



Articulating the Interests of Disability Groups: Utilization of Social Media in Kudus Regency, Indonesia

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Article Information

Submitted April 25, 2024

Revision June 13, 2024

Accepted August 27, 2024

Published October 1, 2024

Abstract

As a minority group, Disability Communication Forum of Kudus Regency (FKDK) uses social media to advocate and carry out social change. This research aims to explore the utilization of social media to articulate the interests of disability groups. This research employed a descriptive-qualitative method. The primary data are collected from in-depth interviews with the chairman of a disability organization, disability activists, and a regional parliament member. Meanwhile, the secondary data are collected from journals, books, and websites related to this issue. This research defines social media usage for Disability Communication Forum of Kudus Regency (FKDK) to encourage the passing of Local Regulations regarding the protection and fulfillment of disability rights. They mobilize communities, raise awareness through sharing videos and photographs, and use media as a fundraising instrument. Social media empowers marginalized groups by providing a platform to articulate their interests, advocate for rights, and facilitate social justice movements. It enhances accessibility, promotes community mobilization, and offers innovative fundraising opportunities. Advocacy groups leverage social media strategically for policy influence, public engagement, and collaboration. However, addressing digital regulation is crucial to ensure inclusivity and digital advocacy endeavors benefit all community members.

Keywords: disability group, local regulation, social media.

Introduction

People with disabilities are classified as the largest minority group in the world. They are estimated to be 15% of the world's population, and 82% are residents of developing countries. Disabled people still face various challenges and struggle to adjust to the social environment. As a minority group, people with disabilities face obstacles in accessing various domains, such as education, work, politics, public services, and cultural and social life.

They repeatedly experience discrimination in accessing economics, politics,

education, health services, and socio-cultural elements.

Based on current data from the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS), the number of disabled people in Indonesia is 22.5 million, or around 5% of the total population of Indonesia (Adioetomo et al., 2014).

More than 8 million or 13.3 percent of all households in Indonesia have at least one person with a disability among their family members. People with disabilities in Indonesia have lower levels of education, poor health, poor public services, and minimal economic opportunities (Cameron & Suarez, 2017).

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Disability is continually related to poverty. It is rooted in the barriers that prevent people with functional difficulties from having equal access and opportunities as people without disabilities. These barriers include physical, attitudinal, legal, or policy pushed by a lack of capacity to construct appropriate accommodations for programs and facilities for disabilities (Adioetomo et al., 2014). They also have to deal with psychological barriers due to the negative stigma from a society that regards people with disabilities as incapable of help. Sometimes, this stigma comes from the family, which is supposed to be a support system to gain self-confidence and empower them (Surwanti & Ma'ruf, 2018).

From a legal aspect, the government has committed to improving the welfare of persons with disabilities by enacting Law No. 4/1997 on People with Disabilities. The term disabled people was later changed to persons with disabilities. This law regulates the rights and equal opportunities for persons with disabilities to obtain a decent living standard, employment, proper education, and access and equal opportunities to participate in development, accessibility, and rehabilitation. At the international level, the government ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) on 30 March 2007. As a follow-up to the ratification, the government passed Law No. 19 Year 2011 on the Ratification of the UNCRPD, which was later amended into Law No. 8, 2016 (Irwanto et al., 2010).

Law No. 8/2016 is a new opportunity for people with disabilities to get better access in various aspects. However, the implementation of this law requires synergy from various parties. The approach to a disability then changed from a social welfare approach to a

disability rights fulfillment approach (Paikah, 2017).

Providing rights for persons with disabilities requires a solid legal commitment from the government. At the regional level, disability regulation is needed due to the diversity of the region's characteristics. The local regulation is an arrangement for the implementation of Law No. 8 of 2016 based on the circumstances and necessities of each region. Some districts in 12 provinces have already passed local regulations regarding protecting and fulfilling the rights of people with Disability, such as D.I. Yogyakarta, Central Java, East Kalimantan, and DKI Jakarta (Kustiani, 2019).

