

## Community Based Approach: Empowering Persons with Disabilities

Halid Hasan<sup>1)\*</sup>, Farika Nikmah<sup>2)</sup>, Joni Dwi Pribadi<sup>3)</sup>

<sup>1,2,3)</sup> Department of Business Administration, Politeknik Negeri Malang, Indonesia

\*Corresponding Author

Email: [halid.hasan@polinema.ac.id](mailto:halid.hasan@polinema.ac.id)

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### Abstract

*This study aims to analyze the implementation of empowerment of people with disabilities by Lingkar Sosial. Lingkar Sosial is a social organization that accommodates people with disabilities in Indonesia. In Indonesia, related to empowerment of disabilities is regulated by Government Regulation No. 52 of 2019 concerning Achieving Welfare for People with Disabilities. This study uses primary data obtained from interviews and secondary data from literature reviews as supporting materials. Furthermore, the data was analyzed using a qualitative approach. The results of the study indicate that Lingkar Sosial has an important role in empowering people with disabilities through economic, social and cultural empowerment. Lingkar Sosial has played a good role, there has been a structured and continuous work program every year, collaborating with various parties, and development for staff in managing people with disabilities. For sustainability, it is necessary to further improve cooperation with the government, academics and other parties that can strengthen the role of Lingkar Sosial.*

**Keywords:** *Empowerment, Disabilities, Social Organization*

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## INTRODUCTION

Disability means a physical or mental condition that limits a person's movements, senses or activities (Khanal, 2014). Disability is complex, dynamic, multidimensional and contested (Uromi & Mazagwa, 2014). Government Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia Number 52 of 2019 concerning the Implementation of Social Welfare for Persons with Disabilities explains that empowerment is one of the efforts made so that the existence of persons with disabilities becomes strong in society by building conditions and development potential, and persons with disabilities can develop themselves so that they can form strong individuals or community groups so that they do not depend on others. However, until now, persons with disabilities still face problems related to their lives and welfare (Surwanti, 2014). Persons with disabilities in society face several problems including stigma, prejudice, stereotypes and low expectations. These problems are triggered by many misunderstandings about persons with disabilities, such as misunderstandings about the causes of disability, misunderstandings that persons with disabilities cannot contribute to society, cannot have normal relationships or are not sexually active, cannot report sexual harassment, are contagious or bring bad luck, and have 'magical' powers (Rohwerder, 2018). In fact, people with disabilities are often hindered mostly not by their functional disorders, obstacles arise from the fact that people with disabilities are excluded from access to education, employment or the labor market, public services, and marriage (Oyugi et al., 2018).

Meanwhile, if we look at the regulations above, people with disabilities should have the same opportunity to develop themselves as recognized human beings. So an organization is needed that is able to accommodate people with disabilities to help them develop themselves. This is because in Indonesia the existence of people with disabilities is still often considered a group that is weak, helpless, or unable to work, and can even be said to only disturb others (Chawa, Putra, & Purba, 2023). The organization in question aims to become a community of

people with disabilities that makes a person or group of people with disabilities not inferior, able to mix in society without awkwardness. This community is what will later be able to help eliminate the negative stigma about people with disabilities. The existence of a community provides space for power to direct and influence. In the context of empowerment, Bendell (2005) stated that society or communities have the right to make decisions regarding empowerment programs that will affect the lives of their members.

Empowerment as a process that involves individuals, with knowledge, abilities, and beliefs, to make meaningful decisions (Hermansson & Martensson, 2011). Empowerment is a social process to accept, promote, and develop individual competence to find ways to achieve needs, desires, or solutions (Thanathiti, 2019). Various community development programs have been organized to empower people with disabilities. There are two perspectives to achieve empowerment of community development programs, macro and micro perspectives. The macro perspective, reviews the principle of human orientation as a Marxist concept of power relations (Kenny, 2006). It is emphasized that community development is committed to empowering those who are powerless or disadvantaged, that people can be excluded, oppressed, marginalized or disadvantaged when there is an imbalance of power and resources (Chawa, Putra, & Purba, 2023). This inequality is usually caused by state policy or the way privileged groups or individuals try to control the way people live for profit. Therefore, development programs must pay attention to equity, social justice and justice to ensure equal distribution of economic resources, housing, health and education, equality of civil, legal and industrial rights, and also equal opportunities to participate and make decisions in society.

