisting of individuals with physical disabilities (physically disabled), hearing impairments (deaf), and intellectual disabilities (mental retardation) who had an interest in the world of agriculture and were members of a business unit initiated by the Cimahi City Branch Leadership Council of the Indonesian Association of Persons with Disabilities (DPC PPDI) in 2021. After going through the planning and organizing process, Poktan Tuman was officially formed as a disability farming group with the assistance of the Cimahi City Food and Agriculture Service (Dispangtan) and

the Cimahi City Government on May 2, 2022. Over time, the activities carried out by Poktan Tuman have not only focused on agriculture, but also include animal husbandry, fisheries, and the development of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) as an effort to expand economic opportunities.

Before establishing partnerships with various institutions, the Tuman Farmers Group began its group activities by striving to optimize its own resources and potential through self-help, including individual skills, social solidarity, and access to local resources, to enhance its capacity and social functioning. *Bottom-up* demonstrates how groups of people with disabilities can build independence from their existing potential, while also creating opportunities for collaboration with external parties to expand support in the future. The Tuman Farmer Group's approach can be assessed using a strengths-based perspective, which emphasizes that every individual and group has the capacity to develop if that potential is given space to be recognized and optimized.

The Strength of Disabled Farmers' Groups Based on the ROPES Aspect

ROPES Aspects	Indicator	Results
Resources (resource)	Resources originating from individuals	People with disabilities in the Tuman Farmer Group are highly motivated to remain productive despite their physical and mental limitations. They view farming as a form of worship, devotion, and a form of collective struggle.
		The group leader has strong leadership capital in the form of organizational experience, communication skills, self-regulation, emotional maturity, and a high commitment to motivating members.
	Family	Family support is a crucial source of strength, keeping her motivated to organize and strive for independence. Religious values provide psychological strength and meaning in leading the group.
	Social environment	The group received training from the Agriculture Department on basic agriculture and composting, which strengthened the technical capacity of members even though external support was not optimal.
	Institutions/organizations and program services	The Tuman Farmer Group has access to social and institutional networks, such as the agricultural service and NGOs, which are utilized strategically for training, capacity building, and group sustainability.
Options(option s)	Current focus of attention	Tuman Farmer Group prioritizes food security, improving members' skills, and economic stability without relying on donors.
		Concrete steps taken include the formation of independent groups, recognition from the service, capacity building through training, and strengthening capital through member self-reliance.
		Currently, the Tuman Farmer Group is opting for internal strengthening and optimizing member potential due to limited human resources and still-low income. However, the long-term strategy includes expanding the involvement

		of other people with disabilities, increasing member incomes, and developing an independent and sustainable inclusive agricultural model.
	Resources currently accessible to meet needs	The facilities or means used in the daily activities of the Tuman Farmer Group are still simple, such as using ordinary agricultural tools, such as sickles and a hoe, to carry out agricultural activities such as land clearing, cutting grass, clearing weeds, and cultivating the land.
<i>Possibilities</i> (future possibilities)	Vision of the future/having ideals	The group has a vision to use disability-friendly agricultural tools, such as a <i>hand tractor</i> with a steering wheel and seat, to improve work efficiency and comfort. This is due to current budget constraints, minimal government support for large-capacity equipment, and an unapproved aid application process, which leaves the group dependent on donors.
	Have skills and creativity	Members have a variety of non-agricultural skills (laptop repair, automotive, sewing, sports, and athletics) that have the potential to be developed to strengthen the group's economy.
	Able to do recreation	Recreational activities such as touring, comparative studies, and breaking the fast together strengthen social bonds and group cohesion as a foundation for long-term empowerment.
<i>Exceptions</i> (exceptions)	When problems don't turn out as feared	People with disabilities are able to persevere by turning every activity into a form of worship and devotion. They view their involvement in empowerment organizations like PPDI and Poktan Tuman as a field of charity that gives meaning to their lives.
		In conditions of crop failure or limited funds, the group is able to survive by adjusting crop types and contributing personal funds from members.
		The group carries out more strategic planting management to maintain yield and price stability.
	When some hopes or plans start to come true	The most anticipated facilities are public services that are inclusive and easily accessible to all people with disabilities, whether blind, deaf, or physically disabled, such as lifts, guiding blocks, and ramps, as well as officers who understand the needs of people with disabilities.
		Social acceptance and equal employment opportunities in various sectors are also currently the main expectations, not just a formality in the 1% disability workforce rule.
		Hopes began to materialize after the Tuman Farmer Group was officially launched and received support from various parties, including government agencies, the Regional Secretary, and social organizations. Progress has been made in the form of increased cooperation, public recognition, and the group's ability to manage its agriculture independently.