Based on SUPAS BPS data, Central Java had more than 90.000 people with Disability about the age of 10 in 2016 (7). The details are as follows:

Table 1
Number of People with Disability in Central Java in 2016 (Hidayati et al., 2020)

No	Type of Difficulties	Total
1	Functional vision difficulties	23.716
2	Functional hearing difficulties	13.916
3	Functional walking or stair climbing difficulties	19.750
4	Functional hand or finger use difficulties	5.888
5	Functional memory difficulties	15.761
6	Functional behavioral or emotional difficulties	5.415
7	Functional speech difficulties	7.184
8	Functional self-care difficulties	5.891

People with a disability face many challenges and obstacles, including accessibility, public services, education, employment, assistive devices, public participation, and social and cultural barriers. In the economic sector, people with disability

experience difficulty finding jobs because some companies do not provide special assignments and job vacancies for Disability.

To realize better accessibility for people with disabilities, Disability Communication Forum of Kudus Regency (FKDK) advocates to encourage the ratification of local regulation. Established in 2014, this community has been actively advocating for local government. They also actively manage social media channels such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter (X) to amplify their voices regarding protecting and fulfilling the rights of people with Disability (Yulianto, 2022).

Social media has a multiplier effect, meaning that the dissemination process stops at individuals and spreads through a chain of events (Flore et al., 2019). Social media allow underprivileged communities to express their concerns globally, mobilize communities, raise awareness, and contribute to accountability through citizen journalism and sharing videos and photographs (Karki, 2023).

Social media also plays a crucial role in social justice and advocacy by providing a platform for marginalized voices to be heard and for the movement to gain strength. It raises community building, awareness-raising, and mobilization, empowering individuals and groups to drive positive change. Social media amplify marginalized voices to promote inclusivity and social justice. It provides a space of expression, allowing marginalized people to communicate their perspectives. Furthermore, they develop online communities and influence public opinion (Karki, 2023).

Method

The research approach is utilizing a qualitative method. Qualitative research aims to understand social phenomena in their natural environments comprehensively. It relies on people's direct experiences as meaning-making agents in their daily lives and focuses on the why rather than what of social phenomena (Fossey et al., 2002).

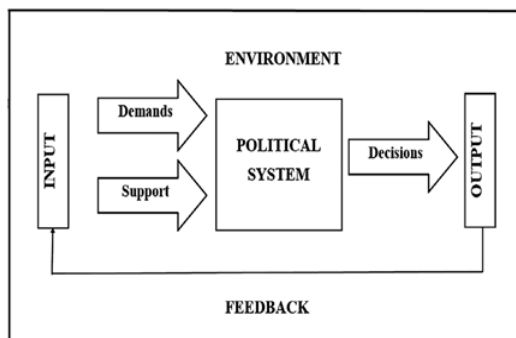
This descriptive research uses data collection methods through in-depth interviews, focus group discussions (FGD), and documentation. An in-depth interview was conducted with the head of Disability Communication Forum of Kudus Regency (FKDK) and a local parliament member. Meanwhile, in the FGD forum, researchers invited two resource persons: media practitioners and disability activists. In the FGD activity, students from the Faculty of Da'wah and Islamic Communication IAIN Kudus were also present as the audience. Meanwhile, the secondary data are collected from journals, books, websites, and other related resources.

Result and Analysis

Interest Articulation of FKDK To Push Ratification of Local Regulation Regarding Protection and Fulfillment Rights of Disability Groups

In the political system of a democratic country, the public conveys demands and support for the political system. Demand is a requirement by society to create a policy or government decision. As shown in Figure 1, demand produces new policies by the government regarding the actual problems (Easton, 1953).

