



Photovoice: An Alternative Method for Inclusive Research in Revealing the Collective Memory of Space and Identity in Salatiga

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Abstract

Communication studies increasingly confront the complexity of social spaces and the need for inclusivity. This study explores the implementation of photovoice as an alternative method for inclusive research, aiming to provide equal participation for youth communities in Salatiga, including individuals with disabilities. The research seeks to uncover how collective memory and urban identity are constructed through visual narratives and participatory engagement. Employing a qualitative approach within a constructivist paradigm, data were collected from 14 informants through focus group discussions, interviews, and 30 photographs, then analyzed using the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) framework. Findings indicate that photovoice facilitates participants' reflection on spatial experiences and personal memories, encouraging dialogue across diverse backgrounds. It strengthens participants' roles as co-creators of knowledge and offers a visual platform for expressing marginalized perspectives. Despite interpretative challenges, photovoice proves effective in revealing lived experiences and fostering inclusivity. The study concludes that photovoice serves as an innovative and participatory approach to inclusive research. Its broader implication emphasizes the potential of visual methods to democratize knowledge production, enhance equitable representation, and contribute to the reconstruction of urban and cultural identities within contemporary communication studies.

Keywords: photovoice, inclusive research, collective memory, urban identity, participatory communication

Introduction

The entanglement between space and society has become a dominant concern within social science research. Social sciences and cultural studies now widely acknowledge that space is more than a simple physical container; it encompasses social, symbolic, and material dimensions. As cited in Herndl (1991), Henri Lefebvre conceptualizes space as socially produced, shaped through processes that construct and regulate human relationships. This theoretical advancement has generated

critical investigations into social inequalities and exclusionary practices. These investigations are often grounded in class, identity, or group formation (Nind & Vinha, 2014). Understanding space in this expanded sense calls for innovative and action-oriented methodologies capable of addressing multifaceted spatial challenges.

A natural outgrowth of these theoretical developments is the need for research approaches that can adequately capture the lived realities and complexities of space as experienced by communities. Participatory

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research methodologies have thus gained prominence for their reflective, flexible, and interactive features. These approaches respond to more conventional, top-down methodologies (Chambers, 1994; Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995; Rifkin, 2014). Participatory research centers on community needs and positions community members as key stakeholders. These members contribute to every stage of the research process, including design, data collection, analysis, and interpretation. The approach does not rely solely on experts, academics, or the government officials (Billings, 2000). Such approaches are especially vital in contexts where spatial injustices are experienced most acutely.

Biggs (as cited in Damico, 1994) outlines four models of participation: contractual, consultative, collaborative, and collegial. The collegial form is most aligned with participatory research, as it recognizes community members as equal partners with valuable knowledge and agency. Participatory mapping, originating from India's Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) program in the 1980s, is a prominent example of this approach. This method demonstrates how integrating local knowledge into every research stage, problem identification, social analysis, and solution development, can enhance the effectiveness of social mapping and community-based health services (Hinden, 2005).

Thus, innovative methodologies guided by genuine participation are essential to address complex societal issues embedded in space and place. Given this methodological evolution, communication studies, as a core social sciences discipline, must also adapt and collaborate within multi- and transdisciplinary frameworks. UNESCO (2023) has underscored the importance of freedom of expression, journalism justice, media access, education, and literacy for fostering dialogue, democracy, and development. Furthermore, communication science's inherent flexibility

enables it to intersect with emerging challenges such as climate change, development, agriculture (Anwar et al., 2013; Huang, 2019; Podmore, 1985; Robertson, 2012), public archaeology (Holtorf, 2016; Merriman, 2004), and identity politics (Lewis, 2015). Central to all these is the need to understand how communication shapes perceptions of space, place, and belonging.

In space and cities, identity constitutes a particularly contested concept. Rather than being a fixed attribute (Kong & Law, 2002), identity is socially constructed through lived experience. It accrues physical, social, and symbolic dimensions unique to each group or state. Community members collectively negotiate the meaning of space through ongoing interaction and shared process. Identity involves tangible elements, such as architectural layout and urban design (Jones & Svejnova, 2017), and intangible assets, such as collective beliefs, values, and social practices (Puchala, 1984). Dialogue and shared experiences shape the present sense of belonging and how mutual responsiveness, confidence, and esteem are exhibited within communities.