Solutions (alternative solutions)	Things are going well	The Tuman Farmers Group has succeeded in establishing chili as a primary crop due to its stable selling price and daily harvests, which support economic sustainability.
		Management of planting seasons, division of tasks, and harvest results began to be organized more systematically.
		Agricultural activities become a space for mental and social recovery, increasing self-confidence, a sense of acceptance, and solidarity among members of the disabled community.
	Success that has been achieved	The proudest achievement for the Tuman Farmers Group was when the group was officially recognized by the Department of Agriculture and officially inaugurated by regional officials, including the Regional Secretary and representatives from relevant agencies. This was a significant moment because the group was formed independently, <i>bottom-up</i> , or from the initiative of people with disabilities themselves, not because of government programs.
		For the local community, the existence of the Tuman Farmer Group provides inspiration and a real example that people with disabilities are able to contribute independently and positively in the social environment.
	Efforts to continue success	Fighting for the rights of people with disabilities, especially in terms of accessibility and equal employment opportunities.
		Financial independence and organizational sustainability must be maintained through careful planning. One way to achieve this is through sound crop management to avoid dependence on donor assistance.
	Hope or image	The biggest hope for Poktan Tuman is when this group is able to develop into a truly independent and economically and socially empowered group of disabled farmers.
		The Tuman Farmer Group has its own extensive agricultural land, equipped with disability-friendly agricultural equipment and a professional management system. This serves as a symbol of independence and recognition of the abilities of people with disabilities.
		If this hope is truly realized, life in the Tuman Farmer Group will be much more stable and productive. Group members will have a steady income from farming, be able to employ more people with disabilities, and serve as a living example that physical limitations are not a barrier to progress.
	Steps to create hope	Focus on financial independence, strengthening member capacity, and expanding collaborative networks to open employment opportunities for other people with disabilities.

3.2. Discussion

Strengths-based perspective (*strength-based perspective*) in Social Work views that “Every individual, group, or community has potential, resilience, and moral responsibility that can be developed according to the situation they face.” (Saleebey, 1997) A strengths perspective can be described as a specific method for working with clients, based on their own experiences in addressing their problems. This approach does not ignore the difficulties or issues they face, but rather seeks to identify positive aspects based on the client's resources and skills as a foundation for addressing various issues. In the context of people with disabilities, disabilities can impact various aspects of life, from social, psychological, emotional, to physical. Physical disabilities, for example, can limit daily activities such as moving or walking, impacting the implementation of social roles and responsibilities, and increasing dependence on assistance from others or technology. On the other hand, persistent social stigma often makes it difficult for people with disabilities to build and maintain social relationships. Yet, the need for physical and mental health is a universal human need. This reality demonstrates that people with disabilities still frequently face various forms of discrimination, making a strengths-based approach crucial for restoring their dignity, capacity, and position as individuals capable of development and empowerment. (Marpaung & Sahrani, 2025).

Fundamentally, every individual and community can survive and thrive in their own way, including the courage to face challenges and the potential for energy, imagination, willpower, and hope for change. Even in difficult circumstances, there are always resources that can be tapped, whether from within the individual, family, institution, organization, or community. Saleebey (1997) explains that every community, despite its limitations, always relies on strengths in the form of morals, practical skills, and social relationships that can be used to overcome various problems. Resources within a community can be formal or informal, naturally occurring or organized, and include individuals, families, groups, organizations, and institutions. In an inclusive and welcoming community, there are many opportunities for everyone to engage and contribute to the common good. While challenging environments can be challenging, they can also be seen as spaces rich in potential, where individuals and communities are better able to survive and thrive when their strengths, abilities, and skills are recognized and utilized (Saleebey, 2008).

