

Empowerment Communication for Persons with Disabilities A Case Study of Caffe Lubi.co

Mita Maulia¹, Hanindyalaila Pienrasmi², Budhi Waskito³

^{1,2,3} Communication Studies Program, Faculty of Social and Political Science,
Bandar Lampung University, Indonesia
Email : mitamaulia0505@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study discusses the role of empowerment communication in enhancing the abilities of deaf-mute individuals at Caffe Lubi in preparing for the world of work. The background of this research is rooted in the ongoing challenges faced by people with disabilities – particularly those who are deaf-mute – in Indonesia, including discrimination and limited access to employment opportunities, despite their significant presence in the national population. This study aims to provide an in-depth description of the empowerment communication processes implemented at Caffe Lubi and their impact on the development of work-related skills and personal independence among deaf-mute individuals. A descriptive qualitative method with a case study approach was employed, focusing on Caffe Lubi. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation involving three deaf-mute individuals working at the café. The findings reveal that empowerment communication at Caffe Lubi is conducted through two-way interactions between facilitators and persons with disabilities, the use of sign language, and written communication tools. This process has proven effective in improving both soft skills – such as teamwork, time management, and problem-solving – and hard skills, including barista techniques, inventory management, and the use of office software for administrative tasks. The empowerment initiatives at Caffe Lubi not only enhance vocational competencies but also foster self-confidence and independence among deaf-mute individuals, equipping them to adapt in the workplace both as employees and as potential entrepreneurs. This research underscores the importance of inclusive and supportive communication in empowering people with disabilities, ultimately contributing to equal employment opportunities and a more disability-friendly work environment.

Keywords: empowerment communication, persons with disabilities.

INTRODUCTION

Persons with disabilities are members of society who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments, which often hinder them from interacting equally with the general population. Disabilities vary widely and include visual impairments, hearing impairments, speech impairments, physical disabilities, intellectual disabilities, emotional or behavioral disorders, and combinations of these conditions (Jauhari, 2017). Deaf-mute individuals are those who experience both hearing impairments and difficulties in verbal communication, relying instead on sign language or other assistive communication tools in their daily lives (Sholihah, 2016).

In Indonesia, persons with disabilities continue to face injustice as a result of frequent discrimination. One of the main factors contributing to this discrimination is the negative perception or lack of public awareness regarding the diversity and rights of persons with disabilities. According to data from Statistics Indonesia (BPS, 2022), the proportion of workers with disabilities remains relatively low – approximately 5.37% of the total working-age population – and has even declined compared to the previous year. This indicates that persons with disabilities still face significant challenges in accessing employment opportunities.

Discrimination against persons with disabilities is often rooted in society's inability to accept diversity. As a result, minority groups such as deaf-mute individuals frequently become targets of unfair treatment. However, according to data from Statistics Indonesia (BPS, 2023), the number of persons with disabilities in Indonesia has reached approximately 22.97 million, or 8.5% of the total population – a significant proportion that deserves attention across various aspects of life, including education, employment, healthcare services, and public facilities.

Empowerment is a crucial effort to enhance the capacity and independence of persons with disabilities. It is defined as a process of providing power or increasing the capacity of marginalized groups so they can meet their basic needs and actively participate in society. Both the central and local governments have an obligation to strengthen these groups; however, community support is also essential to ensure the effectiveness of the empowerment process (Hamid, 2018).

Communication is one of the key factors in the empowerment process of persons with disabilities. Through communication, information about rights, opportunities, and available support can be conveyed and understood by persons with disabilities. Communication also helps build mutually supportive relationships between persons with disabilities and the broader community. Empowerment communication aims to increase motivation and provide opportunities, involving essential elements such as the communicator, message, channel, audience, and feedback (Dewi, 2020).

Caffe Lubi serves as a concrete example of the empowerment of persons with disabilities, particularly those who are deaf-mute. At this café, they are given opportunities to develop various job skills, such as serving food and beverages, managing inventory, and providing customer service. In addition, they receive training in effective communication, teamwork, time management, and building self-confidence and independence within the workplace.

