Community-based Approach to Empower People with Disabilities

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Abstract
This article seeks to understand the empowerment issues of persons with disabilities. Various development programs have been implemented to reduce stigma, prejudice and stereotypes that impede persons with disabilities from having greater access to education, employment or the labor markets and public services. However, research findings showed that many interventions and strategies to address disability issues focus more on individual or medical models. As a consequence, public stigma and social exclusion of persons with disabilities continue to occur, preventing them from participating in various activities in the society including in the tourism sector. The purpose of this study is to identify social reasons that lead to exclusion and lack of empowerment, as well as to establish programs at the community level to increase the engagements of persons with disabilities in tourist attractions and tourist destinations in Malang. The result of the study shows that the insufficient skills and knowledge of the community members of Desa Kalisanga (nicknamed Kampung Cempluk) in communicating and interacting with persons with disabilities cause the lack of awareness in regard to disability issues. Using macro perspective, this study exhibits community-based approach which requires participation of community members in the planning and organizing an inclusive arts and music festival in Kampung Cempluk. The community was successfully provided various accessibility facilities needed by persons with disabilities to participate, both attending and performing at the festival. This study shows that community-based approach could be employed as a model or strategy to empower persons with disabilities by providing them with equal opportunities to participate in tourist attractions or other activities in the society and wider access to tourist destinations and other public facilities.

Keywords: Community-based approach, empowerment, people with disabilities

1. Introduction
The disability issue has affected the lives of one billion people, or 15% of the world’s population and most of them are from developing countries (The World Bank, 2019). This number will continue to increase due to various factors including conflict, malnutrition, accidents, violence, HIV/AIDS, ageing and natural disasters (Chaudry, 2005). According to Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol (CRPD),
persons with disabilities are those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments (United Nation, 2017). In Indonesia, the rules regarding persons with disability has been regulated under Act of the Republic of Indonesia Number 4, of 1997 which states that people with disabilities is a person with physical disability, mental disability, or a person with physical and mental disabilities (Undang-undang, 1997).

Having different abilities from people without disabilities, persons with disabilities are facing several issues including stigma, prejudice, stereotypes and low expectation (Division for Social Policy and Development (DSPD), 2017). These issues are driven by many misconceptions related to persons with disabilities, for instance misunderstandings about the cause of disabilities, misconceptions that persons with disabilities are unable to contribute to the society, cannot have normal relationships or sexually inactive, unable to report sexual abuse, contagious or bring bad luck, and having ‘magical’ prowess (Rohwerder, 2018). However, persons with disabilities are often hindered mostly not by their functional impairments\(^1\), the hindrance emerged due to the fact that the persons with disabilities are excluded from access to education, employment or the labor markets, public services and marriage (Elwan, 1999; Mont, 2004; Oyugi, Mavole, Okuku, & Muhini, 2018).

The exclusion of persons with disabilities is related to other definition of disabilities which associates this issue with contextual factors including social interactions and environment. This definition implies that ‘disability’ is not an attribute of the person. Instead, it defines disability as the result of interaction emphasizing that “disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others” (World Health Organization, 2011). This definition indicates the shift from an individual, medical perspective (medical model) to a structural or social perspective (social model) in which people are viewed as disabled by society rather than by their body.

World Health Organization (WHO) stated that interventions or strategies on improving social inclusion and participation can be achieved by employing social perspective or model which could address the barriers hindering persons with disabilities from participating in social activities and day to day lives (World Health Organization, 2011). These barriers include system and institutional barriers (e.g. lack of inclusive policies and laws), physical barriers (e.g. inaccessible transportation and buildings), information barriers (e.g. lack of sign language interpretation on meetings), and perhaps

\(^1\) Impairment: a characteristic and condition of an individual’s body or mind, which unsupported has limited, does limit or will limit that individual’s personal or social functioning in comparison with someone who has not got that characteristic or condition. Impairment relates to a physical, intellectual, mental or sensory condition; as such it is largely an individual issue. Accordingly, disability is the way(s) in which people with impairment are excluded or discriminated against: as such, it is largely a social and development issue (World Bank, 2007).
most importantly, barriers due to stigmatizing attitudes and discriminatory behaviors and practices (Kuper et al., 2018; Saran, White, & Kuper, 2020).