Figure 1. The Political System Model
(Easton, 1953)



Defining demands means that the community can develop interest groups. Interest groups are individuals and institutions tied by identical opinions and interests, then organize themselves to influence political policy. This strategy was accomplished by the Disability Communication Forum of Kudus Regency (FKDK). The representation of interests conveyed by disability groups to the Regional Government of Kudus Regency is related to the protection and fulfillment of disability rights in various fields, such as education, economics, and social life. People with disabilities need a supportive environment to actively participate in society, including physical and non-physical accessibility, policies, and socio-economic aspects. The policy aspect relates to protection from discrimination and denial of disability rights. Socio-economic factors relate to the issue of welfare levels, public awareness, and even openness to disability rights. Meanwhile, service factors relate to inclusive services in various fields such as education, health, employment, youth potential development, community-based rehabilitation, social support services, and service affordability (Kementerian Sosial RI, 2021).

In addition to the environment, personal factors also influence disability participation,

such as gender and barriers such as physical, intellectual, or psychosocial barriers. The economic condition of people with disabilities is also a supporting factor. People with disabilities who come from wealthy families tend to have better facilities and access than those who are poor (United Nations, 2014).

Anjas Parmono - a disability activist in the Consortium of Islamic Political Thought Department, IAIN Kudus, stated that there are still many problems that people with Disability must solve. However, two concerns need to be optimized: education and employment issues. Rismawan stated that education is the ultimate way to skill up human resources and upgrade a person's quality (Prodi Pemikiran Politik Islam IAIN Kudus, 2022).

Anjas Pramono, with a physical disability, explained his experience in achieving higher education. He graduated from primary school with excellent grades and became the top score on final exams in the Kudus Regency. However, there are various obstacles to continuing the education level. These obstacles include negative stigma, the unsupported schools' infrastructure for Disability, and also the unpreparedness of teachers to accept students with a disability (Prodi Pemikiran Politik Islam IAIN Kudus, 2022).

On the issue of employment, Anjas Pramono further explained that there are many people with disabilities in Kudus who are unemployed at home and even isolated by their families. Most companies require physical and mental health in their job requirement. Disabilities are often considered physically unhealthy. Companies in the Kudus district also do not provide quotas for disabled workers (Prodi Pemikiran Politik Islam IAIN Kudus, 2022).

Education and labor are also a concern for Rismawan Yulianto, the head of FKDK. Of all FKDK members, only a few have received education up to high school level. This factor is due to several things, such as the lack of family awareness and knowledge about the importance of education for people with disabilities. They also experience difficulties in accessing school; for example, not all people with physical disabilities have wheelchairs (Yulianto, 2022).

Rismawan expressed concern about the need for more education among FKDK members. Therefore, he encouraged his members to participate in the national high school equivalency examination (Kejar Paket C Program). He stated that people with Disability must be taught to live independently because they cannot depend on their families all the time. They have the potential to develop their knowledge and skills so that they are expected to be able to work, take care of their own lives, and have a productive and quality life (Yulianto, 2022).

Rismawan also highlighted the unpreparedness of schools in Kudus District to become inclusive schools. It is based on Adrian's personal experience as a person with a disability. Obstacles in the school include building infrastructure that is not yet disability-friendly and also a negative stigma in the community that results in bullying. Awareness of parents to send their disabled children to school is also still low. There are cases where families isolate people with disabilities from the community. Wawan, as the chairman of FKDK, also regretted this. Education is a fundamental right for everyone, including people with disabilities (Yulianto, 2022).

Regarding employment, in general, FKDK members are entrepreneurs because most FKDK members have low education, and companies in the Kudus Regency do not provide quotas for people with disabilities. The company that provides disability quotas is in the Jepara Regency, and only a few members have modified vehicles for work (Yulianto, 2022).

In the public infrastructure sector, it is still rare to find infrastructure that facilitates and assists the mobility of persons with disabilities, such as buildings, transportation, and road crossings. Although some government public service buildings already provide access for people with disabilities. Other public facilities such as sidewalks, public transportation, places of worship, shops, and health facilities are not yet accessible for disabilities. Rismawan stated that sidewalks are slippery, and also electric poles are in the middle of the sidewalk, making it difficult for people with disabilities to walk, especially for people with visual impairment. Most places of worship, such as mosques, have stairs that make it difficult for those with disabilities to access (Yulianto, 2022).