Three deaf-mute individuals at Caffe Lubi hold positions that align with their respective skills: cashier, kitchen staff, and server. They are able to work professionally, demonstrating that with proper support and training, persons with disabilities can contribute equally in the workforce. The development of soft skills – such as teamwork, time management, and problem-solving – alongside hard skills like coffee preparation, inventory management, and the use of office applications, serves as essential preparation for entering and adapting to the world of work.

The empowerment practices at Caffe Lubi demonstrate that equality and independence for persons with disabilities can be achieved with the right support, particularly through effective and inclusive communication. This highlights the vital role of communication in supporting the empowerment process and enhancing the capabilities of deaf-mute individuals as they prepare to enter the workforce.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Empowerment Communication

Empowerment communication is a communicative process aimed at increasing motivation and providing opportunities for marginalized groups or individuals, such as persons with disabilities, to enhance their capacity and independence. In this context, communication functions not only as a means of conveying information but

also as a way to build mutually supportive relationships between persons with disabilities and the wider community. Empowerment communication also involves key elements such as the communicator, message, channel, audience, and feedback, ensuring that the communication process is two-way and effective (Sya'diah, 2020).

According to theory, empowerment communication involves key elements such as the communicator, message, communication channel, audience, and feedback. This process must be two-way to ensure the effective transfer of information, motivation, and support. Everett M. Rogers emphasizes that communication can lead to behavioral and social change, highlighting its critical role in the process of empowerment (Dewi, 2020).

B. Indicators of Empowerment

According to Suharto, as cited in (Wahab, 2023) the indicators of empowerment can be described through four dimensions of power: *power within* (awareness and self-confidence), *power to* (the ability to make decisions and take action), *power over* (the ability to influence or positively control others), and *power with* (the ability to collaborate and build solidarity with others).

"Power over" refers to an individual's ability to overcome barriers and discrimination, enabling them to no longer be passive recipients of unfair treatment but to actively advocate for their rights in the workplace. "Power to" signifies the capacity to take action, as demonstrated by deaf-mute employees at Caffe Lubi who have acquired new skills – both soft skills such as communication and teamwork, and hard skills such as coffee making and inventory management – empowering them to make decisions and act independently.

Furthermore, "power with" is reflected in the collaboration and cooperation between persons with disabilities, their colleagues, and the surrounding community, fostering solidarity to achieve shared goals. Meanwhile, "power within" relates to the development of self-confidence, awareness of personal potential, and internal motivation for growth and independence. These four indicators serve as benchmarks for the success of the empowerment process, in which persons with disabilities are not only able to actively participate in the workforce but also possess the strength to transform their lives in a more autonomous and meaningful way.

C. Empowerment Process

According to Sulistiyani, as cited in (Wahab, 2023) the empowerment process consists of several stages: conscientization, capacity building, access provision, and empowerment. These stages aim to enhance the ability of individuals or groups to achieve independence and actively participate in society. The conscientization stage is the initial step in the empowerment process, where individuals or target groups – such as persons with disabilities – are encouraged to understand their conditions, potential, and the challenges they face. During this stage, open dialogue and communication are conducted to help them recognize their rights, opportunities, and the importance of active participation in transforming their lives. This stage is

crucial for building internal motivation and overcoming feelings of inferiority caused by discrimination or social stigma.

The transformation stage is a process of changing mindsets, attitudes, and behaviors that occurs after individuals or groups become aware of their potential and rights. At this stage, persons with disabilities are encouraged to take an active role, express their opinions, and participate in activities that support independence. This transformation also involves changes in the social environment to become more supportive, leading to a shift from dependence to independence and active participation.