It can be argued that external factors have prevented persons with disabilities from participating in social activities and day to day lives. As a consequence, a macro perspective is needed to change the system or structural aspects to be more inclusive for persons with disabilities. However, research findings showed that many interventions and strategies to address disability issues focus more on individual or medical models. Most of these interventions attempted to improve the social skills of persons with disabilities, rather than focusing on the system level (e.g. policies), community level as well as social reasons for exclusion and lack of empowerment (Saran et al., 2020).

Based on the reviews above, this study aims to find a model to empower persons with disabilities. This study also identifies social reasons that lead to exclusion and lack of empowerment, as well as establishes programs at the community level to improve the engagements of persons with disabilities in tourist attractions and tourist destinations in Malang. These programs could be employed as model for empowering persons with disabilities in the tourism sector. This aim is in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which clearly states that vulnerable people must be empowered, including persons with disabilities (more than 80% of whom live in poverty) (United Nation, 2016).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Macro and Micro Perspectives in Empowering Persons with Disabilities

Interventions to overcome stigma in persons with disabilities are challenged by several issues. Included in this issue are social and cultural factors that cause the stigma. For instance, there is a culture of communities which assumes that disabilities are given from ancestors, supernatural – demons/spirits, God – punishment/fate, actions of parents etc (Macdonald, 1995). This caused several consequences. First, persons with disabilities depend their life on other people in order to live a ‘normal’ life. Second, those assumptions hamper persons with disabilities from participating in social and cultural life.

Many scholars stated that the participation processes have been associated to the concept of empowerment (Arnstein, 1969; Bendell, 2005; Onyx & Beton, 1995). This means that without power, the participation process becomes empty and ineffective (Arnstein, 1969; Swanepoel & De Beer, 2000). Arnstein (1969) argued further that a higher level of participation would be achieved if people are allowed to participate in the decision-making processes. In terms of development, Bendell (2005) stated that people or communities have the right to make decisions related to development programs which will influence their life.

Various community development programs that have been conducted to empower persons with disabilities become the main objective of these programs. There are two perspectives to achieve the empowerment of community development programs, namely
macro and micro perspective. From the macro perspective, Kenny (2006) reviewed the principles of human orientation as a Marxist concepts of power relations. Kenny strongly affirmed that community development has a commitment to empower those who are powerless or disadvantaged. Kenny explained that people can be excluded, oppressed, marginalized or disadvantaged when there are inequalities of power and resources. These inequalities are usually caused by state policies or the way privileged groups or individuals try to control people’s way of life for profit. Therefore, development programs should concern on equity, social justice and fairness to ensure equal distribution of economic resources, housing, health and education, equality of civil, legal and industrial rights, and also equal opportunities for participation and decision making in society. On the other hand, from the micro perspective, Bhattacharyya (2004) promoted human autonomy or agency as the ultimate goal of development. It refers to individual capability to define and have the power to control their lives. In sum, the micro principal advocates power and control to each individual to be able to overcome problems affecting their lives.

The different levels of analysis from the macro – micro perspectives will influence the focus or approach in which the development programs will be employed. The macro perspective emphasizes more on the structural level, such as the state, institution, and privileged individuals or groups as the central problem of community development, and considers structural change as the main solution to the problem. The macro perspective focuses on the people or institutions only in terms of their relationship to the large-scale structure. The micro perspective, in contrast, emphasizes more on the individual level as the main focus and objective in the program development. These programs focus on building individual capabilities as the agent/subject of development.