Building on this foundation, the concept of identity guides exploration into how individuals and groups remember their past. These inquiries shape personal and collective memory and serve as the basis for developing cultural history. Maurice Halbwachs, in his 1925 work "Social Frameworks of Memory," pioneered in exploring how collective memory is produced and maintained through social interaction (de Saint-Laurent, 2018; Hernon & Schwartz, 2016). Memory is not limited to recording a sequence of past events. It involves dynamic sharing, reconstructing, and interpreting historical contexts and human experiences. Various cultural forms mediate these processes and give memory significance to a community.

Despite the importance of collective memory, Kansteiner (2002) critiques that conceptual and methodological advances are not consistently matched by empirical studies that meaningfully capture community perspectives. Research to date often emphasizes chronology, geography, or media forms, but is less focused on how memory is experienced in community life. As a result, media studies methodologies, such as media reception, have been increasingly adopted to bridge interpretative gaps (Kansteiner, 2002).

The globalization of urban communities makes the discourse on identity even more complex. Increasing cross-border interactions have triggered identity crises and value shifts. For instance, the ASEAN Identity and Beyond Forum (2023) recognized that Southeast Asia still seeks robust shared identity solutions post-ASEAN Charter 2007 despite "One vision, One identity, One community."

This research examines the city of Salatiga, Indonesia, which is notable for its rich historical background. The city displays replicas of urban icons, such as miniature Eiffel Towers and Dutch windmills. This phenomenon reflects a broader pattern observed in Indonesia, China (Chen et al., 2017; Huang, 2019; Veasna et al., 2013), and ASEAN countries. Salatiga's multicultural population, shaped through student diasporas, provides fertile ground for exploring questions of value exchange and city identity. The mix of colonial legacies and modern diversity makes Salatiga an exemplary site for examining how identity is constructed through material symbols and lived social interactions.

A fundamental research question emerges from this context. It concerns the identification of the principal actors responsible for facilitating value exchange and constructing city identity. Recent studies indicate that youth, professionals, and marginalized groups are critically involved in transformative processes

(McKoy et al., 2021). Therefore, understanding their contributions is essential for a comprehensive view of urban dynamics. In this regard, the present research focuses on amplifying the voices of young people. Special attention is given to inclusive representation, including individuals from disabled communities such as *Sahabat Tuli*. This approach provides a holistic and equitable perspective on Salatiga's identity.

Within this inclusivity framework, diversity in background, age, gender, and ability is emphasized as foundational to fairness and equity (Morina, 2017; Forlin, 2013). Methodologically, this underscores the need for inclusive research practices within the social sciences (García Iriarte et al., 2023; Nind & Vinha, 2014). Visual sociology offers a powerful way to advance this agenda, positioning images as data and argument. As Douglas (2012) states, visual approaches can offer more explicit, perceptual insights than statistics independently (Lyons et al., 2024; O'Malley & Munsell, 2020), allowing participants to express and interpret meaning. Thus, this research explores the extent to which photos can become tools for capturing and articulating the social meaning of Salatiga.

Accordingly, inclusive research traditions derived from disability studies and participatory action research (Walmsley et al., 2018) are adapted in this research. As argued by Walmsley and Johnson (see Nind & Vinha, 2014). Inclusive research is oriented to producing knowledge collaboratively, especially in ways that improve the lives of marginalized groups. Rather than isolating disabled people as single subjects, this research explores their interaction with non-disabled peers, recognizing all as valued community members (Uditsky, 1993).

Aligning with Inclusion International (Kathleen & Macdonald, 2012), the opportunity for full participation. In social life, the right to inclusion is asserted as a

right for persons with disabilities. Thus, the research applies inclusive and participatory principles to investigate the implementation of the photovoice method in capturing the collective memory of young people in Salatiga, aiming to inform both scholarly discourse and inclusive, community-based practice.