Micro perspective, empowerment to create autonomy for people with disabilities (Bhattacharyya, 2004). This refers to the ability of individuals to determine and have the power to control their lives (Chawa, Putra, & Purba, 2023). The micro principle advocates the power and control for each individual to be able to overcome problems in their lives. Different levels of analysis from the macro-micro perspective will affect the approach to the program to be implemented. The macro perspective emphasizes more on the structural level, such as the state, institutions, and individuals or groups who have privileges as the main problems of community development, and considers structural change as the main solution to the problem. In contrast, the micro perspective emphasizes more on the individual level as the main focus and goal in program development. These programs focus on building individual capabilities as agents/subjects of empowerment. Macro and micro perspectives, both need to be implemented in empowering the disabled. As conveyed by Keyes, Webber & Beveridge (2015) that empowering the disabled is how we show concern, sincerity, and programs implemented are beneficial for their lives.

In Indonesia, currently people with disabilities are required to improve their skills so that they can be independent in social activities and daily life (Nurhayati & Ambari, 2020). In the research of Nurhayati & Ambari (2020), is stated that people with disabilities are protected by law as stated in several regulations, such as in the amendment to the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, the fourth amendment, Chapter XA regulates human rights. In the amendment to the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, the fourth amendment, Chapter XA regulates human rights. One aspect of the formulation of human rights stated in the 1945 Constitution is human rights related to social welfare. Equal rights and obligations for all citizens in all aspects of life and livelihood are prerequisites for achieving social welfare for all Indonesian people.

Most recently, Government Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia Number 52 of 2019 concerning the Implementation of Social Welfare for Persons with Disabilities which specifically regulates disability. Meanwhile, the system or structural aspects are not adjusted to be more inclusive for people with disabilities. In other words, there is a lack of focus at the

system/policy level, community level, and social reasons for exclusion and lack of empowerment (Mangku, Yuliantini & Lasmawan, 2022); (Saran, White, & Kuper, 2020). Based on the review above, this study aims to find a model to empower people with disabilities. In this study, it focuses on the role of the Lingkar Sosial organization, which is a social institution formed by the government with its scope in empowering people with disabilities. This study also identifies the social reasons that cause exclusion and lack of empowerment, and builds programs at the community level to increase the involvement of people with disabilities in society.

## RESEARCH METHODS

Using a qualitative method, this study involved various participants including Lingkar Sosial staff, government, and parties concerned with disability issues. Qualitative research involves researchers so that they will understand the context with the situation and setting of the natural phenomenon that is being researched (Fadli, 2021). A total of 20 participants were selected based on their experiences related to disability issues. To select participants, two strategies were used: purposive and snowball methods. According to Shaheen, Pradhan & Ranajee (2019), the purposive method was used to collect five informants from Lingkar Sosial staff, government, and parties concerned with people with disabilities. Snowball sampling was used to obtain fifteen people with disabilities. Some of these members were interviewed to collect data related to the issue of exclusion of people with disabilities. Based on these data, this study formulated a model or intervention strategy to empower and reduce stigma against people with disabilities. 20 participants, the explanation is as follows:

**Table 1. Distribution of participants**

No	Partisipants	Total (Person)
1	Lingkar Sosial staff	2
2	Social Affairs staff	1
3	Elements of society	2
4	Person with disabilities	15
<b>Total</b>		<b>20</b>

Source: Data processed (2024)

The staff of Lingkar Sosial are the chairman and vice chairman, then one person from the government represented by the Social Affairs Department, and two people from the community who understand about empowering people with disabilities. Meanwhile, 15 people with disabilities, those who are categorized as adults, with ages ranging from 18-50 years, are categorized as deaf and mute.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This research was located in the Lingkar Sosial office. This research found that there have been several empowerment programs for people with disabilities. From the interview results, this research found that these programs are held routinely and are an annual agenda, as illustrated by the following informant.

*“....Every year we have to submit an activity plan to the government, especially to the Department of Social Affairs to get approval and we receive a budget for these activities.*

*We also have to report on the activities that we have organized, along with information about the time of implementation, participants and results or outcomes of the activities as a form of our accountability to the government that provides the budget... ”.*

The above statement was confirmed by the Department of Social Affairs, that this is indeed the government's way of empowering people with disabilities through Lingkar Sosial.

*“...The government needs the existence of organizations such as Lingkar Sosial. This is because the Department of Social Affairs will not be able to do it alone. Many groups of people are weak and all must be considered by the government, not only people with disabilities. So, with the existence of Lingkar Sosial, the government feels helped and can optimize its work... ”.*

Community elements who care about people with disabilities also gave their opinions about the existence of Lingkar Sosial. Incidentally, the community element is a lecturer who was once involved in research collaboration in empowering people with disabilities. The research collaboration program with academics is one of the annual activity plans of Lingkar Sosial. The results are very helpful in empowering people with disabilities to be independent economically, socially and culturally. People with disabilities are increasingly confident in mingling in society and playing a role in several community activities.