The stage of intellectual capacity building is carried out through training, education, and mentoring tailored to the needs of the target group. At Caffe Lubi, for instance, individuals with hearing and speech impairments receive vocational training in both hard and soft skills, such as coffee brewing, inventory management, computer application use, as well as communication and teamwork. This intellectual capacity enhancement aims to prepare them to compete in the workforce and make independent decisions, thereby supporting sustainable empowerment.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design, aiming to gain an in-depth understanding of the empowerment communication process and the enhancement of individuals' abilities to face the workforce. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation, providing rich and contextual information (Sugiyono, 2019).

The data analysis technique employed in this study is qualitative descriptive analysis, in which the collected data are systematically organized, classified, and interpreted to identify patterns and meanings relevant to the research focus. The analysis process follows several stages: data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. This approach aligns with the qualitative research methodology described by (Sugiyono, 2019), which emphasizes a holistic and in-depth understanding of social phenomena.

This study considers the validity of data through triangulation, which involves combining multiple data sources and collection methods to ensure the accuracy and credibility of the research findings. By applying a systematic and comprehensive method, this study aims to provide a clear depiction of how empowerment communication is carried out and contributes to enhancing the capacities of hearing and speech-impaired individuals at Caffe Lubi.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. Form Of Empowerment

The form of empowerment implemented at Caffe Lubi focuses on developing the capacity and independence of deaf-mute persons with disabilities to prepare them for the workforce. Empowerment is carried out through two main aspects: technical skills (hard skills) and non-technical skills (soft skills). The hard skills provided include training in coffee brewing, managing raw material inventory, cooking, and using computer applications such as Microsoft Office for administration and stock

recording. Meanwhile, the soft skills developed include effective communication, teamwork, time management, and problem-solving in the workplace.

In addition to training, empowerment is also realized through providing opportunities for persons with disabilities to occupy various job positions according to their interests and abilities, such as cashier, kitchen staff, and server. In practice, they are actively involved in task distribution, decision-making, and resolving operational problems. This fosters a sense of confidence, independence, and responsibility within the individuals.

Empowerment at Caffe Lubi also emphasizes the importance of two-way communication between persons with disabilities and café management. This communication is conducted through sign language, writing, or other forms of visual communication that facilitate interaction and coordination within the team. An inclusive and open work environment encourages persons with disabilities to express their opinions, engage in discussions, and take initiative in various activities.

Overall, the empowerment practices at Caffe Lubi not only enhance technical and non-technical skills but also build self-confidence, independence, and mental readiness among deaf-mute persons with disabilities to contribute professionally in the workforce or to become independent entrepreneurs.

B. Involvement

The involvement of deaf-mute persons with disabilities at Caffe Lubi is highly active and participatory. They are not merely objects of training but also serve as subjects who are directly engaged in the entire operational process of the café – from vocational skills training to the execution of daily tasks. Individuals with disabilities at Caffe Lubi are given the opportunity to take on various job positions according to their interests and abilities, such as cashier, kitchen staff, and server. In carrying out their duties, they actively participate in task distribution, decision-making, and problem-solving in the workplace.

This involvement is also supported by an inclusive and open work environment, where every individual is given space to express opinions, engage in discussions, and take initiative. They are involved in determining operating hours, task allocation, and performance evaluations. Moreover, the participation of the surrounding community, customers, and café managers further strengthens the empowerment process, creating a collaborative and respectful work atmosphere. Through this active engagement, deaf-mute individuals with disabilities are able to develop soft skills such as teamwork, communication, time management, and independent problem-solving.

As a result of this high level of involvement, their self-confidence, independence, and ability to adapt and contribute professionally in the workplace have significantly increased. This active participation proves that with equal support and opportunities, persons with disabilities can become valuable members of a work team and make meaningful contributions to their environment.

C. Indicators of Empowerment

Power Over, These indicators are reflected in the ability of persons with disabilities to overcome barriers and discrimination encountered in both workplace and social environments. At Caffe Lubi, individuals with hearing and speech impairments

demonstrate assertiveness in facing challenges, are no longer passive recipients of unfair treatment, and have the courage to demand equal rights and opportunities. Power To, This dimension is reflected in the individual's ability to act and make decisions independently. Persons with disabilities at Caffe Lubi are capable of performing various job tasks, such as brewing coffee, managing inventory, and serving customers. They are also able to solve problems that arise in the workplace without constantly relying on others.