In the political field, one of the indicators of low political participation is seen in the participation of people with disabilities in the Kudus Regency elections. There is no definitive data on the number of disabilities. For example, regarding data collection of the Permanent Voters List (DPT), not all families include their family members with disabilities in the data collection. The KPUD of Kudus Regency recorded that the number of people with disabilities registered as DPT in the local election (Pilkada) was 843 voters or 0.131% of all DPT in Kudus Regency, consisting of physical disabilities, visual disabilities,

hearing and deaf disabilities, mental disabilities (ODGJ), and other disabilities (Qodarsasi, 2021).

There are several obstacles experienced by persons with disabilities in Pilkada participation, among others: a) severe disability conditions that do not allow them to go to the polling station; b) the difficulty of accessibility to the polling station. Not all people with disabilities have wheelchair facilities or modified vehicles; c) there are still polling stations that are less disability-friendly. For example, polling stations that still use classrooms or buildings with stairs; d) There are still people with disabilities whose names are not recorded in the Permanent Voters List (DPT) (Qodarsasi, 2021).

As a local parliament member, Ahmad Yusuf Roni stated that local governments should realize the protection and fulfillment of disability rights. People with disabilities are empowered people who can even help others. If they have a supportive environment, they can become quality individuals. However, they still often receive negative stigma and experience discrimination in daily life. Therefore, the government must design local regulations to guarantee the protection and fulfillment of disability rights (Roni, 2022).

Yusuf explained the background and urgency of the draft of the regional regulations (Ranperda) on Disability and how it was conceived. The draft of local regulation was proposed in 2019. Yusuf took the initiative to propose a draft of the local regulation to be discussed at the parliament meeting. However, along the way, there were pandemic obstacles; some budgets had to be cut for handling Covid-19, so the discussion about local regulation was postponed. In 2021, he proposed this issue similarly, and it began

to be discussed in the middle of the year. Fortunately, by the end of the year, Law No. 10 the Year 2021 Regarding the Protection and Fulfillment of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities could be ratified (Roni, 2022)

By the ratification of local regulation, Yusuf hoped it could improve the quality of life for people with Disability and prevent them from discrimination in various fields. Yusuf notices that the local government has tried to pay attention to the needs of people with disabilities. For example, related to public facilities, Yusuf sees a trend that leads to improvements in providing facilities for people with disabilities in the Kudus Regency. Office buildings and public facilities have provided access for wheelchair users. With the implementation of the Disability Regional Regulation, it is expected that the facilitation of persons with disabilities will be improved (Roni, 2022).

Kudus Regency Law Number 10 Year 2021 Regarding Protection and Fulfillment of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities cannot yet be implemented directly. Regent Regulation must strengthen this local regulation. Local parliament, disability organizations, and activists continue to push for the Regent Regulation to be passed.

Discussion

FKDK's Utilisation of Social Media to Encourage the Passage of the Disability Regional Regulation

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities clearly outlines the rights of persons with disabilities, including 1) the right to equality and non-discrimination; 2) the right to services or accessibility; 3) the right to liberty and security; 4) the right to equal recognition before the law; 5) the right

to justice; 6) the right to be free from torture or cruel punishment; 7) the right to be free from exploitation and violence; 8) the right to education and health; 9) the right to work and employment; and 10) the right to freedom of movement and citizenship (Kusumastuti, 2016).

In fulfilling the rights of disability group, the Disability Communication Forum of Kudus Regency (FKDK) has made various efforts and endeavors, such as a) conveying to political parties, b) conveying through social media, c) participating in the policy formulation process, d) lobby and negotiate with political elites; e) utilize personal relationships with political elites; e) carry out unconventional movements such as demonstrations, strikes, blocking roads, convoys, and others.