Werner and Scior (2016) explained several levels of interventions to empower persons with disabilities which can be included in either micro or macro perspectives. Regarding the micro perspective, Werner and Scior (2016) included intrapersonal level of intervention which focuses on the persons affected by stigma and aims to help them overcome the negative consequences of stigmatization. This kind of intervention could be conducted in two level including individual and family levels. This intervention includes teaching self-advocacy skills to persons with disability; providing medical and psychosocial counseling to persons with disabilities to improve self-help and self-advocacy skills; undertaking emancipatory research, whereby persons with disability have more prominent role in the research process; parental advocacy; and nurturing children with disabilities (Mostert, 2016; Rohwerder, 2018).

Regarding macro perspective, Werner and Scior (2016) explained that it focuses on interpersonal (beyond the familial level) and structural level of interventions. These levels of interventions target the social interactions between the stigmatized and the non-stigmatized. Furthermore, structural level of interventions focus on social forces and institutions through legislative action, mass media, governmental,
and organizational policies aiming to reach large audience and service delivery (Scior & Werner, 2016).

A systematic review study showed that empowerment of persons with disability focuses more on the micro perspective (e.g. improving the social skills of the persons with disability), rather than the macro perspective which focuses on structural or system level (e.g. policies), community and societal level as the reasons for their exclusion and lack of empowerment (Saran et al., 2020). This study aims to fill this gap by looking for effective intervention model or strategy using the macro perspective, particularly at the community level, to empower persons with disabilities.

2.2 Community-based Development to Empower People with Disabilities

Community-based Approach could have various definitions depending on who profess to practice it. Although this approach has different definition, most of the exponents share the same notion that the implementation of this approach requires the communities to actively participate in conducting development programs that have an impact on their future (Rahman, 2018; Wismer & Mitchell, 2005). Scholars also considered that communities have capacity to perform as agent of change, the same role as the government and the private sectors (Wismer & Mitchell, 2005). Several research studies showed that community-based approach has been employed to address various issues and crises including natural disasters, environmental degradation, tourism (community-based tourism) and mental health as well as youth suicide problems (Baber & Bean, 2009; Rahman, 2018; Tolkach, King, & Pearlman, 2013; Wismer & Mitchell, 2005). Moreover, this approach could be employed to bridge the gap between members of local communities and political decision makers (Wismer & Mitchell, 2005).

Community-based development consists of two main concepts which are approach and community. The concept of the approach could be extended from information sharing, education and consultation through various forms of collaborative arrangements and partnerships to delegation of authority and various forms of ‘citizen control’ (Wismer & Mitchell, 2005). Meanwhile, the concept of community could be classified into two types; geographical and social (Kenny, 2006). First, geographical area as a group of people living in the same place or sharing particular characteristics, for instance has been linked to recognized history and specific demographic features, such as sex ratio, age, density, culture, religion and the degree of homogeneity (Chaskin, Brown, Venkatesh, & Vidal, 2001; Kenny, 2006; Rahman, 2018). Second, the definition of community has been extended beyond physical boundaries as the demarcation of primary community. Based on this perspective, community is defined as a social group or networks of social relations of people connected by common attributes and interests as well as destiny as a collective entity (Chaskin et al., 2001; Rahman, 2018; Wismer & Mitchell, 2005). These two types of community definitions have been adopted in this study. The definition of the geographic/physical boundaries of the community refers to community members who live in Desa (village) Kalisongo, Malang, also known as Kampung Cempluk, where this study was located. Once a year, community members of Desa Kalisongo work together to
organize the *Kampung Cempluk* festival which is an annual national festival of tourism destination to attract tourists to come to their village. This festival unites community members to work collectively based on common interest to organize the *Kampung Cempluk* festival.