Method

Qualitative research attempts to explain and examine the phenomena in real-world settings. It investigates how people make sense, perceive, and interpret the phenomena (Kathleen & Macdonald, 2012). The approach used the constructivist paradigm to assert that data were solicited from all participants' personal meaning and knowledge construction. Instead of general results, this research focused on meaning and perspective exploration from each photo to contextualize a space.

A qualitative approach was conducted in the constructivist paradigm to assert that data were solicited from all participants' personal meaning and knowledge construction. Adom (2019) stresses that researchers have to ensure a reflective space for informants in order to gain deep meaning from their experiences. Thus, the constructivist tradition constitutes reflective research that constructs social realities through human interpretations (Dwiyanto, 2021).

In order to meet the needs of the diverse backgrounds of young participants, the researcher decided on photos as visual objects for mediated realities and collective memories. Wang and Burris (see Douglas, 2012) describe photovoice as "record and reflect their community's strengths and concerns...to promote critical dialogue and knowledge about important issues through large and small group discussion of photographs, and...to reach policymakers." The popularity of the photovoice method

has echoed back after two decades due to its work (Hergenrather et al., 2009). It combines with photos, critical dialogue, experience-based knowledge, and participants' reflective concerns to communicate community interests, problems, and culture until they engage in a discussion for social exchange. Therefore, this method is successfully applied in education, disabilities, public health, and other issues (Sutton-Brown, 2014). Commonly, it has been conducted for people or marginal groups with insufficient space to express or speak up about their existence.

Photos are perceived as a tool to explore the participants' views about research topics. It was not merely about photo production or aesthetic objectives but about deploying their thought. Hence, the photographic qualities of the cameras were not essential; those were more for bridging media to communicate ideas about phenomena (Douglas, 2012; Wang & Burris, 1997).

This research was conducted in two coffee shops (Tepi Kota and Cindys Cafe) and one young collective art space (Uwit Art Space). These venues function as creative hubs frequently utilized by young people to facilitate social and cultural activities in Salatiga. Their selection is based on several considerations. First, these spaces provide neutral environments that enable participants to express themselves freely. Second, they foster a sense of belonging and emotional proximity among participants. Third, such venues effectively encourage greater participation of the younger generation in deliberative discussions.

The following are the data collection procedures implemented from September to November 2024. This can be seen in Figure 1.

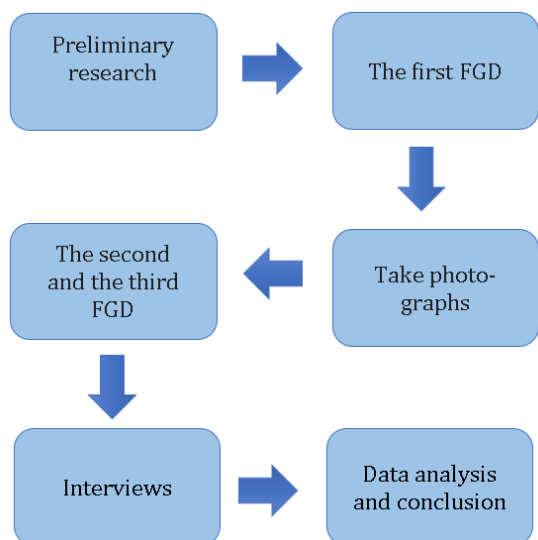


Figure 1. Photovoice Method Workflow

Based on Figure 1 above, it can be explained as follows:

- a. Preliminary research. The initial stage focused on identifying candidates for participation. This process considered the presence of various collective groups in Salatiga. The groups include those that engage in sports, traditional arts, contemporary culture, environmental activism, and advocacy for people with disabilities. The approach was designed to ensure adequate representation of the diverse social backgrounds present in Salatiga. Afterward, the researcher decided on 14 informants from diverse backgrounds. The following is the listed group that joined with their nicknames to keep their credentials.