Power With, This indicator is evident in the cooperation and solidarity between persons with disabilities, their coworkers, and the surrounding community. At Caffe Lubi, they actively work in teams, share responsibilities, support one another, and participate in collective decision-making. This fosters an inclusive and collaborative work environment. Power With in, This dimension relates to the enhancement of self-confidence, awareness of personal potential, and internal motivation for growth. Individuals with hearing and speech impairments at Caffe Lubi exhibit positive changes in attitude and mindset, showing increased self-assurance, recognition of their own abilities, and a strong motivation to continue learning and become independent.

D. Empowerment Communication

The empowerment communication implemented at Caffe Lubi has led to significant changes among deaf-mute persons with disabilities, particularly in terms of skills, self-confidence, and independence. Through inclusive two-way communication—utilizing sign language, written text, and visual communication—persons with disabilities are not merely passive recipients of information, but active participants in dialogue, expression of opinions, and decision-making within the workplace. This process strengthens mutual trust between persons with disabilities and café management, fostering an open and supportive work environment.

The primary outcome of empowerment communication is the enhancement of technical skills (hard skills), including coffee brewing, inventory management, cooking, and the use of computer applications for administrative tasks. In addition, soft skills such as teamwork, time management, problem-solving, and interpersonal communication have developed significantly. Deaf-mute persons with disabilities have become more confident in performing their duties, capable of solving problems independently, and proactive in taking initiative in daily work activities.

Empowerment communication also drives changes in attitude and behavior. Individuals who were previously passive and lacking in self-confidence have become more active, independent, and highly motivated to grow. They are not only able to adapt to the work environment but are also prepared to compete in the broader workforce, either as employees in the formal sector or as independent entrepreneurs.

Overall, the results of empowerment communication at Caffe Lubi demonstrate that effective communication support can significantly enhance the capacity, independence, and active participation of deaf-mute persons with disabilities in the workforce. This confirms that empowerment communication plays a crucial role in creating an inclusive and empowering work environment for vulnerable groups.

CONCLUSION

This study confirms that the empowerment communication implemented at Caffe Lubi has had a significant impact on enhancing the capacity, independence, and self-confidence of deaf-mute persons with disabilities in facing the world of work. Through a structured training approach – covering both technical skills (hard skills), such as coffee brewing, inventory management, cooking, and computer application usage, and non-technical skills (soft skills), such as communication, teamwork, time management, and problem-solving – persons with disabilities have demonstrated the ability to adapt and contribute professionally in the workplace.

Empowerment communication at Caffe Lubi is conducted in a two-way and inclusive manner, utilizing various channels such as sign language, written communication, and visual cues. This communication process not only delivers information but also builds motivation, provides emotional support, and creates space for dialogue and collaborative problem-solving. As a result, an open, collaborative, and respectful work environment is fostered, where persons with disabilities are not merely passive recipients but active agents in decision-making, task distribution, and performance evaluation.

The indicators of empowerment achieved include: the ability to overcome discrimination and barriers (*power over*), the ability to act and make decisions independently (*power to*), the ability to build collaboration and solidarity (*power with*), and increased self-confidence and internal motivation (*power within*). The findings reveal that deaf-mute persons with disabilities at Caffe Lubi have been able to develop their potential, demonstrate active participation, and are prepared to compete in the formal workforce or become independent entrepreneurs.

Overall, this study emphasizes that the success of empowerment is strongly influenced by effective communication, continuous training, and an inclusive and supportive work environment. The empowerment model implemented at Caffe Lubi serves as a best practice that can be adopted by other institutions or organizations in their efforts to improve the quality of life and independence of persons with disabilities. Thus, empowerment communication proves to be a key element in driving positive change, expanding employment opportunities, and fostering a more just and inclusive society for deaf-mute persons with disabilities.

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