Conducting community-based development approach requires two principles (Wismer & Mitchell, 2005). First, the implementation of community-based development should involve the participation of communities. Second, although participation has various interpretations, the community-based approach has focused on the definition of participation as the authority of communities to control their own development programs or activities. It could be argued that the principle of community-based approach is built based on the basic assumption that community members should be involved in the development process because they are in the best position to have an appropriate cultural and ecological understanding, as well as knowing what the local priorities are in terms of development (Swanepoel & De Beer, 2000). Based on this notion, community participation should be involved to identify their problems or issues and to find solutions to these problems using their own capacity and resources. This kind of authority would place community as subject instead of object and at the same time ensure the sustainability of the development process.

By adopting a macro perspective, this study takes community-based approach to empowering persons with disabilities. These people have been excluded from attending and performing at the *Kampung Cempluk* festival tourist attraction. As a solution to this problem, this study undertakes an intervention by involving community members of *Kampung Cempluk* to organize an inclusive festival which enable persons with disabilities to participate in this festival.

3. Research Sites and Methods

By employing descriptive qualitative method, this study involved various participants including NGO that concern on disabilities issues, persons with disabilities and community members of *Kampung Cempluk*. *Kampung Cempluk* is a nickname of Desa Kalisongo, Malang, East Java-Indonesia, which has a-week-long annual national festival for tourist destination every year. Various arts and music performances have been held in this event for a week. However, this event has never involved people with disabilities, either as performer or audience of the festival.

Twenty participants were selected based on their experiences related to disabilities issues and their involvement in organizing tourist attraction at the *Kampung Cempluk* festival. To select the participants, two strategies were employed: purposive and snowball methods. The purposive method was used to collect five informants from NGOs concerned on persons with disabilities. Snowball sampling was employed to obtain fifteen community members of Desa Kalisongo or *Kampung Cempluk*. Some of these members were interviewed to gather data related to the exclusion issues of persons with disabilities. Based on these data, this study formulates a model or strategy of intervention.
to empower and reduce stigma against persons with disabilities by involving them to participate in the Kampung Cempluk festival, for instance as performers or audience of this event.

4. Community-Based Approach to Empower People with Disabilities

This study was located in Kampung Cempluk which has an annual cultural festival held by the community members since 2012. This festival has been included as the national agenda of the Culture and Tourism Office (DISBUDPAR) Malang to promote local culture in this city. This study found that this festival was not yet inclusive for persons with disabilities. From the results of the interviews, this study found that the community members of Desa Kalisongo had difficulties to communicate and lacked of awareness on disabilities issues, as illustrated by an interviewee as follow:

*I have met these people (persons with disabilities, persons with speech impairment) ... But, I am afraid to communicate with them since I cannot speak their language, I am so scared if there is a misunderstanding (Siti: community member of Kampung Cempluk)*

*...I do not try to stay away from persons with disabilities...but sometimes I feel afraid if we do not understand what they say or treat them inappropriate so it will hurt them...*(Rohmah: community member of Kampung Cempluk)*

An interviewee explained that communication issues have hampered social interaction with persons with disabilities. The community members of Kampung Cempluk lack the knowledge and skills on how to treat and carry out social interactions with persons with disabilities, for instance they do not understand how to use sign language to communicate with people with hearing or speech impairment. As a consequence, persons with disabilities have not been involved in their festival.

The above discussion shows that the social exclusion of persons with disabilities in Malang occurred due to people without disabilities have insufficient knowledge and skills in how to treat and communicate with persons with disabilities. This might be different from other regions where stigma against persons with disability mostly arose because of religious and cultural reasons, i.e. related to back luck, curse or punishment from God (Rohwerder, 2018).