Table 1. The List of Research Informants with Various Background

Name	Background
Subject 1	Musician
Subject 2	Traditional art and content creator
Subject 3	Zine artist, designer, and illustrator
Subject 4	Freelance writer and historian
Subject 5	Environmental activist
Subject 6	Literature student and film community
Subject 7	Finest artist

Subject 8	Musician
Subject 9	Musician and philosopher
Subject 10	Comic artist
Subject 11	Teacher for deaf children
Subject 12	Zine activist
Subject 13	Skateboard club
Subject 14	Musician

- b. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). The following step is intended to gain insight into the research design for all participants. The researcher explained the objective and how the method operates. It is a participatory model in which participation and action depend on participants' vigor and commitment. Thus, the comprehension of participants from the beginning becomes noteworthy. Instead of technical matters, the researcher listens to the spontaneous ideas about their collective memories. Climate change, fresh air, green environment, and water springs are dominant topics in their memories. From this discussion, questions about how to visualize immaterial objects came up. Accordingly, synchronizing perception from collecting data to knowledge transfer is ensured. It was due to PAR's orientation to inquiry rather than a strict methodology (Hervé et al., 2023).

During two weeks, the participants gathered their photos. They thought, remembered, reflected, and finally determined the memories they wanted to share and visualized them. Two days before presenting, all participants deployed 30 photos to researchers, even though some changed the photos at the last minute.

FGDs are conducted three times: all participants are in the first FGD, seven informants are in the second, and seven are in the third. In total, 30 photos are shared with a broader audience. As explained previously, the first FGD sought to synchronize among participants. The following study

involved more than 50 audiences (students, artists, and young audiences), and the informants shared their memories about Salatiga. The presentations continued with a question-and-answer session, providing participants with feedback. The storytelling became the discussion style to dismiss the strict and clumsy relations among participants.

- c. Interview. It is intended to deepen the photos' interpretations from informants. It confirmed the data's meaning to avoid misreading by the researcher.

After collecting data, the researchers conducted a verbatim translation and analyzed the photo's interpretation of 15 informants and all FGD participants' comments to answer the research questions.

This article emphasizes examining how photovoice contributes to inclusive research in which full participation is the spirit of the approach. It points to the active participation of the disabled group over normalcy and decreasing exclusion from

mainstream social settings. As a result, the SWOT (Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities Threats) is used to analyze it. Albert Humphrey initiated it in 1960 and 1970 to evaluate the research or project for decision-making purposes (Sasoko & Mahrudi, 2023). This research is intended to demonstrate alternative methods in social science research developments. The following figure describes the workflow of the photovoice method.

Results and Analysis

This analysis aims to determine the contribution of the photovoice method to inclusive research. In particular, this investigation focuses on how photovoice facilitates the exploration of collective memories related to urban space among young people in Salatiga. The SWOT analysis serves as a framework to evaluate the research process. This approach assesses strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in applying photovoice within the inclusive research paradigm.

Table 2. SWOT Analysis

Strength	Weakness	Opportunity	Threat
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusive • Reflective • Participative • Holistic involvement • Exploring personal interpretation and experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extra effort to explain the photovoice concept • The challenge of determining the topic and photo framing from the complexity of the issue • The challenge is to find the connectedness between photos and informants • There is no consistent way of analyzing photovoice data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historical and cultural documentation • Raising collective awareness • Potential for digitization and dissemination of cultural history • Research and education media • Provides space for participant creativity • Technological advancement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not all participants have photography skills • Multiple interpretations

Photovoice enables participants to examine the concepts of space and memory through photographic images, visual representations, and narrative accounts. This method enriches the interpretation of urban space by illuminating the value of both material and non-material memories. It analyzes how participants' relationships with symbols, identity, place, and the freedom to construct city memories are shaped through their interactions with specific spatial contexts. Furthermore, Lefebvre (Herndl, 1991) identifies that this approach initiates critical discussions regarding the interconnections of symbols, identity, space, and freedom realized through social interaction. The research process facilitates visual expression and encourages participants to narrate their unique experiences and viewpoints concerning memory and space. Photovoice also strengthens participants' active roles in reconstructing individual and collective memories within the research context.