For people with disabilities, involvement in the workforce is a strategic space to actualize their potential and strengths. Through work activities, they can actively participate in social life, expand their relationships, improve their skills, and strengthen their independence and meaningful social roles. Beyond meeting economic needs, work also provides experiences of social appreciation and recognition, which contribute to the development of self-confidence and self-esteem in people with disabilities. (Siregar & Purbantara, 2020) This condition is reflected in the disabled members of the 'Tumbuh Mandiri' Farmers Group (Poktan Tuman), where various strengths, both internal and external, can be identified as the main capital in the sustainability of their activities. These internal strengths include the motivation to be independent, continuously developed farming skills, and a collective work spirit, while external strengths come through group support, institutional mentoring, and established social networks. In practice, these strengths can encourage economic independence through agricultural production activities, strengthen the social participation of group members, and build mutually supportive work patterns, thus

enabling disabled people to remain productive and empowered in meeting their social and economic needs.

The continued existence of the 'Tumbuh Mandiri' Farmers Group (Poktan Tuman) demonstrates that people with disabilities possess the capacity and strength to continue building and supporting the group's sustainability. Based on the results of an assessment that identified the strengths of people with disabilities through a strengths-based perspective, using the ROPES analysis framework, activities in the Tuman Farmer Group are based on the naturally occurring potential of individuals and groups. The optimism and positive outlook of farmers with disabilities can directly contribute to their psychological well-being and resilience in the face of stress. (Marpaung & Sahrani, 2025) This individual capital enables the Tuman Farmer Group to remain resilient amidst internal and external group dynamics. Based on field findings, people with disabilities acquire job skills not through formal training, but rather through informal learning processes that occur in the workplace, such as learning from fellow workers or group members. This pattern aligns with various studies that reveal that people with disabilities often develop skills through their closest social networks, including friends, family, and daily work practices. The types of income-generating activities undertaken are generally informal and traditional, with relatively low skill, capital, and time requirements. Although these activities are often perceived as having limitations in terms of innovation and business expansion, their suitability to the capacities and experiences of people with disabilities makes them a realistic and accessible option. (Tinta & Kolanisi, 2023) This confirms that although people with disabilities have limitations in their activities, they still have potential that can be explored and implemented to achieve social and economic independence.

The involvement of people with disabilities in economic activities is not solely determined by modern market opportunities, but by the degree of fit between individual abilities and the demands of the work environment. In the agricultural sector, inclusive empowerment programs have the potential to significantly impact people with disabilities, including by improving the skills and knowledge of farmers with disabilities, strengthening support services tailored to their work needs, and increasing the contribution of people with disabilities to agricultural development. Osman et al. (2025) explain that developing such a program requires a comprehensive technical approach, from needs assessment, formulation of educational, managerial, and policy objectives, to learning design, program implementation, and formal and non-formal education strategies. Therefore, through psychosocial assessment with an (PIE) approach, this understanding becomes stronger when linked to a bio-psycho-socio-spiritual framework, which views people with disabilities as whole human beings with various interconnected dimensions, so that the development of their potential and strengths can be carried out more appropriately and sustainably. (Graybeal, 2001).

The results of a strengths-based assessment using the ROPES analysis framework at the Tumbuh Mandiri Farmers Group (Poktan Tuman) show that the principle of community inclusion is a crucial foundation in the process of strengthening the capacity of people with disabilities. Community inclusion emphasizes that every individual has the right to be respected and valued as a valued member of their community, and to have the opportunity to participate in the social life of their neighborhood. (Slyter & Johnson, 2023) Field findings show that the involvement of Poktan Tuman members in agricultural activities and social

interactions in their surrounding areas allows them to become part of a broader community, rather than isolated in an institutional or exclusive space. Furthermore, Slayter & Johnson also explain that the existence of a diverse circle of support (*circle of support*), both formal and informal, plays a vital role in supporting the continuity of group activities and the social functioning of its members. This support comes not only from companions or institutions, but also from fellow group members, family, and social networks in the surrounding environment. This circle of support does not take over control of individuals with disabilities, but rather serves as a source of attention, protection of interests, and strengthening of social roles, while still respecting the individual's right to determine the direction of involvement and support they desire. These findings confirm that people with disabilities in Poktan Tuman do not live in isolation, but rather function in interconnected social relationships, where acceptance of disability identity and involvement in the community contribute to increased self-confidence, comfort in participating, and the achievement of the group's shared goals.