Social media is one of the practical tools for achieving interest. Social media is consciously employed to change the communication model between individuals. Social media now takes over interactions between individuals directly. Interaction between office mates, interaction with family, or even interaction with neighbors. Community service that has been carried out in our society can be announced through internet-networked communication tools such as WhatsApp, Twitter, Line, and other social media (Nuruddin, 2018).

Social media provides a giant leap and substantively provides a new way of interacting. Social media pushes us to jump into a different environment due to the nature of the communication it brings. Online social networks change the order and deliver a new paradigm by reformulating how and to whom citizens can communicate, including when and why the communication occurs (Ibrahim & Iriantara, 2017).

Meanwhile, the media has a role in facilitating social justice movements and advocacy, especially for marginalized groups. Media allows underprivileged communities to express their concerns globally, mobilize communities, raise awareness, and contribute to accountability through citizen journalism and the sharing of videos and photographs (Karki, 2023).

The social media platform has an ultimate function for social advocacy (Karki, 2023), such as 1) raising community building, awareness-raising, and mobilization; 2) empowering individuals and groups to drive positive change; 3) becoming a crucial tool for advancing social justice causes and amplifying the voices of those fighting for equity and equality; 4) provides nonprofits, advocacy groups, and organizations with new advocacy and fundraising tools, allowing them to reach a larger audience and engage supporters in the advocacy process.

As a marginalized group, people with disabilities still experience discrimination in various aspects of life, such as education, employment, politics, public services, and facilities, as well as the social and cultural fields. Due to these various discriminations, there is a need for an advocacy movement to demand protection and fulfillment of the rights of people with disabilities so that they can achieve a better quality of life.

To achieve these interests, FKDK, as a forum for people with disabilities in the Kudus Regency, uses social media as a means of advocacy. The social media currently used by FKDK are Instagram with the account name @fkdk.kudus, Facebook with the account name Kudus Disability Communication Forum, and the YouTube channel with the name Jalan Hidupku. FKDK actively posts various

community activities on these three social media platforms, both routine and incidental.

The publication of various FKDK agendas in social media is expected to raise community building and awareness of society. Disabled people often experience stigmatization and discrimination in society. Social stigma is a social reaction from society to someone ostracized, excluded, or rejected from social acceptance (Nisa, 2018).

Social stigma gives rise to a label addressed to someone who is not considered the same as them. The labeling provided leads to negative labeling or not good. The root of stigma is the difference between physical, moral, moral, or tribal. As well as those with disabilities who are frequently affected by stigma due to capacity, those who are considered by society experience limitations that are truly visible if compared to non-disabled people (Latipah, 2017).

The stigma that develops in society occurs due to a lack of knowledge and interaction with people with disabilities. Disabilities can also produce much work. Therefore, to inspire and empower individuals or groups to drive positive change, the YouTube channel "Jalan Hidupku" shows the public that limited body function does not prevent them from working. It is expected that this will minimize negative stigma in society and increase community support to provide a supportive environment for people with disabilities. Currently, "Jalan Hidupku" YouTube channel has received 14,900 subscribers. With this large number of subscribers, the wider community is expected to accept FKDK's educational messages about disabilities.

Figure 2. Inspirational Disability Stories on the FKDK YouTube channel



Figure 2 describes the inspiring story of Sulikin, who has a physical disability. He is disabled due to osteogenesis imperfecta (bone brittleness). However, these limitations do not hinder Sulikin from developing carving skills. He has sold his carvings to various cities. His work even received direct appreciation from the Governor of Central Java. To educate and raise public awareness, FKDK also presents podcasts with politicians and academics on Disability, as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3. FKDK Podcast with Politicians and Academics



Separated from social media, which is managed by the community, FKDK furthermore networks with various local

media, like the social action carried out by FKDK during the pandemic, which Beta TV covered. During the pandemic, to coincide with the commemoration of International Day of Persons with Disabilities, FKDK members took to the streets to distribute masks to road users, as shown in Figure 4. On this occasion, FKDK also articulated its interests to Kudus Regency stakeholders. They also pointed out that the sidewalks on the main road are still difficult for people with disabilities to access. Rismawan, as chairman of FKDK, hopes that Kudus Regency can become an inclusive city.