Strength

Inclusivity represents a primary strength of the photovoice method. For example, Subject 6, a young woman passionate about tattoos, has experienced rejection from her family, neighbors, and community. Social norms in Indonesia often associate negative stigma with women who have tattoos, rendering such identities taboo. Subject 6 stated, "I feel like trash! Even though a tattoo means memories I archive in my body." She shared a photograph of her important tattoo (see Figure 2), which resonated deeply with other participants and elicited a collective emotional response. Her narrative, presented through photovoice, enabled her experiences to be recognized and validated within the group. Subject 6's experience is not unique. Several studies support the existence of social exclusion and stigma directed at tattooed women in Indonesian society (Akib & Ibrahim, 2016; Siregar, 2023; Yasim & Candraningrum, 2019).

In this research, Subject 6 explained how Salatiga has offered her a space to be herself. She has more confidence to live within a community that accepts her. She argued that, albeit a small city, Salatiga has open-minded people (Warne, Snyder, & Gillander Gâdin, 2013). It is confirmed that active involvement means we must participate to make it real. Thus, people are treated as citizen members rather than a minority group.



Figure 2. Subject 6 and Tattoo

Subject 11 is a member of Sahabat Tuli, the deaf community in Salatiga, which has initiated multiple activities to campaign for equality for disabled people. She shared about the exclusion experience because of her deafness. Her life was challenging because there was less support for infrastructure and social interactions. She only has limited friends with whom she interacts.

Subject 11 delivered a photo of "Kafe Hening." It is a coffee shop managed by the deaf community in Salatiga. They have served all consumers by ASL (American Sign Language) or a natural language for deaf groups, with similar functions to spoken language. To order the foods and beverages, the consumers need to ASL through the small guide pasted on the wall.

Implicitly, the photo not only talks about "Kafe Hening" but also represents their willingness to be recognized like others. She said firmly that they (the deaf group) do not favor being excluded. She stated, "We are not stupid; we are just deaf; it is different. She also needs to

communicate, discuss, and contribute to society."

During the presentation of her photos, she was helped by a sign language interpreter. She sat equally with other informants and received many questions from FGD participants. In the interview, she confirmed that she was delighted with the participant's enthusiasm and how this research encouraged her confidence to be equal with others.

Photos helped Subject 11 depict the ideas that benefited her and the audience. It could be a medium to communicate through visualization, meaning the imagination and the audience's interpretations are more decadent. On the other hand, it stimulated researchers to foster dynamic discussions that bestow inclusivity for various backgrounds.



Figure 3. Kafe Hening

Reflective is another strength of photovoice. Boyd & Fales (1983) denote reflection as constructing and elucidating the meaning of present and past experiences. It concerns experiential learning that, unconsciously or with self-awareness, drives participants to interpret the cities for their lives. The single interview and the first group discussion introduced the participants to deepening and engaging in the research topics. Some young community leaders have triggered the city with many activities. However, this prompted them to rethink personal perception, which differs from collective activities. It precisely attempts to discover the reason for their decision-making consciousness in community movements.

The participants are requested to think about how Salatiga resonates in their lives.

Data collection involves taking or hunting old or new photos regarding the research topic. It was interesting that one topic could produce multifarious frames or points of view. Even though participants had time and freedom to determine which photos represented their memories, they confessed that it was difficult to choose them. They desired to share more stories instead of two photos.



Figure 4. Hidden Space

Figure 4. Subject 11 shared a photo (Figure 4) explaining his search for freedom. He feels his family could not answer his curiosities about several ideologies that disturbed his mind. Hence, this photo tells how he met, discussed, and debated what freedom is for, learning societal beliefs and principles. Subject 12 acquired personal values through social interactions in a location often perceived by others as unsuitable for socializing. Despite prevailing societal views, this environment contributed significantly to his intellectual development and capacity for critical thinking. Subject 12 has established and manages a zine community that fosters collaboration among individuals with diverse interests.

Participation is also considered to be the main strength of photovoice. Brechin assumed there is a tendency for an imbalance of power in research about

people. Researchers usually tend to control. However, it shifted when the researchers adopted participatory research because of one principle in which participants have power as well as the researchers.