Meanwhile, the interviews given to people with disabilities were conducted with structured interviews, by providing answer choices, so that they do not feel pressured when answering each question. People with disabilities often have closed personalities and like to be alone (Gutman et al., 2019). So the questions given must be practical and should not take up their time.

Interviews with people with disabilities are related to empowerment by the Lingkar Sosial that accommodates them to obtain inclusive services in the community. Interview instruments for people with disabilities are formatted specifically and cannot be used simultaneously to interview Lingkar Sosial staff, government or community groups. Using individual-level analysis consisting of three components (Bolton & Brookings, 1998). First, the intrapersonal component refers to how people think about their capacity to influence the social and economic systems that are important to them. This component treats empowerment as a personality variable that includes psychological processes such as perceived control, self-efficacy, sense of community, and perceived competence. Second, the behavioral component refers to specific actions to exert influence through participation in organizations and activities. Third, the interactional component includes knowledge of needed resources and problem-solving skills.

Then, to translate into questions, the current study adapted and modified the Psychological Well-Being Scale based on Ryff (1989) dimensions of psychological well-being, which include self-acceptance, positive relationships with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth.

*The personal growth* dimension scored high, as evidenced by responses from people with disabilities indicating that they viewed life as an ongoing process and that they learned valuable lessons over time, making them feel stronger and more competent. Personal growth was stronger when they were part of a Lingkar Sosial. For them, the Lingkar Sosial provides reinforcement for their efforts to give meaning to themselves, not to be inferior with the limitations they have and to remain enthusiastic about living life and enjoying it.

*Positive relationships with others* are the second highest dimension. Lingkar Sosial allow people with disabilities to benefit greatly from friendships and feel a sense of trust among coworkers. They find a community that can support each other. Having a community gives the group strength rather than being alone (Suparman, Ninawati, & Setiawan, 2022).

*Self-acceptance* is the third highest dimension. Lingkar Sosial for them helps people with disabilities feel confident, think positively about themselves, be proud of their lives, and feel grateful and consider themselves lucky. Self-acceptance increases when they join and are active in Lingkar Sosial. Several activities held provide space for them to enjoy life and be grateful. Such as the batik activity that was once held by Lingkar Sosial, to express their mood into a batik motif, where the batik cloth can be sold or worn by themselves. It is proven that the community is able to increase self-acceptance for people with disabilities (Khusen & Suryadi, 2021).

*Autonomy* is a way of thinking and working freely, but not outside the rules and producing work according to target. Free means the best work, creative, innovative, enthusiastic, and ultimately more productive. Lingkar Sosial provides economic empowerment according to the passion of each person with disabilities. For example, for the blind, those who like the profession of massage, are helped to promote massage services. So, according to the answers of people with disabilities under the auspices of Lingkar Sosial, that they have felt the role of Lingkar Sosial in providing freedom for them to explore themselves, according to their passion.

*Purpose in life*, people with disabilities said that some of them found their soul mate when they joined the Lingkar Sosial. They finally found friends to share with and feel comfortable with. They found their purpose in life and were enthusiastic in their daily lives. They also get information about health, that they have the right to get good services for their health. So far they have had difficulty accessing health, because they do not get adequate information.

*Environmental mastery*, is the ability to create or choose contexts, a sense of control and competence, knowing how to take advantage of opportunities, the ability to manage life and the world effectively (Buratta, Delvecchio, & Mazzesch, 2023). Environmental mastery refers to the degree to which individuals feel responsible for their own lives and have the competence to create an environment that meets their personal development needs. The answers given by people with disabilities, that after joining the Lingkar Sosial, they are no longer stressed, they have high environmental mastery, so they can feel the harmony of life. They feel increased psychological well-being after being active in the Lingkar Sosial.

Based on the responses from people with disabilities about the role of Lingkar Sosial in empowerment, it appears that Lingkar Sosial are most successful in personal growth, followed by positive relationships with others and self-acceptance. These three are considered by people with disabilities to be able to be done well by Lingkar Sosial. They feel more confident, get a comfortable environment so they are able to accept themselves and dare to mingle with society. People with disabilities gave responses like this:

*“...I am not alone now. In the past, I did not dare to leave the house. I only did limited activities inside the house and everything was done by other family members. But after I met Lingkar Sosial, I met other friends, I met an atmosphere where I felt comfortable, appreciated and I came to know the wider world...”*

The results of the interviews accompanied by observations and involvement of researchers, found the role and programs of the Lingkar Sosial in empowering people with disabilities.