How individuals interpret their disabilities, their communication styles, and their comfort in relating to and participating in the community demonstrates that the experience of disability is both personal and contextual. Participation in the community, including in disability community spaces, can be an important means for individuals to build a sense of belonging, self-confidence, and social connectedness. (Slayter & Johnson, 2023). Therefore, people with disabilities need to be seen as part of a broader, stronger, and more diverse disability community. This understanding is in line with the development of contemporary models of disability, particularly the socio-ecological model or individual-environment fit (*person-environment fit*), which positions disability not as a deficit inherent in the individual, but rather as the result of a mismatch between the individual's capacity and strength and the demands of the environment in which he lives, learns, works and carries out activities. (Wehmeyer, 2020). Within this framework, disability is understood to exist in the gap between the individual and their environment, so that when this gap can be narrowed through environmental adjustments and the provision of appropriate support, the presence of the disorder (*impairment*) no longer significantly limits an individual's social participation. This has important implications for empowerment practice, as it emphasizes a strengths-based approach (*strengths-based approach*) which views people with disabilities as part of the functioning of humanity in general, not as a separate or deviant group. Thus, the focus of intervention is not directed at “fixing” individuals, but rather on designing supports and environments to reduce barriers that limit full participation in the context of everyday life, such as aspects of education, health, livelihoods, and empowerment. (Tinta & Kolanisi, 2023).

In a strength-based perspective, the concept of “empowerment” is not only measured by economic success, but also by increasing access to resources, social participation, recognition of rights, and the bargaining position of people with disabilities in community life. Degenerate (2016) emphasizes the importance of shifting perspectives from practices based solely on pity or fulfilling needs (*needs-based approach*) towards a rights-based approach (*rights-based approach*), which views people with disabilities as subjects with rights and capacities, not simply recipients of assistance. In this context, social workers not only play a role in restoring individuals' social functioning but also carry out advocacy functions to defend human rights, including the rights of people with disabilities. (Purinam et al., 2018) Therefore,

social work, as a humanitarian profession, has a strategic role in ensuring the fulfillment of the rights of persons with disabilities through inclusive, equitable social services that are oriented towards strengthening individual capacity and transforming social systems.

4. CONCLUSION

This study shows that the *strength-based perspective* is a relevant and effective framework for understanding the experiences of people with disabilities, both individually and collectively. Rather than focusing on limitations, this approach demonstrates that people with disabilities possess capacities, life experiences, and internal and external resources that can be developed to improve social functioning. As seen in the research results, the experience of the Tumbuh Mandiri Farmers Group (Poktan Tuman) demonstrates that people with disabilities possess strengths and skills that can be utilized to carry out daily activities and support productive work in the agricultural sector, with significant social and economic impacts. The use of Clay Graybeal's ROPES framework helps uncover resources, options, future possibilities, and strategies that enable people with disabilities to build solidarity, productivity, and self-confidence in their social lives. Thus, this research confirms that empowerment of people with disabilities is more optimal when starting from strengthening the capacity and support of the social environment, rather than from an approach that positions them solely as a vulnerable group.

Based on the research findings above, a strengths-based perspective can serve as a foundation for viewing people with disabilities in a more empowering way without ignoring their limitations. This approach can increase social sensitivity and community empathy, while simultaneously shifting existing perceptions and stigmas, allowing the social functioning of people with disabilities to be built and maintained sustainably in community life. Through a strength's perspective, intervention programs for people with disabilities implemented by various parties are recommended to be based on the resources, experience, and skills that individuals already possess. This effort can be achieved by facilitating access and removing various barriers that hinder participation, thereby improving social inclusion and outcomes for people with disabilities. These interventions need to be implemented in layers, starting at the individual level through training and personal support, and at the community level through providing access to social spaces and facilities, and up to the system level through strengthening policies and regulations that support inclusivity. Therefore, the implementation of strengths-based disability empowerment programs in other disability groups or centers in Indonesia has the potential to encourage broader system-level interventions, while accelerating the realization of the principles of inclusive development of *no one left behind*".

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