Since the initial identification stage, the researchers considered inclusivity. Subject 12's story aligns with the research about youth in Southeast Baltimore, in which the salient community (little money, power, or status) could communicate issues via group discussion of photographs (Strack, Magill, & McDonagh, 2004). Therefore, photos are regarded as a medium for all participants, including disabled people, to share their thoughts, feelings, and experiences about Salatiga's memories. Informants shared photos of the old buildings, graffiti or murals, the crossroads, and the former house and dining table. It represents human relations, hospitality, and social issues related to city transformations. They compared cities in the past and present that triggered their idea for the future. The photo has the power to be accessible and comprehensible (Hidayah et al., 2020). It means a photo can explain a thousand words or stories due to its multi-interpretative nature.

Due to seeking personal sense, this method has a strength in building the emotional involvement of participants as well. During the discussion, some participants responded to the stories from informants by conveying their experiences, like Paska (a student from the eastern part of Indonesia), who told how she adapted to cultural distinctions. Subject 9 (a student) is touched by how Subject 11 struggled as a deaf person with his appreciation because it is new information for him. He promised to visit Kafe Hening and learn more about ASL.

This method has been demonstrated to elicit profound emotional engagement from interviewees and participants alike, fostering the development of shared memories. There are multiple interpretations about the meaning of

community (McIntyre, 2003). The term "community" in this article deals with the context of collective experience and human relations rather than a geographical point of view. For disabled people, photos help them go beyond their boundaries in expressing themselves.

Employing photovoice was further strengthened by how informants reflect on their personal and collective experiences, offering a multifaceted perspective on the city and the memories of young people. For instance, the collective experience of women in Belfast, Northern Ireland, is that they share their feelings and emotional experiences through images (McIntyre, 2003).

Weakness

The first weakness of the photovoice method is the extra effort to explain the concept. The main objective of the photovoice method is to offer identity, document, and analyze live issues within diverse paradigms (Switzer, 2019). So, the orientation of the image collection demonstrated a co-constructed experience rather than a photo contest. Nonetheless, the participants are more concerned with the photo's quality than the story. This method does not demand a photo's aesthetic beauty, but the photo's function as a medium to explain the informant's thoughts. Therefore, aligning perception in each stage was crucial.

Capturing memory is the second challenge. A photographic image is visual information produced by writing with light (Bernier, 2005; Torallba, 2014). Using photography to capture invisible objects is debatable during the first FGD. Thus, the consciousness of a creative and often imaginative process is critical (Switzer, 2019). For example, Salatiga's memory of coolness brings a calm atmosphere. Informants found it complicated to visualize these memories. So, for some narratives, photos really complement them. Previously, Subject 11 would have a picture of a senior

high school; however, urban development has changed the buildings to other functions. As a result, she captured the present object to elucidate the memories.

Collective urban memory is a broad topic. The diversity of perspectives and spatial interpretations of informants' personal experiences is both a wealth and a weakness. It makes it difficult for researchers to find common threads within the diversity and complexity of more or less subjective issues. Furthermore, there is no consistent method for analyzing photovoice data. Some researchers (e.g., Tsang, 2020) stated the difficulty in erasing the interpretation between researchers and participants' distortion in analyzing photos. Therefore, several FGSs and personal approaches to narrating the photos were repeatedly conducted.

Opportunities

The Photovoice method offers the opportunity to preserve urban or community knowledge. The study of American Indian tribal members documented the water and health reservation of indigenous knowledge and beliefs through photo-visual (Mitchell, 2018). It demonstrated the acknowledgment of possession of knowledge without exception. The study about Salatiga's collective memory recorded the younger generation's knowledge. Inviting disabled people to participate fully through an appropriate method could reduce the barrier of insufficient opportunities. It underpins "Nothing about us without us" (Hogan, Jain, Peiris-John, & Ameratunga, 2020).

In practice, this method can also be a trigger for developing collective awareness and social identity in the broader media. A sense of belonging is fertilized by feeling valued and eager to contribute as a member of the city (Strack, 2004). Through photos, the disabled participants could share their ideas about cities' development and its impact from their point of view, e.g., lack of

accessibility for their independence. Research by Zaini et al. (2024) proved that (social) media provides equitable public services in Kudus Regency.