*Macro and Micro Perspectives in Empowering Persons with Disabilities* There are two perspectives to achieve empowerment of community development programs, macro and micro perspectives. Macro perspective, that the principles of human orientation as a Marxist concept of power relations (Chawa, Putra, & Purba, 2023). That community development has a commitment to empowering those who are powerless or disadvantaged (Kenny, 2006). Conditions where people can be excluded, oppressed, marginalized or disadvantaged when there is an imbalance of power and resources. State policies that cause inequality. In addition, the way groups or individuals who have privileges try to control people's ways of life to gain advantage. Thus, development programs must pay attention to equity, social justice and justice to ensure

equal distribution of economic resources, housing, health and education, equality of civil, legal and industrial rights, and also equal opportunities to participate and make decisions in society (Chawa, Putra, & Purba, 2023). Lingkar Sosial at the macro level, fighting for equality for people with disabilities. For example, striving for equality for people with disabilities to get health services. Striving for people with disabilities to have access to health insurance, political equality by involving people with disabilities in elections. Getting equal opportunities to get education, special education for people with disabilities, and other programs to achieve equality.

Macro perspective by Lingkar Sosial, in three ways, that they are government, society and community. The government through the Social affairs Department, provides financial support for programs in Lingkar Sosial. Then from the government, it is lowered to the institutions below it, such as the sub-district level and village government to help Lingkar Sosial in empowering people with disabilities. Lingkar Sosial actively calls on local governments for their activities, and together organizes data collection on the disabled population. This data collection is to provide equal rights for people with disabilities as citizens, to be invited to develop themselves.

Lingkar Sosial involves people who care about disabilities. They are invited to participate in running Lingkar Sosial programs. While Lingkar Sosial as a community, shelters people with disabilities, fights for justice, both economically, socially, culturally and politically. The role of the Social Circle as a community, as conveyed by one of the disabled people.

*“...Lingkar Sosial made me discover a colorful world, with my limitations, I can be creative according to my passion...”*

The micro perspective promotes independence or personal development as the ultimate goal of development. That is, the ability of individuals to determine and have the power to control their lives. The micro principle advocates the power and control for each individual to be able to overcome the problems that affect their lives. This is what Lingkar Sosial does, more on strengthening the personal of each person with disabilities. Empowering them with programs that support economic, social and cultural resilience. The empowerment activities of each person with disabilities are explained in the next section of this study, by explaining the programs that have been organized by the Lingkar Sosial.

*The Capacity Building of Community Members* The initial step taken by Lingkar Sosial is to develop the capacity of its members. This program is to improve skills and knowledge on how to communicate with people with disabilities. They are trained to be able to communicate with people with disabilities using sign language when dealing with deaf and mute people. Furthermore, training is also provided on ethics of assistance when dealing with blind people. This training program is also a practice and has initiated social interaction between people with disabilities and non-disabilities. Those involved in the Social Circle activities stated:

*“...I am a housewife with grown-up children, so I need activities to keep me useful. From the beginning I was concerned about people with disabilities, coincidentally my neighbor was like that. Finally I joined Lingkar Sosial to channel my concern for people with disabilities. I have been in this role for 3 years, and I feel happy to have been part of an inclusive life...”*

*“...I am a retired teacher, I want to continue to be useful to society. I joined Lingkar Sosial to continue to devote myself as well as worship, practicing my knowledge. Disability is a special group and is a challenge for me...”*

Those who join Lingkar Sosial do so voluntarily and selflessly. They want to serve and be useful. Their salary is only a small amount that is obtained from every activity organized by Lingkar Sosial, just transportation money or pocket money. However, that is not what is sought, but more on their devotion to provide benefits to others.

*Planning and Organizing Activities*

The programs planned by Lingkar Sosial should be well-organized and on time. All of that is a promise that Lingkar Sosial must keep to the Social Affairs Department to be accountable for the results and outputs. The results will be assessed to consider the sustainability of the program. Such as activities on learning self-resilience, people with disabilities are invited to climb mountains, the aim is to train their physical endurance and provide confidence that nature is very vast and we have the opportunity to enjoy and manage it.