Based on the findings above, this study then delivered an intervention by establishing a model or strategy the way by which Kampung Cempluk festival could involve the participation of persons with disabilities. The strategy was conducted in order to adopt the principle of community-based development approach which requires active community participation. Related to this study, the community members of Kampung Cempluk have been involved in organizing art and music festival that are friendly to persons with disabilities.
4.1 The Capacity building of Community Members

The first step of the strategy was to carry out the capacity building of community members. This study has established development programs to improve the skills and knowledge of the festival committee, as well as community members of Desa Kalisongo. The community and committee have been trained to be able to communicate with persons with hearing impairments using sign language. Furthermore, workshops were conducted in relations to the ethics of assisting persons with visual impairments and socialization of accessible public facilities needed by persons with disabilities. This study has involved NGOs and persons with disability to deliver these training programs. These training programs have also initiated social interactions between disabled and non-disabled people in Kampung Cempluk Festival.

4.2 Planning and Organizing an Inclusive Festival

Second step of the strategy was to plan and organize the Kampung Cempluk Festival to be more inclusive for persons with disabilities. In this step, the committee and community members employed the knowledge and skills they have attained from the training programs to develop new ideas or concepts for the Kampung Cempluk festival to be more inclusive for persons with disabilities. The committee also involved persons with disabilities from NGOs and organization for persons with disabilities to develop this idea. There were various activities and facilities in the festival which manifested the inclusion process. For instance, this festival provided sign language interpreters on stage to help persons with speech and hearing impairments to enjoy performances on stage. This festival also involved the community members of Desa Kalisongo who have been trained sign language to welcome and communicate with visitors and audience with speech and hearing impairments.

The committee of Kampung Cempluk festival also provided various facilities needed by people with various physical impairments as illustrated in the following figure:

*Picture 1. Accessibility and guidance were provided to assist persons with disabilities at the Kampung Cempluk Festival*
Picture 1 shows the area that could be accessed by persons with disability, particularly people with physical disability requiring special equipment such as wheelchair or crutches. Therefore, the committee has built ramps or tracks that were safe for people with physical disability to pass. The picture also depicts some assistants or committee members who were responsible for helping persons with disabilities during the festival. The committee also built an accessible area next to the stage so that visitors or audience with disabilities could see the performance directly. There were also accessible toilet and accessible parking areas for persons with physical disabilities who used three-wheeled vehicles.

![Accessible parking area for persons with disabilities in Kampung Cempluk Festival](image1)

Another accessible accommodation was meal menu in braille for the visually impaired. The community members of Desa Sumberejo have written their menu in braille in order to serve people with visual impairment so they could buy food while enjoying the festival.
To be more inclusive, Kampung Cempluk Festival has involved persons with disabilities to present art and music performance on the stage. However, this study found that they performed less frequently compared to non-disabled people. There were more than fifty performances of people without disabilities compared to one performance of persons with disabilities. It could be suggested that Kampung Cempluk Festival should accommodate more participation of persons with disabilities in the next art and music performance.

5. Giving Equal Opportunities and Access of People with Disability in Tourism

This study employed a macro perspective to empower persons with disabilities. This perspective assumed that the exclusion and marginalization of a group of people in the society occurred due to external factors, i.e. state policies or the ways privileged groups or individuals tried to control how other people or group live in order to fulfill their interests (Kenny, 2006). Related to disability issues, based on macro perspective, the marginalization of persons with disabilities occurred not because of their functional impairments, but the limitation emerged due to the fact that they were excluded or ignored from various government policies and other privileged group’s interests or considerations. As a consequence, persons with disabilities have limited opportunities to access various resources and participation in any activities in society. This study found that persons with disabilities in Malang have limited access to tourist destinations and attractions, for instance to attend the Kampung Cempluk art and music festival.

This study found that Kampung Cempluk festival was not yet inclusive for persons with disabilities. This occurred due to the fact that there were communication problems.
that hindered social interactions between community members of Desa Kalisongo and persons with disabilities. This study showed that the community has insufficient skills and knowledge in interacting, for instance using sign language, and treating people with disability. As a result, they lacked awareness on disability issues. This explained why Kampung Cempluk has not become an inclusive festival for persons with disabilities.