Challenge

The current technological advancement can be a chance to implement this method. According to Felten (2008), the new "pictorial turn" era puts image into the center of communication and meaning-making. Nonetheless, visual cognition and perception require a skill. The study of the physical processes shows that "seeing is not simply a process of passive reception of stimuli but also involves active construction of meaning" (Felten, 2018). Hence, the typical diversity of informants in this research required varied approaches. In the process, the researcher overcame it by repeatedly approaching them personally. Inviting a sign language translator was also one of the solutions. Teaching visual literacy could improve the skills of making and interpreting visual meaning in the future.

Discussion

Research involving women with disabilities in Australia has demonstrated that photographs can serve as effective media to foster appreciation for disabled women, as they reduce negative societal attitudes and harmful behaviors (Macdonald, Dew, Fisher, & Boydell, 2023). These individuals claim their space through photographs, enabling them to communicate identity on equal terms. Walmsley and Johnson have further emphasized the importance of inclusive research approaches to improve the quality of life for disabled people. Their guidelines advocate for the consideration and representation of their needs from their own perspectives and the provision of respectful treatment within the research community.

1. Providing access and representing their views and experiences

The informant from the disabled group expressed her appreciation that she was not “excluded” in the focus group discussion. Subject 11 was given the same time and space to explain her memories and thoughts about her photo. With the help of a sign language interpreter, she sat on the same panel as the other informants. It proves that visuals can be a medium to express memories, ideas, and even hopes of someone who captures social reality in silence.

The photo of “the silent coffee shop” from the Sahabat Tuli community aroused FGD participants with many questions about how disabled groups interpret space. The photo sparked the imagination and interpretation of how disabled people live in an uncomfortable situation, lonely and pitied. They rejected those and encouraged more people to learn sign language. “I am not stupid, I just cannot hear,” she said. Using a photo, she explained her experience.

Visual images also help tell stories. The photo of the tattooed arm was a visual medium that assisted in explaining her ideas and memories. She admitted that she was not a good storyteller. Similarly, one informant (a traditional artist) chose a photo about Noknik, a traditional art that once flourished in Salatiga. At first, when asked to be an informant, he refused for the same reason. Photos became a tool that made it easier for them. He narrated stories and even sparked a dialogue about an endangered artwork. Photos help them capture and record moments. It aligns with Emile Zola, referenced by Sontag in (Ketelle, 2010), who asserts, “in my opinion, no one can claim to have truly seen something until he has photographed it”. Loxley (2023) adds that photography should reinforce assumptions about people and places, and can also be used to understand other worlds.

2. Reflecting that research should respect the backgrounds and conditions of individuals or groups

In Indonesia, people with disabilities are regulated by Law No. 8 of 2016. According to article 24 of the Law, states that persons with disabilities have the right to expression, communication, and information, which includes the rights to: a) have freedom of expression and opinion, b) obtain information and communicate through accessible media, and c) use and obtain information and communication facilities in the form of sign language, braille, and augmentative communication in pure interaction.

In inclusive research, equality is critical, including access to living space within the city, which is the right of all citizens. The design should be built around the needs of the individuals and communities within it (Crabb, Clarke, Alwaer, Heron, & Laing, 2019; Itair, Shahrour, & Hijazi, 2023; Uin et al., 2024). Understanding community perceptions is essential and should be integrated into the decision-making process. This perspective recognizes that every segment of society possesses the capacity to contribute to the collective transformation of space for the greater good. Including young people from diverse backgrounds, including individuals with disabilities, exemplifies the principle of equality that this research seeks to advance.

Conclusion

A critical analysis of the application of photovoice in this research supports the conclusion that the method enables participatory and inclusive inquiry. Photovoice provides opportunities for community members to contribute to the construction of knowledge meaningfully and to participate in decision-making processes. This participatory approach is particularly valuable in research settings where the inclusion of diverse perspectives is essential. Although the research

highlights limitations and challenges in employing the photovoice method, the findings underscore its substantial strengths and potential. Photography is an accessible and effective medium, allowing individuals from various social backgrounds to engage in research. Furthermore, technological advances have expanded the possibilities for utilizing photovoice, reinforcing its relevance and applicability in contemporary research contexts. This evidence demonstrates that photovoice is a robust and innovative method suitable for fostering inclusivity and collaboration in knowledge production, especially within the evolving landscape of social science research.

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