Lingkar Sosial also seeks to establish cooperation with various parties, such as academics for disability empowerment. This cooperation program continues to be encouraged by Lingkar Sosial to gain a wider range of relations, gain knowledge transfer, and new things that can be used to develop efforts to empower the disabled. In accordance with the government's strategic plan, the responsibility for empowering the disabled is the responsibility of all parties. This is used as a tool by Lingkar Sosial to gain the widest possible relations, so that together empowering the disabled can gain equality in life.

Government Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia Number 52 of 2019 concerning the Implementation of Social Welfare for Persons with Disabilities, emphasizes that persons with disabilities must receive equal rights in society and all must treat disabilities properly, becoming an encouragement for the implementation of empowerment for them optimally. Lingkar Sosial can use this regulation as a basis for implementing their programs, as a basis so that what is planned can be implemented properly and benefit persons with disabilities. Some of the leading programs organized by Lingkar Sosial include:

1. Health services for disabilities

Disability health services are called POSYANDU, which are health services based on the needs of various disabilities. This service is free, at the village/sub-district level so it is affordable and easily accessible. The innovations of this service are: 1) therapy services. If previously therapy was only available at the central hospital, with the presence of POSYANDU, therapy becomes closer. 2) Pick-up and drop-off services. If previously disabilities were neglected, with the presence of POSYANDU, disabilities are not hindered by transportation. 3) Training services. If previously training was only in special schools for disabilities, then with the presence of POSYANDU, disabilities find it easier to get training.

2. Development of inclusive tourism villages

Activities held temporarily include nature activists, scouting, and other nature activities. There is one place, called Bukit Tursina, which is a disability-friendly hill, where people with disabilities can do various activities such as camping, gathering with fellow people with disabilities or other parties, and this hill is planned to be a tourist destination developed as disability-friendly, equipped with facilities suitable for the disabled. Not only is this hill a tourist destination, but the village government wants to make its village an inclusive tourism destination, which provides equal rights to vulnerable groups including disabilities. Lingkar Sosial welcomes this initiative and seeks to establish sustainable cooperation with the village.

3. Disabled Nature Lovers (DIFPALA)

Recreational activities, mountain climbing and camping which are routinely held by Lingkar Sosial. People with disabilities participate in mountain climbing in East Java. The purpose of this activity is to develop self-potential, train courage, independence and problem solving.

The main principle of the community-based approach is empowering people with disabilities to participate in society. Participation describes the scope of participation based on the sequence of the development planning process, in detail the types of society participation in development are: (1) Participation in decision making; (2) Participation in the implementation of activities; (3) Participation in development monitoring and evaluation; (4) Participation in the utilization of development results (Hasan et al., 2023). Participation of people with disabilities can be achieved by implementing a conceptual approach that can be expanded from sharing information, training

and discussions through various forms of collaborative arrangements and partnerships that are stated in the activity programs. The Lingkar Sosial accommodates all, such as providing training programs to community members to improve skills on how to use sign language, ethics of helping blind people, and showing a comfortable attitude of friendship for people with disabilities. After accommodating its members, then move on to people with disabilities. If people with disabilities are handled by members of the Lingkar Sosial who understand how to deal with people with disabilities, then empowering people with disabilities is easier. Communication runs smoothly, each understands the intention, so that the targeted goals can be achieved.

According to research conducted by Chawa, Putra, & Purba (2023); Gutman et al (2019), this research strengthens it that the community-based approach was successfully carried out by Lingkar Sosial, not an easy thing. Communicating with people with disabilities requires patience and following their wishes. Comforting them first, after that they will find it easier to talk, convey their concerns and even dare to make decisions.

## CONCLUSION

This study shows that the role of communities such as Lingkar Sosial is important, because it empowers people with disabilities who are often in a powerless position because they are excluded and marginalized from access to various resources, facilities, and activities in society. Using a macro and micro perspective approach, to provide an overview of the role of Lingkar Sosial in empowering people with disabilities. The results obtained, that from the macro side, the role of government, community and society is important to play a role in providing equality for people with disabilities. The micro perspective, more on empowering individuals with disabilities, Lingkar Sosial organizes several activities to foster independence, self-confidence for people with disabilities to be creative and mingle with society.

Empowerment of the helpless or disadvantaged community can be achieved if the development program pays attention to equity, social justice and fairness to ensure the equal distribution of various resources in society. This is what the Lingkar Sosial program is, that the development program can be realized in real terms, not just written. There are real outcomes that people with disabilities are well accepted by society, getting equal opportunities in the economic, social, cultural and political fields.

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