This study attempted to undertake intervention model or strategy so that Kampung Cempluk could become a more inclusive festival by employing macro level perspective. Werner and Scior (2016) stated that macro level intervention for empowering persons with disabilities focus on the interpersonal (beyond the familial level) and the structural level, i.e. at community level. Werner and Scior continued to explain that macro level of interventions targets the social interactions between the stigmatized and the non-stigmatized. To adopt the macro perspective, this study conducted a community-based approach which involved participation of community members of Kampung Cempluk to organize a festival which included persons with disabilities, both to attend and to perform in the art and music performance. The Kampung Cempluk festival facilitated interaction between persons with disabilities and community members of this kampung.

The main principle of community-based approach is community participation. Community participation could be obtained by conducting a conceptual approach that could be extended from information sharing, education and consultation through various forms of collaborative and partnership arrangements to delegation of authority and various forms of ‘citizen control’ (Wismer & Mitchell, 2005). This study has delivered training programs to community members of Kampung Cempluk to improve the skills and knowledge of these members on how to use sign language, the ethics of assisting blind people and the socialization of accessible public facilities needed by persons with disabilities. The main objective of these programs was to increase the capacity of community members to be able to communicate and interact as well as collaborate with disable people. The training programs were also expected to increase the level of awareness of community members in relation to disability issues.

The community members of Kampung Cempluk have succeeded in organizing inclusive tourist attraction in the Kampung Cempluk festival. The skills and knowledge they have developed from the training programs have been utilized by community members to provide various accessible facilities required by persons with disabilities to attend and perform at the Kampung Cempluk Festival. The intervention process in the Kampung Cempluk Festival illustrated that the principle of participation required the authority of community members to control their own development programs or activities. In relation to this study, this authority has been delegated to community members in planning and organizing an inclusive festival for persons with disabilities in Kampung Cempluk. This level of authority could be achieved by these community members as they already have the skills and knowledge obtained and developed from the training programs.
The inclusive Kampung Cempluk festival illustrates the empowerment process for persons with disabilities. It has provided equal opportunity for persons with disabilities to participate in tourist attractions and wider access to tourist destinations. Kenny (2006) stated that empowerment of people who are powerless or disadvantaged could be achieved if development programs concern on equity, social justice and fairness to ensure equal distribution of various resources in society.

6. Conclusion

This study showed that persons with disabilities are in a powerless position because they have been excluded and marginalized from accessing various resources, facilities and activities in society, including in the tourism sector. To overcome this problem, this study adopted a macro perspective approach which concerned on external factors which caused the exclusion and marginalization of persons with disabilities. This study identified that the community members of Desa Kalisanga, or its nickname Kampung Cempluk, have insufficient skills and knowledge in communication and interaction with persons with disabilities. As a result, they lacked awareness in regard to disability issues. This study carried out intervention programs by looking for a strategy or model to change the Kampung Cempluk festival which is an annual tourist attraction to be more inclusive for persons with disabilities. The intervention was conducted at the community level by employing community-based approach which required community participation as its main principle. This study involved community members of Kampung Cempluk to participate in the planning and organizing an inclusive arts and music festival in Kampung Cempluk. The community succeeded to provide various accessible facilities needed by persons with disabilities to participate, both attending and performing in that festival. This illustrated the level of authority of community members to have control over their own activities. The community members have developed the capacity to organize an inclusive arts and music festival based on the skills and knowledge they have obtained from the training programs conducted by this study. This study shows that community-based approach could be employed as a model or strategy to empower persons with disabilities by providing them with equal opportunities to participate in tourist attractions or other activities in the society and wider access to tourist destinations and other public facilities.

A critical note, however, has been made. Persons with disabilities have less frequent performance on stage compared to non-disabled people. In order to address this issue, the social inclusion programs of the Kampung Cempluk festival require an evaluation process. In addition, there were also feedback from the conference to involve the Indonesian government in order to ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of these programs because an inclusive tourist destination would require a lot of resources including financial, physical and human resources.

7. References

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