Figure 4. Raising Public Awareness and conveying Aspirations Regarding Public Facilities on the Beta T.V. YouTube Channel



To amplify and raise their voice to stakeholders, FKDK actively holds hearings with local governments and informs the wider community via social media. After the passing of Kudus Regency Regional Regulation Law No. 10 Year 2021 Regarding Protection and Fulfillment of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, a Regent's Regulation should be immediately drafted, which technically regulates in detail how to implement the Regional Regulation. To realize social justice and equality towards disabilities, FKDK continues to push for the Regent's regulations to be ratified immediately.

Figure 5. FKDK Audience with the Regent of Kudus on the FKDK Instagram Page



In Instagram posts, as shown in Figure 5, FKDK always includes hashtags such as #kudusinklusi and #difabelbisa. These hashtags are used to promote social change and increase reach on social media. As explained by Karki, hashtags like #BlackLivesMatter and #MeToo have demonstrated social media's global reach and impact in highlighting social justice issues and promoting social change. As a result, social media has become a crucial tool for advancing social justice causes and amplifying the voices of those fighting for equity and equality (Karki, 2023).

Figure 6. FKDK Audience with the Regent of Kudus on the Beta TV YouTube Channel



FKDK demands greater involvement in drafting the Regent's Regulation on the Protection and Fulfillment of Disability Rights. FKDK wants to ensure that the regulations designed are right on target and in line with the current needs of people with disabilities, as shown in Figure 6.

Apart from raising awareness, mobilizing movements, and encouraging social justice towards disabilities, FKDK also utilizes social media to raise funds. FKDK has a "Jum'at Berkah" program, which aims to provide moral and material support to people with disabilities who are economically disadvantaged and who have severe disabilities.

Apart from charity, this activity also collects data on the number of disabilities. While carrying out the activities, Rismawan, as chairman of the FKDK, had many experiences. He stated that at the grassroots, many problems experienced by people with disabilities have not been resolved, such as economic, educational, and health problems, which cause people with disabilities to become increasingly isolated from social life. With this "Jum'at Berkah" activity, Rismawan can reach people with disabilities who have been isolated.

By actively using social media, FKDK has networked with national disability organizations and from various other regions. The National Commission on Disabilities also visited Kudus Regency to support the speedy ratification of the Regent's Regulation. Representatives from the National Commission on Disabilities directly held an audience with the Regent of Kudus Regency. Apart from disability organizations, FKDK

also networks with stakeholders, activists, academics, and other communities in Kudus and various regions.

Efforts to encourage the issuance of the Regent's Regulation must also be balanced with efforts by people with disabilities to upgrade their potential so that they are ready for the various opportunities available when the Regent's Regulation is passed. It is what Rismawan continues striving for as chairman of FKDK. Rismawan hopes that education can become a concern for people with disabilities so that their personal quality can be improved.

Conclusion

Persons with disabilities must face various challenges and obstacles in Kudus District. These challenges and obstacles include accessibility, public services, education, employment, assistive devices, public participation, and social and cultural barriers. The Disability Communication Forum of Kudus Regency articulates its interest in realizing disability rights in the Kudus area.

In the digitalization era, social media is also an effective channel for FKDK to articulate its interests. FKDK is a marginalized group that facilitates social justice movements and advocacy, especially in pushing for the ratification of the Regent's Regulation regarding the protection and fulfillment of disability rights in Kudus Regency. Social media allows FKDK's underprivileged community to voice their concerns, mobilize communities, raise awareness, promote equality, and use it as a fundraising tool.

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